

ELCA Rostered Leaders Gathering, Atlanta, August 9, 2017



LSPS AUSTIN TX

Social Location: Hispanic/Latino/Mestizo/Hybrid Person from the U.S. - Mexico borderlands

- Baptized Lutheran
- Live in Liminal Space as a way of being in the world
- The place where I stand is a place I call: Interstice/To Stand Between
- Read the Bible through Hispanic/Latino/Mestizo/Hybrid eyes:
 - Santa Biblia: The Bible Through Hispanic Eyes by Dr. Justo Gonzalez
 - Cultural Lens/Perspective to the text
 - Exile
 - Diaspora
 - Displacement
 - Cultural Marginality (in the larger American story and church)
 - Cultural ambiguity: Who am I in this place/space/text/church?

Liminal Defined:

- relating to a transitional or initial stage of a process
- Occupying a position at, or on both sides of, a boundary or threshold
- “You’re not what you used to be; you’re not yet what you’re going to be.”
- The Space where we do Theology Together: ***Teología en Conjunto***

Interstice Defined:

- A [holy] space that [Spirit] intervenes between [persons] things
- A Gap or break in something continuous (life gaps: ministry)
- A Space Between two things as in the space in a border fence/wall

El Encuentro/El Acompañamiento: Acts 8:26-40

The Spirit sends Philip to the African Eunuch/other



Textual observations:

Ethnos/Gender/Faith Identity as Social Constructs

- Apostle Philip is preaching in Samaria when sent to the Eunuch
- Eunuch is African/Ethiopian (ethnos or people “other”); xenos
- Eunuch is a “Third Gender” (gender “other”)
- Eunuch by faith is a “Jewish convert” (proselyte “other”)
- Eunuch is an African Jew of the diaspora in Ethiopia (Sudan)
 - Castrated by choice to access power in the courts: “Treasurer of Candace”
 - Castrated by force to serve the powerful (as with slaves or family decision)
 - Castrated by choice for service in the reign of God (Jesus’ metaphor in Matthew: one chooses chastity/celibacy for complete devotion to service)
 - Factor in some “ambiguity” to the story ... we make assumptions of castration

Some More Textual Observations:

Two competing traditions within Acts:

1. Hellenist tradition: the acculturated Greek Jews tell the story of the first African convert to Christianity (we assume the eunuch is a convert to Judaism since he goes to worship in Jerusalem)
2. Hebrew Tradition (Chapter 10) tells the story of Cornelius as the first Roman/gentile convert to Christianity
3. At worship in Jerusalem, the eunuch would not have been allowed in the inner sanctum of the Temple, but would have remained in the court of the gentiles because of his "gender otherness;" He would remain "an outsider" and intentionally marginalized by the law and the religious authorities by virtue of his physical otherness and gender claims ... defile
4. Ethiopians today refer to the eunuch as "the first Ethiopian Christian"

“¡Un poquito más ... por favor! ”

Acts 8:4-8 Philip preaches in Samaria to great acclaim (signs and wonders followed his preaching ... and many were filled with joy)

Acts 8:10 Samaria "accepts the word of the Lord ..."

My Latino Lens goes into gear in Samaria ...

Samaria is the place of "otherness," of racial mixture of Jew and gentile dating back to the conquest by Assyria. It's the place where "mestizos" dwell, folks of a hybrid mixture who become "other" by conquest and subaltern identity. We have our own Samaria in the Southwest borderlands where mixture of ethnicity, culture, language, theology, gender and geo-political otherness marks the LATINX community of the LA south as "perpetual other," folks who live on the margins of the powerful, on the edges of the church and in the shadows of the community. We have heard FELIPE preaching "the good news" of God's acceptance of our "otherness" in our historic Samaritan wilderness ... "EL NOS CONOCE MUY BIEN!"

v. 31: ¡Dímelo Felipe!: Who is Isaiah talking about?



v. 8:29-35 Felipe preached the “good news” to “el/la otr@ ... Go down Philip! Let my people know!”

Borderland “other” folk understand where Felipe has been preaching in Samaria. He’s been crossing all kinds of borders: geo-political, cultural, theological, ethnic, linguistic, gender borders. Some time back Philip met the Samaritan woman speaking to Jesus at the well. That “other” woman with five husbands becomes the evangelist in a story full of otherness ... In a story of “encuentro/encounter”

Este Felipe, he understands “***nuestra gente***,” our border people ... he is familiar with the otherness of the Ethiopian eunuch because he has been sent to preach the good news to folks who live in hybrid spaces as a hybrid people...

“***Ni de aquí ni de allá***,” we like to say in Spanish ... We don’t belong over there and we don’t belong over here; **just like living along the U.S. Mexico border**
IT’S A CRAZY BI-NARY WORLD AND WE DON’T QUITE FIT IN IT! WE LIVE IN THE INTERSTICE OF LIFE, IN THE IN-BETWEEN SPACES, THIRD SPACES; LIMINAL SPACES

Border as Interstice – Third Space/My Space



The “Living Waters” of the Rio Grande: where Baptism Transcends Borders!



So what are the “good news” Philip tells us?

All the baptized are children of God, TOD@S! NO EXCEPTIONS!

The Gospel cannot be confined to a bi-nary world! It transcends it!

The Gospel is “AMISTAD con DIOS” in the Third Spaces of our communities

The Gospel crosses and transcends ALL borders of difference: cultural, ethnic, gender, geo-political, linguistic (¡Si SE PUEDE BAUTIZAR A TOD@S! All gender claims! In our Baptism, the Gospel affirms that all are created in the image and likeness of the Creator and affirms our God-given DIGNIDAD!

The Gospel is HOSPITALITY to the XENOS (¡ERES BIENVENIDO A TU CASA!) to the marginalized hybrid “other” of our communities: the gender “other,” the immigrant “other,” the Third Space “other,” the seeker of Dignidad ...

