

TABLE TALK

December 2, 2018



“Go Tell It On the Mountain”

Scripture: Luke 2:8-11, 16-18

People Need Christ to be reconciled with God

Monday Dec 3, 2018 Romans 5:1-11

Why do people need Christ? The apostle Paul laid out a central reason to the Christians in Rome: people need Christ because he lived, died and rose again to reconcile us to God. Being reconciled to God does not just mean “fire insurance.” It opens us to a quality of life in which we see even problems differently, knowing that “trouble produces endurance, endurance produces character, and character produces hope” (verses 3-4).

- Paul expanded on “peace with God” when he told Timothy, “this saying...deserves full acceptance: ‘Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners’—and I’m the biggest sinner of all. But this is why I was shown mercy, so that Christ Jesus could show his endless patience to me first of all” (I Timothy 1:15-18). How has guilt, an inner fear of being undeserving before God and people, robbed you of peace? How have you opened (or how can you open) your heart to the inner peace Christ offers?
- Paul was trained as a Jewish rabbi (Acts 22:3). Rabbis used a rhetorical form known by the Hebrew words *qal wahomer*, or “How much more...” In verse 10, Paul used that form to say, in effect, “If Christ was willing to die for us, how much more sure can we be that he will stay with us and strengthen us for our daily life?” In what ways do you depend on Christ’s presence with you every day? How might it lighten your “spiritual load” to count on that more completely?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, thank you for your willingness to die for me before I was even born, and to draw my heart to you. Thank you for staying with me to guide me into your kind of life. Amen.

People need Christ to find their identity as God’s children

Tuesday Dec 4, 2018 John 1:9-18, 3:16-17

People need Christ’s salvation and reconciliation for the present as well as the future. John wrote that in Christ we can find our true identity. Christ, who was God, “authorized us” to become God’s children. As we claim that identity, we realize that God is on our side, and find that as God’s children we can live a life filled with grace and truth.

- John wrote the prologue to his gospel as poetry, not prose. *The Message* paraphrases the powerful poetry of verse 12 as “whoever did want him, who believed he was who he claimed and would do what he said, He made to be their true selves, their child-of-God selves.” In what ways have you discovered your “child-of-God-self” since you began following Christ? How have those discoveries deepened and enriched your life?
- John also knew the sad reality that many people, then and now, turned away from the light Jesus brought into the world. What are some of the forces, external or internal, that lead people to ignore or reject the light of Christ? What influences helped you to overcome those forces in your own life, and respond to Christ’s light?

Prayer: *Kyrie, eleison*—“Lord, have mercy,” a prayer Christians have used for centuries. As I think of your light in the darkness, and your loving offer to make me your child, I pray it again, Lord, have mercy on me. Amen.

People Need the Church to develop and use their gifts together

Wednesday, Dec 5, 2018 I Corinthians 1:1-9

Paul wrote to the Christians in Corinth that they needed the church. One reason for that was that they could best use their gifts to carry out Christ’s mission when they did it together (an idea he expanded in I Corinthians 12:12-27). God knew this basic truth all along: ten people can be more than ten times more effective working together than if they all work alone!

- Paul called the members of the Corinthian church “Those who have been made holy to God in Christ Jesus” (verse 2). The rest of the letter made it clear that these people still had lots of room to grow spiritually. How clearly do you sense that as you choose to follow Christ, you are “holy to God,” part of God’s family, even when you still have room to grow?
- Paul thanked God for the people in the church at Corinth, and he told them that by God’s grace “you were made rich through him in everything.” Thanksgiving was a few days ago. How has your intention to thank God “in every situation” (I Thessalonians 5:18) held up through “Black Friday” and getting back to regular routines this week? What can you thank God for today?

Prayer: Lord God, I thank you that you haven't called me to make life's journey all by myself. Thank you for those who walk the pathway with me. Amen.

People Need the Church to experience God's Power Fully

Thursday, Dec 6, 2018 Ephesians 1:15-23

"His body, the church, is the fullness of Christ"—strong words! Paul was sure that people need Christ's church—not buildings or policies, but deeply committed people serving together. The church is an environment where God's people can experience God's power more fully—the same awesome cosmic power that was at work when Christ rose from the dead (verse 20).

- In verses 18-19, we read a prayer that "the eyes of our heart" will be able "to see what is the hope of God's call, what is the richness of God's glorious inheritance among believers, and what is the overwhelming greatness of God's power that is working among us believers." How would it change your worship and your workdays if you "saw" that kind of hope, richness and power at work in your life each day?
- Verse 23 said Christ "fills everything in every way." Scholar Dallas Willard noted that the Greek word often translated "heaven" (which we think is very distant) was plural—"heavens"—and for Hebrews included the very air around us. He wrote, "The Judeo-Christian witness regards space as full of God...God occupies and overflows space...we should assume that space is anything but empty." When have you sensed God near you? In what ways can you make God, as the song says, "the air I breathe"?

Prayer: Dear God, you are awesomely great, and wonderfully good. Your great power and gracious goodness are on my side. I can experience them as I worship and share life with your people. I thank and praise you! Amen.

People Need their particular congregation

Friday, Dec 7, 2018 Acts 2:42-47, Hebrews 10:22-25

The very first Christians in Jerusalem formed a congregation that met regularly, shared life and supported one another. They knew they were part of something bigger than just their congregation, but they belonged, grew and served together in their specific churches.

- Pastor Lloyd John Ogilvie wrote, "The final miracle of the Holy Spirit on that day of Pentecost was the birth of the church. You may wonder why I call that a miracle. It is because I know human nature. Next to the transformation of persons, the second greatest miracle is oneness with others who have been transformed." In what ways has the Holy Spirit helped you bridge differences and find fellowship in your church family?
- Hebrews urged Christians to meet together, but for a specific purpose. "Encourage one another," said verse 25. When have you found strength and courage for life through the encouragement you received from other Christians? How can you make it a holy habit to make your impact on others a consistently encouraging one?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, I thank you for your big, worldwide church, but I also thank you for "my" congregation. Teach me how to be an encourager, a person who builds up in my church. Amen.

People Need this Church because it belongs to Christ

Saturday, Dec 8, 2018 Ephesians 4:11-16

To whom does our church belong? The answer is straightforward: our church (and every church) belongs to Jesus Christ, its divine head! He is the one we can trust to lead us to God's goal of spiritual maturity, "measured by the standard of the fullness of Christ." As we serve and grow together, we must always be listening to his voice.

- Scholar William Barclay wrote, "Paul says that a body is only healthy and efficient when every part is thoroughly coordinated. He says that the Church is like that; and the Church can be like that only when Christ is really the head and when every member is moving under his control." What does it mean in day-to-day terms for you to "move under (God's) control"? When have you been set free from hurtful feelings and ways of thinking to move beyond your usual actions/reactions and step into God's world, where love is the guiding principle?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, be the head of my life, as you are the head of the church. I open myself to your wise and loving direction of my life. Amen.

Family Activity: Read Philippians 4:4-7. Review the events of each person's day. Ask one another, "How often did you pray today?" Discuss what it means to pray in every situation and at all times. On a large piece of paper, draw the face of a clock. By each hour, write or draw a picture of what each person is most often doing at that time. Talk about ways to pray throughout each person's day. (You might also want to let each person design his or her own clock and then discuss.) Also, discuss how and when you can pray together more often as a family. Commit to adding one additional time to your family life. Pray together, thanking God for always being with us and for listening to our prayers.