

THE TALKING TABLE

Thanksgiving is a time of turkey, dressing, cranberry sauce, ham, yams, green bean casserole, peas, corn and pumpkin pie.

When you begin to search the Scriptures it is amazing how much is said and done around the table or eating. Revelation 19:9 says, "And He saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And He saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God." We read in Luke 14:16, 17, "Then said He unto him, A certain man made a great supper, and bade many: And sent his servant at supper time to say to them that were bidden, Come; for all things are now ready."

A. The table is where we find provision.

When God led the children of Israel out of Egypt into the Promised Land, He did so with the initiation of the Passover Meal. Exodus 12:7 and 8 record the event: "And they shall take of the blood, and strike it on the two side posts and on the upper door post of the houses, wherein they shall eat it. And they shall eat the flesh in that night, roast with fire, and unleavened bread; and with bitter herbs they shall eat it." We find when the Israelites were in the wilderness that God fed them with manna for forty years. The Bible tells us, "Then said the LORD unto Moses, Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you..." (Leviticus 16:4). "And the house of Israel called the name thereof Manna: and it was like coriander seed, white; and the taste of it was like wafers made with honey" (Exodus 16:31). Psalm 78:19: "Yea, they spake against God; they said, Can God furnish a table in the wilderness?" The answer to that question is most certainly, God can! There is a painting that Norman Rockwell painted in 1943 that will forever be etched in my memory, entitled, "Freedom From Want." It was one in a 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 (Philippians 4:19).

B. The table is where we find fellowship.

The evening before our Lord died He said, "For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come" (I Corinthians 11:26).

Jesus said, “Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me” (Romans 3:20).

“O taste and see that the LORD is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him” (Psalm 34:8). After Jesus rose from the dead, he called the disciples from their diversionary fishing expedition by preparing fish and bread and issuing a call. John 21:12 reads, “Jesus saith unto them, Come and dine....” I believe all of us should “dine” with Jesus. We will find the Lord will bless us in His presence and stir our memories and set our palate for the things of God.

C. The table is where we find encouragement.

Under the command of God, Elijah was told to go to the Brook Cherith. “And it shall be, that thou shalt drink of the brook; and I have commanded the ravens to feed thee there” (I Kings 17:4).

A great example of encouragement at the table is found in the story of Mephibosheth, the son of Jonathan. He was the lame prince living in seclusion and rejection. David, the king sought him out and brought him to his palace and the Bible says in II Samuel 9:13, “So Mephibosheth dwelt in Jerusalem: for he did eat continually at the king’s table; and was lame on both his feet.”

I. THE TABLE SAYS I’M ACCEPTED.

The first time the word “table” is mentioned in the Bible is in Exodus 25:23 which says, “Thou shalt also make a table of shittim wood: two cubits shall be the length thereof, and a cubit the breadth thereof, and a cubit and a half the height thereof” (Exodus 25:23). The revelation of this table came to Moses at the same time God gave him the Ten Commandants, “And look that thou make them (the Tabernacle furniture) after their pattern, which was shewed thee in the (Exodus 25:40).

The law was given to set a moral standard and create civility in an uncivil and fallen world. The law also shows us that we have sinned and need a Savior. Paul said, “...I had not known sin, but by the law...” (Romans 7:7). “For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me” (Romans 7:11). Thanks be to God, in the same revelation of the law, God also gave us the Tabernacle, which was the way back to God. It was here God explained in detail about the sacrifices, the altar and the mercy seat, in other words, the way back to God. Among the artifacts of the Tabernacle was this Table of Shewbread. God was saying, come back to Me. Come back to fellowship. He was saying, as long as the blood has been shed for your sins, we can talk. Now Christ has died once for all for our sins and through Him we can sit at the table for fellowship. “To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved” (Ephesians 1:6).

II. ABSENCE FROM THE TABLE SAYS I’M IN TROUBLE.

Paul rebuked the church at Corinth for not taking church discipline against the perpetrators of well known sin. In I Corinthians 5:9-11 in Apostolic authority, Paul 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 disinvite the disobedient members. It was a severe visual aid.

III. 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). Soon we will be hearing seasonal songs in stores, malls and other public places. One of my favorites says, "I'll be home for Christmas; you can count on me. Please have snow and mistletoe and presents on the tree. Christmas Eve will find me where the love light gleams. I'll be home for Christmas, if only in my dreams." Bing Crosby recorded I'll Be Home for Christmas in 1943 and it instantly topped the charts as one of America's most popular holiday songs. It touched the hearts of 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 the 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 Thanksgiving or Christmas. Everyone beds down quickly upon arrival. They are awakened by the smells of brewing coffee and hot cocoa. They get up, embrace the family and sit down at the table for breakfast. Then it's back to the table for dinner! Dad says to his mother, "Where do we sit?" And Grandmother says, "Sit where you always sit." After all, the table says, "You're home!"

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Johnny Pope". The signature is written in dark ink and has a long, sweeping tail that extends to the right.