

Around The Table: Thoughts of Thanksgiving-Part II

As we think about the table in the home, we think about family, friends and fellowship. Last week we ended with this thought: the table conveys acceptance. The illustration was given of the mom and dad who accepted their son after years of incarceration. He was welcomed home! That is the point we desire to make next.

2. The table says I'm home.

"Thy wife shall be as a fruitful vine by the sides of thine house: thy children like olive plants round about thy table" (Psalm 128:3). Around this time of the year we will hear these words with music being played over sound systems in the stores, malls and other public places, "I'll be home for Christmas; You can count on me. Please have some snow and mistletoe and presents by the tree. Christmas Eve will find me where the love light gleams. I'll be home for Christmas if only in my dreams. If only in my dreams." Bing Crosby recorded *I'll Be Home for Christmas* in 1943 and it instantly topped the charts as the one of America's most popular holiday songs. It touched the hearts of the soldiers and civilians alike who were still going through World War II. In December 1965, when the astronauts Frank Borman and James Lovell were returning to earth after setting a record for the longest flight in the U.S. space program aboard Gemini 7 spacecraft, they requested this carol to be played for them. Truly home is where the heart is. Think with me of young families traveling through the night arriving in the wee hours of the morning to Grandmother's house for Christmas. Everyone beds down quickly upon arrival. You are awakened by the smells of brewing coffee and hot cocoa. You get up, embrace the family and sit down at the table for a quick breakfast. Presents are opened and it's back to the table for Christmas dinner! Dad says to his mom, "Where do we sit?" And Grandmother says, "Sit where you always sit." After all the table says, "You're home!"

3. Absence from the table says I'm in trouble.

There is not a person reading these words who has not experienced in past childhood sobering, serious moments when due to misbehavior, a firm parent has ordered you or your siblings from the table and to your room. Being sent from the table was deprivation of the delicious food that had been prepared, but even more, it was a deprivation of the fellowship of the family. Absence from the table meant broken fellowship. The church in Corinth had developed a haughty attitude over the fleshly sins among some of her members. It was exemplified and sadly illustrated in her attitude toward the matter of a sick, incestuous sin known by the membership and her refusal to address it. I appreciate the way the Authorized Version of our English Bible expresses the Apostle's discontent with Corinth's complacency. He says, *"And ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you"* (I Corinthians 5:2). word translated "puffed up" is from the Greek word, "phusioo" used in the primary sense of blowing; to inflate, i.e. (figuratively) make proud (haughty). The expression, "puffed up" is the perfect translation. It comes to us from Elizabethan era in which the King James Version was written. It was the act of adjusting sleeve or other part of a garment gathered so as to have a rounded shape. Imagine the proud, wealthy person who wanted, by his or her clothes, to flaunt how much more they had than the commoners. It was their desire to parade their excess money to purchase excess cloth and pay tailors to the excess. In a final act of preparation as they walked into public, they would puff their excess cloth by pulling at the sleeves in such a way to be obviously seen. So Paul was rebuking the church at Corinth for not taking church discipline against the perpetrators of this well know sin. In I Corinthians 5:9-11 in Apostolic authority, Paul's de grace says, *"I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators: Yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters; for then must ye needs go out of the world. But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a*

railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat” Paul was telling the church, send these disobedient children from the table. When the church was gathered for the Lord’s Supper, they were to dis-invite the disobedient members. It was a severe visual aid.

It should be noted, the child chooses the course of presumptuous sinning against the grace of the parent. If the child is repentant, they are permitted back to the table. Understand, God’s love and attitude never changes. He is God, He changes not and absolutely nothing will deprive a child of God from His love (Malachi 3:6; Romans 8:38,39). In Hannah Whitehall Smith’s classic, The Christian’s Secret to a Happy Life, she says, “There are times in our lives when delirium makes us utterly unaware of the presence of our most careful and tender nurses. A child in delirium will cry out in anguish for its mother, and will harrow her heart by its piteous lamentations and appeals, when all the while she is holding its fevered hand, and bathing its aching head, and caring for it with all the untold tenderness of a mother’s love. The darkness of disease has hidden the mother from the child, but has not hidden the child from the mother.

“We are told in our Psalm that He “besets” our path. We have some of us known what it was to be “beset” by unwelcome and unpleasant people or things. But we never have thought, perhaps, that we were beset by God, that He loves us so that He cannot leave us alone, and that no coldness nor rebuffs on our parts can drive Him away. Yet it is gloriously true!”

As we said in Pastor’s Word last week, the table says we are accepted. That will not change, but behavior can cause us to be removed from nourishment and fellowship. God’s action and His command for other obedient Christians to take action are never to drive us away, but always to bring us back!

4. The table is the place needs are met.

“Yea, they spake against God; they said, Can God furnish a table in the wilderness?” (Psalm 78:19). There is a painting that Norman Rockwell painted in 1943 that will forever be etched in my memory. It is entitled, Freedom From Want. It was one of the series Rockwell painted which was inspired by a speech from President Roosevelt during World War II, The Four Freedoms: Freedom of Speech, of Worship, from Want, From Fear. In the painting, Freedom From Want, we see a precious old matriarch bringing a huge turkey to a beautifully and traditionally set table. The table is surrounded by beaming family members - glad to be there and happy to partake of the feast, in total absence of want. We are reminded of the promise of God that says, *“I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread”* (Psalm 37:25). The table says our needs are met.

I Timothy 6:8 says, *“And having food and raiment let us be therewith content.”* Many in our country suffer from “affluenza.” It has become so critical that we recognize some have developed a higher strain of affluenza, H1N1: “Have One, Need One.” Remember, God promised to supply all our need, not our greed (Philippians 4:19).

5. The table is the place we say good-bye and hello.

“And he sent Peter and John, saying, Go and prepare us the passover, that we may eat” (Luke 22:8). *“And he said unto them, With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer: For I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God”* (Luke 22:15,16). *“And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me; That ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom...”* (Luke 22:29,30). This was the induction of the Lord’s Supper, often called the Lord’s Table or The Last Supper. Our Lord was saying good-bye

at the table. And His promise was they will be together again; guess where? At the table! Even so, come, Lord Jesus!

I challenge you in this blessed season of the year to cherish those times at the table. We may never know when we will be doing so for the last time. I believe this is why for us, as our kids were growing up, the supper table was our favorite place for family devotions.

- Pastor Pope -

[**Back to Pastor's Word**](#)