

## “Thankful for Salvation” Acts 8:26-40

**Idea:** What is it that brings sinners into communion and fellowship with Holy God?

**Intro:** This month we have been looking at what we can and should be thankful for as Christ-followers. We are thankful for the church, the gospel, and the mission. These three blessings might not be what we usually think of while giving thanks on Thanksgiving, but they should be. This morning we are thankful for a fourth blessing...salvation.

The Bible says that Jesus came to seek and to save the lost (Luke 19:10). Who are the lost? The Bible says that we are all lost. We have all sinned and fallen short of God’s glory (Rom 3:23); we’ve rejected His design. Therefore, Jesus, God the Son, came to make a way for rebellious sinners to come into fellowship and communion with Holy God. How does that happen? The thought of a hater of God being embraced and welcomed into the family of God is unimaginable. It is a farce! Yet sinners being sought out and redeemed by God is the metanarrative, the grand story, of Scripture. It is the theme of the whole of the Bible.

Today, as we prepare ourselves as believers and followers of Jesus Christ to participate in the Lord’s Supper or communion, we would do well to remember what this meal is. In the Old Testament we discover that the people of Israel routinely held sacred assemblies or official occasions whereby God’s people collectively gathered together to worship the Lord, to repent of personal and corporate sin, to remember God’s blessings on them, and to anticipate future blessings. Sacred assemblies were times for God’s people to confess and repent of sin. They were times to renew the covenant relationship with the Lord and return to Him in faithful love and obedience. They were times for worship and sacrifice, feasting and fasting. God’s people like us today, had a tendency to stray from the Lord and His Word. Sacred assemblies were also opportunities for them to remember and celebrate God’s gracious activity in their lives.

The Lord’s Supper is a ceremonial meal whereby we remember and celebrate the grace of God in our lives. In it we reflect upon Jesus’ great sacrifice and the price He paid to bring us into fellowship with God the Father. What is it that brings sinners into communion and fellowship with Holy God?

**Inquiry:** We find the answer to this question in Acts 8. In this passage Philip is directed to go to a certain place by the Holy Spirit. When he arrived, Philip found a court official from Ethiopia who had been to Jerusalem to worship. He was seeking God. When Philip approached the man, he discovered he was reading from Isaiah 53. From this text Philip preached the gospel to the man.

Read Acts 8:29-31, 35-38.

Philip told the Ethiopian that God created Him for Himself. He explained that God had a design for his life, and he told him that if he would live within that design then he would experience all the blessings God wanted to give him. Unfortunately, the Ethiopian, like you and I, had rejected God’s design. His rejection was sin, and sin separates one from God. The man’s sin and separation from God created brokenness in his life. I can see the Ethiopian nodding his head as he realized the brokenness in his life. He had gone to Jerusalem to seek the God of the Jews in an attempt to fix his brokenness. Philip

explained that God uses the brokenness to get man's attention, to create a desire for something more. Philip told him there was nothing he could do to fix the brokenness, but there was something that God had done to fix it. Philip told the man that Isaiah spoke of the Messiah who would come to fix his brokenness and cleanse his sin. This is the good news of the Bible. Philip explained that Jesus Christ is God the Son who came to earth in order to die a sacrificial death. He was crucified on the cross, buried in a tomb, but on the third day Jesus rose from the dead. Now, because of His sacrifice and resurrection, he could be forgiven of all sin and recover God's design for his life. Philip told the man that knowing what Jesus had done was not enough; he had to repent of his sin and believe on Jesus.

The Ethiopian man immediately desired to repent of his sin and place his faith in Jesus. He wanted to completely identify with Jesus, which is illustrated by his desire to be baptized. So that day, a high ranking court official from Ethiopia heard the gospel, placed his faith in Jesus, and publicly identified with Christ through baptism.

What is it that brings sinners into communion and fellowship with Holy God? The atoning sacrifice of Jesus on the cross and His resurrection from the dead is the only thing that brings rebellious sinners into relationship with God. And the Lord's Supper is a beautiful picture of the gracious sacrifice of Christ for us. The bread represents the body of Jesus that bore our sin. The Bible says that as sinners we are all condemned and under the wrath of God the Father (Rom 8). Jesus, however, on the cross took our sin upon Himself. He experienced the full wrath of God as the Father exhausted His fury against our sin. The wine represents the blood of Jesus that was shed for sin. The Bible says that *without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins* (Heb 9:22). He died on our behalf as a sacrificial lamb. Because of the atoning death of Jesus Christ our sins, which are like scarlet, are made white as snow. Though they are red like crimson, they become like wool (Isaiah 1:18).

How should we approach this communion meal?

### **1. In Relationship with Jesus.**

When Paul addresses the Corinthians' abuse of the Lord's Supper in 1 Corinthians 11, he is speaking to believers. The Lord's Supper is reserved for those who are in relationship with Jesus Christ. It is not a religious ritual meal whereby you can please God. It is a meal of remembrance whereby you are confronted with the reality of sin and of a Savior. It is meant to lead you to a place of celebration and sanctification. That cannot happen if you have not yet come to the place of confession and repentance of sin.

### **2. In Identification with Jesus.**

When the Ethiopian eunuch responded to the gospel in faith, the first thing he wanted to do was publicly identify with Jesus through baptism. The early church knew nothing of a person's profession of faith apart from publicly identifying through baptism. Many times they were simultaneous. Today, we have separated them, to our fault, in response to other denominations that teach salvation comes through the act of baptism. In doing so, we have devalued the need for baptism in the life of the believer.

Why are we baptized? It is the public demonstration of an inward change in a person's life. It pictures the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ as well as the death, burial, and resurrection of the believer.

Therefore, since the early church baptized believers when they placed their faith in Christ and practiced the Lord's Supper, we today should approach the Lord's Supper as a baptized follower of Jesus Christ, fully identified with Christ.

### 3. In Fellowship with Jesus.

Read 1 Cor 11:27-32. Paul warned the Corinthian believers to not approach the Lord's Supper in an unworthy manner. He warns us to not partake in the meal if we have unconfessed sin that we are holding onto. We should examine ourselves. Are there actions, habits, and strongholds in my life that need to be confessed to Jesus and repented of?

By not doing this, we bring judgment upon ourselves.

**Conclusion:** Today, we are thankful for salvation purchased for us by Jesus Christ upon the cross. Are you in relationship with Jesus Christ? Have you knowingly and willingly repented of your sin and placed your faith in Jesus? If not, what would hold you back from doing that today?

Have you identified with Jesus through baptism? Some of you might have been baptized as a child and then later became a follower of Jesus. If you have not been baptized post-conversion, then you need to follow the example of the Ethiopian and be baptized. Baptism always follows salvation. It never precedes it.

Are you in fellowship with Jesus? Is there sin that you are holding onto? Why not confess it, forsake it, and receive forgiveness?

Give an invitation.

We are a covenant body of Christ that takes both our relationship with Jesus and community with one another seriously. We celebrate all that Jesus has done in us, and we celebrate the covenant we share with one another. We don't believe we are here by chance. Instead, by grace, God has brought us together so that we might express the life of Christ before a watching world. If you agree with that say, "Amen."

Fence the table for the Lord's Supper.

Observe the Lord's Supper