

ST. ARMANDS KEY LUTHERAN CHURCH  
SARASOTA, FLORIDA

**COME, JOIN THE CONVERSATION!**  
ON  
**THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES**

Lesson Plan for Thursday – February 28, 2013

Resource Book – Kerygma Series – “*into the world*”

Chapter 7 – “*The Gospel Spreads Beyond Jerusalem*”

Acts 8:4-9:43

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**LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

1. To carry on our conversation about the Book of Acts while continuing growth in fellowship with other participants.
2. To recall the three conversion stories in Acts 8 and tell how they illustrate Luke’s purpose to portray the spread of the gospel.
3. To summarize the account of Saul’s conversion and describe the process by which the early church finally accepted him.
4. To cite an example of our congregation’s involvement in mission
5. To identify the ministries of Barnabas and Tabitha and draw parallels to the church’s ministry today.

**OPENING PRAYER OF PRAISE – PSALM 67**

*Let all the peoples praise you, O God. (Ps. 67:3)*

May God be merciful to us and bless us; may the light of God's face shine upon us.

**Let your way be known upon earth, your saving health among all nations.**

Let the peoples praise you, O God; let all the peoples praise you.

**Let the nations be glad and sing for joy, for you judge the peoples with equity and guide all the nations on earth.**

Let the peoples praise you, O God; let all the peoples praise you.

**The earth has brought forth its increase; God, our own God, has blessed us.**

May God give us blessing, and may all the ends of the earth stand in awe.

## **MISSION: IMPOSSIBLE?**

### **Luke 24:46-48**

<sup>46</sup>and he said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, <sup>47</sup>and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. <sup>48</sup>You are witnesses of these things.

### **Matthew 28:18-20**

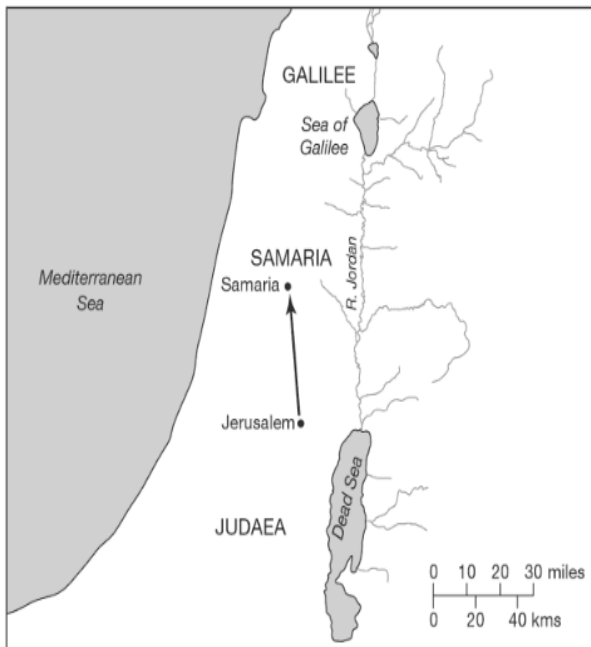
<sup>18</sup>And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. <sup>19</sup>Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, <sup>20</sup>and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

The verses above have been at the heart of the world mission movement. With respect to these verses:

1. How is SAKLC involved in mission activity?
2. How is the FL-Bahamas Synod involved in mission activity?
3. How is the ELCA involved in mission activity?

*\*Keep these verses in mind as we consider the account of Philip’s venture into Samaria*

## **EXPLORING THE SCRIPTURE**



*Acts 8.4–25*

### **Acts 8:4-8 – Out of Jerusalem**

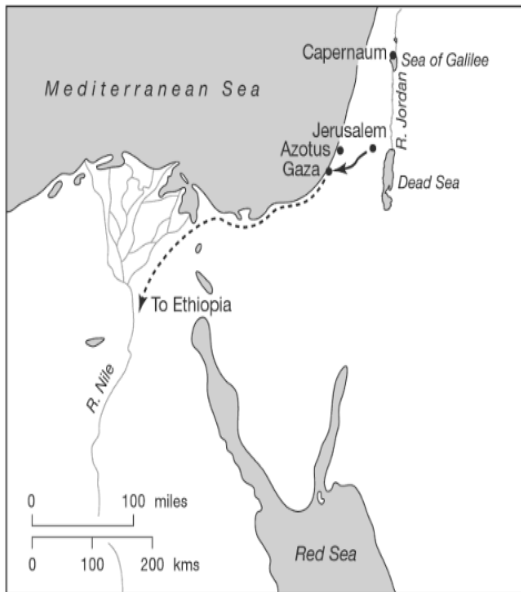
<sup>4</sup>Now those who were scattered went from place to place, proclaiming the word. <sup>5</sup>Philip went down to the city of Samaria and proclaimed the Messiah to them. <sup>6</sup>The crowds with one accord listened eagerly to what was said by Philip, hearing and seeing the signs that he did, <sup>7</sup>for unclean spirits, crying with loud shrieks, came out of many who were possessed; and many others who were paralyzed or lame were cured. <sup>8</sup>So there was great joy in that city.

### **Acts 8:9-25 – Philip and Simon**

<sup>9</sup>Now a certain man named Simon had previously practiced magic in the city and amazed the people of Samaria, saying that he was someone great. <sup>10</sup>All of them, from the least to the greatest, listened to him eagerly, saying, “This man is the power of God that is called Great.” <sup>11</sup>And they listened eagerly to him because for a long time he had amazed them with his magic. <sup>12</sup>But when they believed Philip, who was proclaiming the good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. <sup>13</sup>Even Simon himself believed. After being baptized, he stayed constantly with Philip and was amazed when he saw the signs and great miracles that took place.

<sup>14</sup>Now when the apostles at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had accepted the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them. <sup>15</sup>The two went down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit <sup>16</sup>(for as yet the Spirit had not come upon any of them; they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus). <sup>17</sup>Then Peter and John laid their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit. <sup>18</sup>Now when Simon saw that the Spirit was given through the laying on of the apostles’ hands, he offered them money, <sup>19</sup>saying, “Give me also this power so that anyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit.” <sup>20</sup>But Peter said to him, “May your silver perish with you, because you thought you could obtain God’s gift with money! <sup>21</sup>You have no part or share in this, for your heart is not right before God. <sup>22</sup>Repent therefore of this wickedness of yours, and pray to the Lord that, if possible, the intent of your heart may be forgiven you. <sup>23</sup>For I see that you are in the gall of bitterness and the chains of wickedness.” <sup>24</sup>Simon answered, “Pray for me to the Lord, that nothing of what you have said may happen to me.” <sup>25</sup>Now after Peter and John had testified and spoken the word of the Lord, they returned to Jerusalem, proclaiming the good news to many villages of the Samaritans.

1. Why is Simon so captivated by Philip’s activities? (8:9-13)
2. What is Simon really after in verses 8:18-19?
3. Why do you think Peter gives Simon such a strong reply (8:20-23)?



Acts 8.26–40

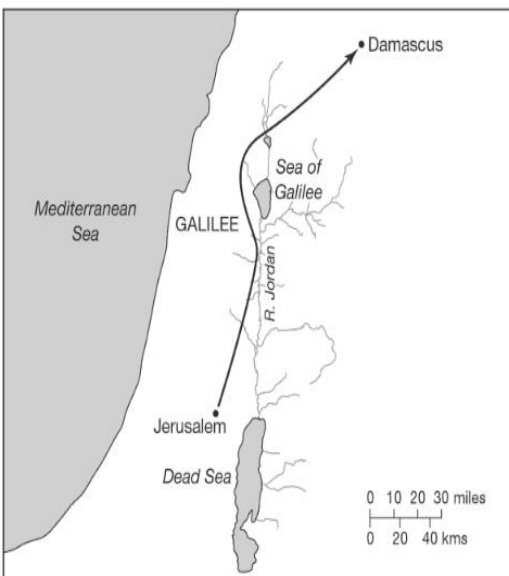
### Acts 8:26-40 – Philip and the Ethiopian Official

<sup>26</sup>Then an angel of the Lord said to Philip, “Get up and go toward the south to the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza.” (This is a wilderness road.) <sup>27</sup>So he got up and went. Now there was an Ethiopian eunuch, a court official of the Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, in charge of her entire treasury. He had come to Jerusalem to worship <sup>28</sup>and was returning home; seated in his chariot, he was reading the prophet Isaiah. <sup>29</sup>Then the Spirit said to Philip, “Go over to this chariot and join it.” <sup>30</sup>So Philip ran up to it and heard him reading the prophet Isaiah. He asked, “Do you understand what you are reading?” <sup>31</sup>He replied, “How can I, unless someone guides me?” And he invited Philip to get in and sit beside him. <sup>32</sup>Now the passage of the scripture that he was reading was this: “Like a sheep he was led to the slaughter, and like a lamb silent before its shearer, so he does not open his mouth. <sup>33</sup>In his humiliation justice was denied him. Who can describe his generation? For his life is taken away from the earth.” <sup>34</sup>The eunuch asked Philip, “About whom, may I ask you, does the prophet say this, about himself or about someone else?” <sup>35</sup>Then Philip began to speak, and starting with this scripture, he proclaimed to him the good news about Jesus. <sup>36</sup>As they were going along the road, they came to some water; and the eunuch said, “Look, here is water! What is to prevent me from being baptized?” <sup>38</sup>He commanded the chariot to stop, and both of them, Philip and the eunuch, went down into the water, and Philip baptized him. <sup>39</sup>When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord snatched Philip away; the eunuch saw him no more, and went on his way rejoicing.

<sup>40</sup>But Philip found himself at Azotus, and as he was passing through the region, he proclaimed the good news to all the towns until he came to Caesarea.

1. How does the passage from Isaiah 53 (quoted in 8:32-33) provide a good opportunity for Philip to tell the good news about Jesus?
2. How is the gospel coming to people in different ways in each of these stories? Reflecting on Acts 1-8, what observations can we make regarding the spread of the gospel to ever widening circles? Cite specific examples.
3. Philip climbed into the chariot and rode with the Ethiopian and allowed him to ask questions. Philip had an opportunity to provide answers. How can we “climb into the chariot” with someone in order to spread the good news?
4. What do people today find puzzling about Scripture? Think of a particular person and a question you have heard them ask. Who are our guides (akin to 8:31)?

### Acts 9:1-20 – Saul’s Conversion: Can a leopard change his spots?



Acts 9.1-9

Meanwhile Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest <sup>2</sup>and asked him for letters to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any who belonged to the Way, men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. <sup>3</sup>Now as he was going along and approaching Damascus, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. <sup>4</sup>He fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" <sup>5</sup>He asked, "Who are you, Lord?" The reply came, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. <sup>6</sup>But get up and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do." <sup>7</sup>The men who were traveling with him stood speechless because they heard the voice but saw no one. <sup>8</sup>Saul got up from the ground, and though his eyes were open, he could see nothing; so they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus. <sup>9</sup>For three days he was without sight, and neither ate nor drank.

<sup>10</sup>Now there was a disciple in Damascus named Ananias. The Lord said to him in a vision, "Ananias." He answered, "Here I am, Lord." <sup>11</sup>The Lord said to him, "Get up and go to the street called Straight, and at the house of Judas look for a man of Tarsus named Saul. At this moment he is praying, <sup>12</sup>and he has seen in a vision a man named Ananias come in and lay his hands on him so that he might regain his sight." <sup>13</sup>But Ananias answered, "Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much evil he has done to your saints in Jerusalem; <sup>14</sup>and here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who invoke your name." <sup>15</sup>But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is an instrument whom I have chosen to bring my name before Gentiles and kings and before the people of Israel; <sup>16</sup>I myself will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name." <sup>17</sup>So Ananias went and entered the house. He laid his hands on Saul and said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on your way here, has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit." <sup>18</sup>And immediately something like scales fell from his eyes, and his sight was restored. Then he got up and was baptized, <sup>19</sup>and after taking some food, he regained his strength. For several days he was with the disciples in Damascus, <sup>20</sup>and immediately he began to proclaim Jesus in the synagogues, saying, "He is the Son of God."

1. From Saul's perspective: How would he have felt during this experience?
2. What is daunting about the assignment that the Lord gives Ananias? From Ananias' perspective: How would he have felt when God called him to go to Paul? How would he have felt during the visit at Judas' house?
3. Have you received an assignment from God that you thought was daunting?

In “Acts for Everyone,” N.T. Wright writes:

*“During Saul’s time, Jews would meditate on the different phases of the great vision of Ezekiel 1 in which the prophet sees four-faced angels carrying something like a great chariot with wheels and flashing lights, and then a great dome or expanse above. Finally, careful not to actually say he saw God, the prophet describes a voice and a figure like a man, which had the appearance of the likeness of the glory of God.*

*We don’t know for sure, but several scholars have suggested that Saul might have been engaging in this meditation on the way to Damascus, preparing himself to act with violence against the Christians for the glory of God. Keeping his heart focused on the divine-chariot, seeing the angels, then the wheels, the lights, until possibly, hopefully he might see the glory, the face – and the face was the face of Jesus!”*

1. Do you agree or disagree with these scholars? Explain.

### **Acts 9:26-35**

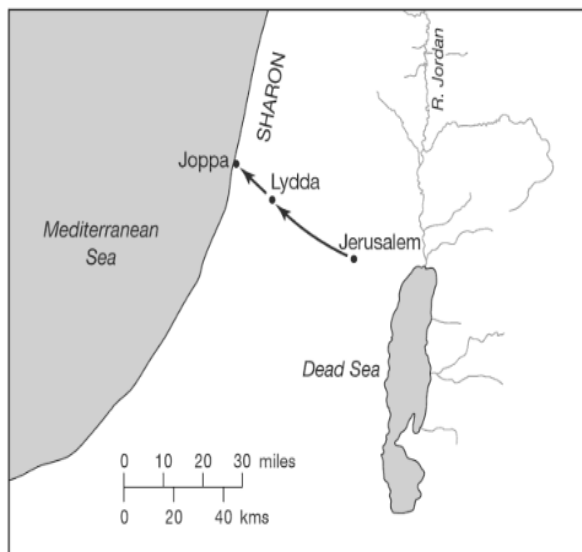
<sup>26</sup>When he had come to Jerusalem, he attempted to join the disciples; and they were all afraid of him, for they did not believe that he was a disciple. <sup>27</sup>But Barnabas took him, brought him to the apostles, and described for them how on the road he had seen the Lord, who had spoken to him, and how in Damascus he had spoken boldly in the name of Jesus. <sup>28</sup>So he went in and out among them in Jerusalem, speaking boldly in the name of the Lord. <sup>29</sup>He spoke and argued with the Hellenists; but they were attempting to kill him. <sup>30</sup>When the believers learned of it, they brought him down to Caesarea and sent him off to Tarsus. <sup>31</sup>Meanwhile the church throughout Judea, Galilee, and Samaria had peace and was built up. Living in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it increased in numbers.

1. How does Barnabas intervene on Saul’s behalf (9:26-27)?
2. Why was Saul sent to Tarsus?

<sup>32</sup>Now as Peter went here and there among all the believers, he came down also to the saints living in Lydda. <sup>33</sup>There he found a man named Aeneas, who had been bedridden for eight years, for he was paralyzed. <sup>34</sup>Peter said to him, "Aeneas, Jesus Christ heals you; get up and make your bed!" And immediately he got up. <sup>35</sup>And all the residents of Lydda and Sharon saw him and turned to the Lord.

1. What was Aeneas' problem?
2. How did Peter respond?
3. What were the results?
4. How does this compare to the healing ministry of Jesus? (See Acts 3:6-8; Luke 5:24-25)

#### Acts 9:36-43 – Tabitha's Story



Acts 9:32, 35, 36

<sup>36</sup>Now in Joppa there was a disciple whose name was Tabitha, which in Greek is Dorcas. She was devoted to good works and acts of charity. <sup>37</sup>At that time she became ill and died. When they had washed her, they laid her in a room upstairs. <sup>38</sup>Since Lydda was near Joppa, the disciples, who heard that Peter was there, sent two men to him with the request, "Please come to us without delay." <sup>39</sup>So Peter got up and went with them; and when he arrived, they took him to the room upstairs. All the widows stood beside him, weeping and showing tunics and



other clothing that Dorcas had made while she was with them. <sup>40</sup>Peter put all of them outside, and then he knelt down and prayed. He turned to the body and said, “Tabitha, get up.” Then she opened her eyes, and seeing Peter, she sat up. <sup>41</sup>He gave her his hand and helped her up. Then calling the saints and widows, he showed her to be alive. <sup>42</sup>This became known throughout Joppa, and many believed in the Lord. <sup>43</sup>Meanwhile he stayed in Joppa for some time with a certain Simon, a tanner.

1. Consider treatment of widows and the poor in Jesus’ day. (See Resource Guide page 60 and Acts 6:1) How might Tabitha’s ministry be appreciated by the widows in Joppa?

### **CLOSING PRAYER**

### **NEXT WEEK – THURSDAY, MARCH 7, 2013 – 10:30 AM OGRAM HALL**

1. Read Resource Book – Chapter 8 – *“Into All the World”*
2. In Scripture read: Acts 10:1-11:18