

Do you have something that you can't live without? The answer of course is yes, but the answer might not always be the same.

If you are a construction worker, you might feel that you can't live without your tools because without them you can't do your job. If you are a doctor you might feel that you can't live without your knowledge of the human body because without it, you can't really help someone.

This conversation can go even deeper especially when we start talking about people. Spouses can't live without each other because together they make a marriage good. Parents can't live without their children and vice versa because they complete their lives.

Jesus, in the Gospel lesson, tells us that ultimately if we had to pick one thing or person we can't live without, that person would be him. Without him we truly have nothing because we don't have what we need in the forgiveness of sins, eternal life in heaven, and a reason for living here on earth.

When Jesus is out of the picture everything becomes empty, including God's Word. God's Word without Jesus really can't save you and give you what Jesus can give, as we will see in the lesson from Acts. But, when Jesus is the center of God's Word then we have everything we need which allows the joy of Easter to march on in our lives every day.

The time after Jesus' resurrection and ascension were exciting times for the church. While they were always prepared to be persecuted they were privileged to witness some incredible sights and victories in mission work. At this time in the history of the church the people of God had started phase two of Jesus' plan of action.

Before Jesus ascended into heaven he told his disciples that they would be his witnesses in Jerusalem and Judea, then they were to go to Samaria, and then to the ends of the earth. The disciples had been doing great work in Jerusalem and Judea but now it was time to expand. With Saul persecuting the church at the time many of the disciples found themselves front and center of this expansion.

That is when we here more about Philip. Philip was first mentioned when the disciples were looking for help in serving the people of Jerusalem. Philip was one of the helpers chosen along with the man named Stephan who became the first martyr of the early church. After Stephan's death Philip went to Samaria and preached the word of God in Samaria bringing many people to faith.

The Lord now had another mission for Philip. He was now going to enter phase three of Jesus' mission: he was to reach out to the rest of the world. He was sent to preach to an Ethiopian eunuch who was treasurer for the Queen of Ethiopia. This eunuch was a God-fearing man. We are shown that to be true by what we learn about this man. He is coming back from going to Jerusalem to worship at the Temple. He was someone who was willing to go long distances for worship when it was necessary. We also see him reading God's Word out loud as he traveled in his chariot.

We are told that he was reading from Isaiah where Isaiah is speaking about the "Servant of the Lord" who would save the world from sin by being punished. However, the eunuch didn't understand what Isaiah was talking about. He needed help connecting the dots. That is why Philip was sent to him by the Holy Spirit.

Philip showed him Jesus through this passage because that was who Isaiah was writing about. When the eunuch learned about Jesus he came to faith and was baptized. Despite going to church, following God's Law about when to travel to Jerusalem, and reading Scripture, this man didn't know about God's plan of salvation and therefore didn't have salvation. The eunuch was missing Jesus and therefore didn't have joy. He didn't know he was saved. He didn't know that he was forgiven.

Jesus tells us in the Gospel of John that he is the true vine and without him we can't do anything good and that is because without him we don't have anything that makes us good. Without Jesus we are still sinners bent on serving ourselves and not God because we are God's enemies. This is true even if we read God's Word and go to church. If we don't believe that Jesus is the savior, then our church going, and bible reading mean nothing.

Without Jesus the Bible becomes for us only a guide book on how to get to heaven. It becomes a book that tells us what we have to do to please our God. What then is our motivation if we have God's Word but leave out our Savior? Our motivation is fear.

We then only worship because God says we must. We give our offerings or God will be angry at us. We invite people to church because we will feel guilty if we don't. We are nice to people because that is what we are supposed to do. We stay away from drunkenness, adultery, gossip, anger, or theft, because if we fall into these things we will go to hell.

Unfortunately, if our motivation is fear, we will still go to hell because our best is not good enough. If we look at God's Word as a rule book on how to get to heaven we have left out Jesus and we are not connected to the vine who is the only one who can bring us to heaven.

Do you look at God's Word like a rule book? Do you do what God wants because you have to? Do you read God's Word and say I'm only doing this because this is what God wants? Do you abstain from sinful activities not because you want to but because you are afraid of what God might do to you?

Then you are not connected to the vine and the joy of Easter isn't yours. When we leave Jesus out of God's Word and out of our lives our works will never be good, our salvation will never be achieved, heaven really isn't our home, and we have no reason for joy. Without Jesus our salvation is up to us and we will never get it.

The eunuch knew that God's Word was important and that going to church in Jerusalem was right, but he didn't know why? It wasn't until he was connected to Jesus did he realize why everything was important. He found the true motivation, love.

When we are connected to the vine we will not see the Bible as a book of rules telling us what to do. We will instead, see it as a love letter about how God saved you from your sins and as a guide on how to say, "Thank you," for that love because we love our God too.

We serve our God out of love for him because of his great love for us. We can't help but do good works and follow our God when we are connected to the love God showers on us through Jesus' work of salvation.

When we are filled with love from Jesus our vine, we will go to church, so we can hear more about Jesus' and how he saved us. We will give our offerings because we don't ever want this truth to be silent. We will tell others because we want the whole world to know their Savior. We will stay away from sin because we want to give glory to God and keep ourselves from breaking his heart.

Philip connected the eunuch to Jesus and the words of Isaiah became everything to him. No longer did he wonder what the prophet meant but he saw his savior at work. He saw his sins being forgiven. He then wanted to receive all the blessings Jesus' resurrection gives us and so he too wanted to be baptized.

Don't let the joy of Easter ever leave you. Don't let Jesus leave your life. Jesus is our everything. He is the one person or thing we need in our lives because he and only he gives us everything. When Christ is at the center of his word and our lives then everything in God's Word will be beautiful because everything he says comes from the one who saved you from your sins and doesn't want anything to keep you from receiving your inheritance in heaven. Amen.