

Next weekend, we will be blessed by prayerful consideration of the following scriptures that celebrate the **Fifth Saturday and Sunday of Easter: Acts 8:26-40. This is the story of the Christian conversion of an African eunuch** who went home to Ethiopia in order to establish the oldest existing Christian Church in the world. Africans appear in crucial places as the story of salvation unfolds. In Jeremiah 38:7ff, we see the story of Ebed-melech the African (Ethiopian), an eunuch (castrated man) in the king's house who instigated Jeremiah's rescue from the bottom of a royal cistern which was full of mud. In Matthew 27:32, we see an African, Simon or Cyrene, compelled and inwardly persuaded to help Jesus bear his cross. And here, we see another African become an early and effective advocate of faith in Jesus. African Christianity predates Islam in Africa by almost 500 years.

Psalm 22:25-31. This Psalm is quoted by Jesus on the cross in Mark 15:34; however, it does not stay in the dumps of depression caused by the agonizing sense of the absence, silence and distance of God. It moves from plea to praise and shouts with victory and joy at the end. Every wrongful crucifixion will end in joyful resurrection and praise! Hallelujah! You may drop down in the dumps, but you don't have to stay there!

I John 4:7-21. Several years ago, this scripture was preached on. It is a clear enunciation, reiteration and celebration of the victorious Love of God which requires and demands justice and love among all human beings. If God is Love, there is no way but love to treat people in the church, in the family and in the world. We are made by love for love, because God is love.

John 15:1-8. The point here is the necessity and vitality of our human community, corporateness and connectedness. We are all connected together in the Love of God. Life, power and victory are all wrapped up in community, connectedness and corporate existence. We will all live together in the Vine of God, or we will all perish separately in the violence of greed. Our life is indeed in Christ. The church's community life and ministries of social justice are no more than cut branches to be tossed into the fire of futility, apart from the indwelling Christ who keeps us attached to God, to each other and to all humanity. What appropriate lessons for these times! Read, share and enjoy!