

Potent Eunuchs!

Acts 8^{26-end}; Psalm 22^{25-end}; 1 John 4^{7-end}; John 15¹⁻⁸

Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit. [John 15⁸]

Christianity isn't just about you and me feeling good: it is about two things (certainly, from the readings today):

- ✘ It is about being the sort of believer that **bears fruit**. If we don't bear fruit we are pruned (the suggestion is that those who are fruitful are trimmed but those who are not are removed).

And

- ✘ It is about **abiding in** Christ so much that **love is perfected among us**. You don't learn how to love by reading a manual on love, you learn it by being loved. That is why our ability to love others – and that isn't an option – is an extension of how that **abiding** in Christ is enough for us to feel secure and loved enough to love others.

Are you aware of the research that tells us that we all need 8 hugs a day lasting at least 20 seconds each for the maximum oxytocin benefit. This reduces stress, has a positive benefit on heart health, boosts your immune system and lessens fatigue. The research also points out that these benefits are only derived when the person hugging us is someone we trust.

Perhaps that is why John writes and tells us that **perfect love casts out fear**.

The reading from Acts gives us a practical example of what this means:

- ✘ An angel turns up and tells Philip to go to the middle of nowhere and then to impose himself on a foreign dignitary. Eunuchs were powerful people who had been emasculated so that they were focused on their task, close to the ruler but no threat to the harem! Potent and impotent all at the same time!
- ✘ Not many would question the ability of such a powerful man to understand anything – but the bold question leads to the invitation to join the chap in his chariot.

- ✘ The sharing of the **good news about Jesus** led to a response: **look, here is water! What is to prevent me from being baptised?**
- ✘ The task completed, Philip is removed: and when **he found himself at Azotus** he continues to share **the good news**.

The challenges to us are fairly clear (developing some of the things I shared last week):

- ✘ When was the last time you felt Jesus hug you? I'm not being (too) soppy, but closeness is important and it has to be close enough to be felt. This is the foundation for everything else- the relationship we want others to enjoy and the secure basis for loving others.
- ✘ What evidence is there that **we love because he first loved us**? If we see it as our being conduits for God's love it bypasses our decisions about whether or not we choose to love: it is always getting the balance right between an unconditional love and a love that has enough integrity not to make do with second best in ourselves or in others. Love, so far as Christians are concerned is a verb: it isn't a passive feeling, it is practical action.
- ✘ It is a willingness to **bear fruit** and to be able to perceive the prompting of God (however strange it may appear to be) to share our faith and in so doing to expect conversions.