

I. Intro

- A. Last week: Stephen; God blessed by keeping him faithful unto death.
- B. Today, we read the story of Philip, another deacon being faithful in LIFE.
 - 1. We'll see God lead him to Samaria and a hint of "the ends of the Earth."
 - 2. Will push pause on Acts after today, pick it up again beginning of 2023.
- C. Persecution: Expansion of the Gospel from Jerusalem to Judea and Samaria
 - 1. People tend to congregate and turn inward.
 - 2. It was persecution that God allowed for the outward expansion of the Gospel.
 - 3. The people of Jesus need these sometimes painful triggers to leave the nest.
- D. **The Kingdom of Jesus is a decentralized movement of obedient disciples.**
 - 1. Our modern church has been captive to a "come and see" model for far too long.
 - 2. Some have called it the "attractional" church. "Come see the cool things my church is doing."
 - 3. But in many ways it has become the "extractional" church. You're so busy here and most of your relationships are here. It extracts you from the place God has placed you to make disciples.
 - 4. Our gathering together as the family of Jesus is so important. It's where we praise God together, are encouraged, instructed and sent out TOGETHER. But it should not remove us from our place of mission.

II. Acts 8:4-13

Now those who were scattered went about preaching the word. Philip went down to the city of Samaria and proclaimed to them the Christ. And the crowds with one accord paid attention to what was being said by Philip, when they heard him and saw the signs that he did. For unclean spirits, crying out with a loud voice, came out of many who had them, and many who were paralyzed or lame were healed. So there was much joy in that city. But there was a man named Simon, who had previously practiced magic [this is the counterpoint to signs- signs point to something else, this magic points to Simon] in the city and amazed the people of Samaria, saying that he himself was somebody great. They all paid attention to him, from the least to the greatest, saying, "This man is the power of God that is called Great." And they paid attention to him because for a long time he had amazed them with his magic. But when they believed Philip as he preached good news about the Kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. Even Simon himself believed, and after being baptized he continued with Philip. And seeing signs and great miracles performed, he was amazed.

- A. Luke sets up a contrast between two men: similar but opposite.
 - 1. Both Philip and Simon amazed people.
 - 2. People paid attention to them both.
 - 3. Both Philip and Simon do works that are considered great. (signs and magic)
- B. But this mirror image of these two men is marked by a stark contrast. Did you notice?
 - 1. Simon's works and message spotlight himself—show himself as great (v. 9).

2. Philip's works and message spotlight JESUS as the center (v. 5, 12).
- C. In the story of Stephen's murder, his accusers set themselves up as clearly against Christ.
 1. But here, with Simon, we see someone who sets himself up as a FALSE Christ.
 2. He was doing miraculous works but with the intent of setting himself up as somebody great, perhaps even wanting to step into the Samaritans' conception of Messiah.
 3. Beware those whose teaching and works promote themselves. This is a sign of a false gospel and a preaching of a false Christ
- D. **A sign of genuine obedience to the mission is humble focus on Jesus.**
 1. Philip's intent was to show the greatness of Jesus, not himself.
 2. And the people of Samaria respond with faith, obedience in baptism, and joy!
- E. Does it make you wonder why the people in this "town of Samaria" were so quick to listen to this Philip's message? Especially when Simon had also done great things?
 1. Remember the Samaritan woman Jesus spoke to at the well? (John 4: 39-41)
 2. Jesus planted the Gospel in Samaria, the Samaritan woman whose name we don't even know watered it, and Philip, a common but faithful follower of Jesus, later came and brought an even greater harvest.
- F. **Jesus' mission will be accomplished by a Kingdom of obedient, Spirit-filled "priests," not "professionals."**
 1. The days of "bring your friends to church and let the 'professional' pastors do the work" are over. That is not you obeying Jesus' command to make disciples.
 2. YOU are the priests who are called to go out, into where you live, bringing the Gospel of Jesus and watching God bring in the harvest.
 3. This is not to discourage you from inviting friends to church. It's just to encourage you that nine times out of ten, that's not how the Holy Spirit will move in their lives. He's going to do that through your love and your proclamation of Jesus to them.
 4. In Scripture, we see the Kingdom of Jesus expand, NOT when people congregate in, but when they obediently move OUT.
 5. Believers gathering together is SO important, but this is not mainly where we see more people becoming disciples of Jesus. It is when we SCATTER (together!) that Jesus' Kingdom expands.
 6. And so, being sent out, let us take a moment to consider some values and warnings concerning our mission

III. Acts 8:14-25

Now when the apostles at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent to them Peter and John, who came down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit, for He had not yet fallen on any of them, but they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then they laid their hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit. Now when Simon saw that the Spirit was given through the laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered them money, saying, "Give me this power also, so that anyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit." But Peter said to him, "May your silver perish with you, because you thought you could obtain the gift of God with money! You have neither part nor lot in this matter, for your heart is not right before God. Repent, therefore, of this wickedness of yours, and pray to the Lord that, if possible, the intent of your heart may be

forgiven you. *For I see that you are in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity.*” And Simon answered, “Pray for me to the Lord, that nothing of what you have said may come upon me.” Now when they had testified and spoken the word of the Lord, they returned to Jerusalem, preaching the Gospel to many villages of the Samaritans.

- A. Hearing about the work of God in Samaria, the church in Jerusalem sent Peter and John to support the work there. I love the “working together” we see here. The church didn’t want Philip running solo, but wanted to support, advise, and shore him up with a team.
- B. And arriving, the Apostles find that the Holy Spirit hasn’t yet “fallen” on them.
 - 1. This can cause some confusion. They believed but didn’t have the Holy Spirit?
 - 2. In the book of Acts, there seems to be at least a few sequences in which the Holy Spirit arrives to believers.
 - 3. Acts 2: The original believers are praying and He comes.
 - 4. Later in Acts 2: Peter preaches, calls them to believe, then be baptized, then receive the Holy Spirit.
 - 5. Here, Acts 8: Believe, baptized, but not filled until Apostles pray, lay on hands
 - 6. Acts 9: Saul is converted, repenting, and Ananias, a non-Apostle comes to lay his hands on Paul to receive the Holy Spirit.
 - 7. Acts 10: Peter preaching to first full-Gentile group at Cornelius’s house: While Peter is in the middle of preaching, the Holy Spirit fills these Gentiles and AFTER that they are baptized.
- C. In Acts, we don’t see a normative sequence established of belief, baptism and Holy Spirit filling. Rather, we see a sequence that demands the original Apostles to be there to, bare minimum, OBSERVE IT.
 - 1. So it seems likely that this delay in receiving the Spirit was not normative but rather for the sake of confirmation to these Jewish Apostles that the mission/calling/filling was truly for all peoples and happening in all peoples, even Samaritans and Gentiles.
 - 2. Notice that Peter and John preach in all the villages as they head back.
 - a. The Apostles hadn’t yet preached in non-Jewish areas yet.
 - b. This delayed Holy-Spirit-filling emboldens Peter and John to widen their audience.
 - 3. Another possible issue is that the Samaritan believers had only been baptized in Jesus’ name, not the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
 - a. Perhaps this is again, a non-normative, sequence of Spirit-Filling for the sake of correcting the baptism practice?
 - b. This seems to be confirmed in Acts 19 with Paul in Ephesus.
 - 4. Nevertheless, the Samaritans receive the Holy Spirit and Simon the magician sees this happen and is amazed.
- D. I think it’s interesting that back up in v. 13, Luke connects Simon’s “belief” and baptism and amazement to seeing the signs Philip performed.
 - 1. With the other Samaritans, the belief, amazement, and joy ladder up to Philip’s proclamation of *Jesus*.
 - 2. But Simon’s response seems to ladder up to the works Philip performed.
 - 3. Perhaps this gives us a glimpse into what Simon was believing and actually after: not Jesus Himself, but the powers he might gain through Him.

4. And so, in my estimation, Simon sees this ability to give the Holy Spirit as an opportunity to increase his earning potential.
 - a. “Magicians” in those days earned their living by selling spells, charms, and magical feats.
 - b. And so Simon offers to buy the ability to fill people with the Holy Spirit, completely unconnected from belief in Jesus.
 - c. Another possibility is that Simon, with his eye on the goal of being seen as the Samaritan messiah, sees this ability as necessary to complete the picture.
 - E. But, as Simon will learn: **The Gospel and the filling of the Spirit are not commodities or products, they are gifts.**
 1. When you see a preacher or religious leader seeking to or becoming rich by way of his message, run the other way.
 2. Peter reacts very strongly.
 - a. He piles on hyperlinks to the Old Testament using key phrases, showing that like the pagans of old, Simon has evil intentions to glorify and enrich himself at the expense of the poor and powerless. This is a great injustice. (See Isaiah 58, especially)
 - b. And this brings up a very important point: *What you do is important. WHY you do it is even MORE important.*
 - F. **Our motives matter. The desire for power (and wealth) is corrosive.**
 1. As we obey Jesus’ mission to make disciples, we must constantly be checking our motives.
 2. Across the world, we have seen Christian leader after leader after leader fall because of the slow-fade of motives and we are certainly not immune.
 3. This is what happens when our influence outpaces our character.
 - G. *The mission of Jesus will not be accomplished by professional people with a selfish agenda, but by humble, regular people, obedient and filled with the Holy Spirit who want to see nothing more or less than King Jesus worshiped. Seek to be THAT person.*
- IV. Acts 8:26-40

Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip, “Rise and go toward the south to the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza.” This is a desert place. And he rose and went. And there was an Ethiopian, a eunuch, a court official of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who was in charge of all her treasure. He had come to Jerusalem to worship and was returning, seated in his chariot, and he was reading the prophet Isaiah. And the Spirit said to Philip, “Go over and join this chariot.” So Philip ran to him and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet and asked, “Do you understand what you are reading?” And he said, “How can I, unless someone guides me?” And he invited Philip to come up and sit with him. 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 before its shearer is silent, so He opens not his mouth. In His humiliation justice was denied Him. Who can describe His generation? For His life is taken away from the Earth.” And the eunuch said to Philip, “About whom, I ask you, does the prophet say this, about himself or about someone else?” Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning with this Scripture he told him the good news about Jesus. And as they were going along the road they came to some water, and the eunuch said, “See, here is water! What prevents me from being

baptized?” And he commanded the chariot to stop, and they both went down into the water, Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him. And when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord carried Philip away, and the eunuch saw him no more, and went on his way rejoicing. But Philip found himself at Azotus, and as he passed through he preached the Gospel to all the towns until he came to Caesarea.

- A. If we zoom OUT from this passage and look at both chapters 7 and 8 together, we can see a theme that Luke is trying to highlight.
1. In Chapter 7, with Stephen’s sham trial and execution, we see in Stephen’s words and actions, an echo of Jesus’ words and actions on the cross.
 2. In Chapter 8, with Philip’s story here with the Ethiopian, we see in Philip’s words and actions, an echo of Jesus’ post-resurrection conversation with two disciples on the road to Emmaus.
 - a. Traveling along a road
 - b. An explanation of the Scriptures
 - c. Connecting the Old Testament Scriptures with Jesus’ death/resurrection
 - d. Sudden disappearance.
 3. Luke envisions Jesus’ church following in His footsteps, doing the things He did and finishing His mission.
- B. Now zoom back in: the unique details of this specific passage, with the Samaritans and with the Ethiopian man has a distinct flavor about it: expansion and inclusion
1. The Holy Spirit is leading the church to step outside of the context that it was born in and bring this Gospel to ethnicities that had always been considered outsiders.
 2. Samaritans, as we know, were seen by Jews as “less than” because of their mixed heritage and yet they respond to Jesus and are filled with the Holy Spirit.
 3. The Ethiopian Eunuch, a man who is *doubly an outsider*
 - a. He’s fully gentile and has been castrated for his line of work.
 - b. This was most likely a black man, serving a very important woman in the Nubian royalty. (Candace likely a royal title, for the wife or mother of the king, not a name. Nubia is actually modern-day Sudan, but referred to as Ethiopia in Greek.)
 - c. Though he seems to be a worshiper or at least admirer of the Jewish God, Yahweh, he would have been prohibited from becoming a full Jewish convert or to pass the court of the gentiles in the temple because of his castration.
 - d. And yet, here’s an angel and the Holy Spirit leading Philip by the hand to have an encounter with just this one man.
 - e. And the man is reading Isaiah 53! Did you see what Isaiah 53 says?
 - 1) It is a direct prophecy about the suffering of God’s servant. It’s about Jesus!
 - 2) And Philip, knowing the Scriptures very well, is able to trace the lines from this Scripture to Jesus Himself. And the man believes.
 - f. God used extravagant means and a prepared and willing disciple to reach this one man from the “ends of the Earth.”
 - g. Then he asks a sincere question: “What prevents me from being baptized?”
 - 1) “Philip, I’ve been on the outside of Judaism, trying to get in.”
 - 2) “You tell me about this Jewish Messiah, Jesus, and I believe.”

- 3) "But am I still on the outside? What prevents me from being included?"
 - 4) God's implicit answer is "Nothing." This is a powerful statement of God's intentions of inclusion for all people who would repent, trust, and follow Jesus.
- h. **The Gospel of Jesus is for all who would believe. Never count anyone out.**
- C. Two important things to be used by God: *willingness* and *readiness*
1. Are you willing to leave the days of "My church will accomplish the mission" behind? (Not that all of us are or have been in this mindset.)
 2. Are you willing to accomplish Jesus' mission at any cost?
 3. And when you do obey, are you ready? Do you know how to prepare? Do you know what Scripture says? Do you know how to hear the Holy Spirit's voice to be guided each step of the way? Do you know who you'll be on mission with?
- V. How do I prepare myself for mission?
- A. **Draw near to Jesus. Know the Scriptures. Live with God's family. Obey the Holy Spirit.**
- B. Looking at that list you're probably thinking the same thing I'm thinking: All those things take time. They don't happen overnight.
1. "Go slow to go fast."
 - a. But there is a difference between going slow and procrastinating.
 - b. Procrastination is trusting future "YOU" to start what you need to start.
 - c. But the problem is that if present "YOU" is not willing to start, present "YOU" will turn into future "YOU" and future "YOU" will not be trustworthy to start because nothing has changed.
 2. We may need to go slow to go fast, but the operative word is GO!
 - a. Deep time with Jesus and His word EVERY DAY.
 - b. Learning to hear His voice and obey it.
 - c. Being part of a gospel family (small group, home group) to be encouraged, prepared, and sent out for mission *where you are*.
- C. Gospel Families (Home groups and discipleship groups)
1. We need more groups, and our groups need facilitators.
 2. This may be a very natural first step in obedience for you.
 3. Pastor Chris will be in the Welcome Center to have a conversation.