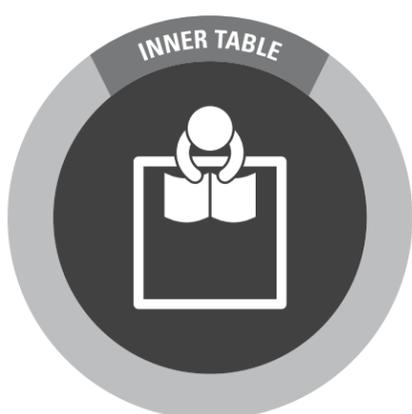


# Sermon Notes

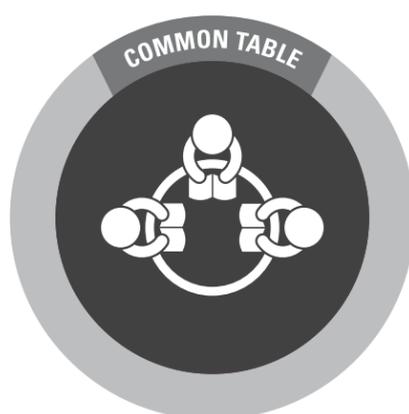
“In the Echo of Angels”  
December 16th, 2018



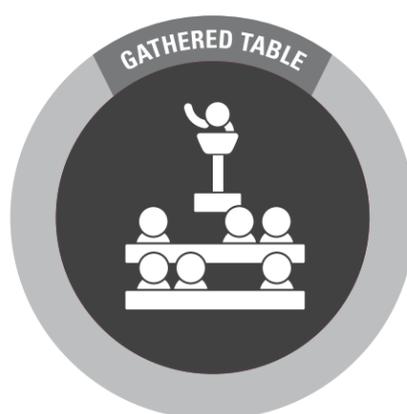
**First  
Friends**  
Church



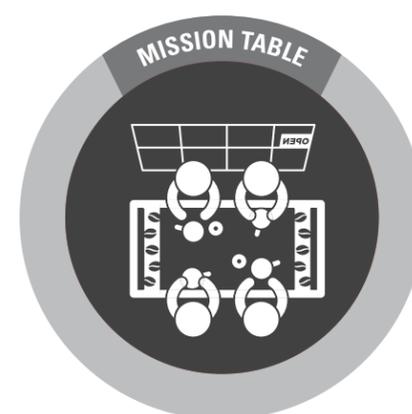
*Seeking God*  
in Solitude



*Finding God*  
in Friendship



*Celebrating God*  
in Community



*Reflecting God*  
in Relationships

## Reflection Questions *(please use these individually or in groups)*

### Sermon Questions:

1. Think about the lyrics of your favorite Christmas songs. Do they worship and adore the Savior who was born, or do they celebrate more cultural aspects of the holiday?
2. Pray for God's peace to be more fully realized in the world. Intercede for the people and places where violence is a daily reality, asking God to soften the hearts of oppressors and victims to the nature of the "cross-shaped" peace seen in Jesus.
3. Is God sending you somewhere this week? When the experience of this worship gathering fades, how might the Spirit be calling you to respond in obedience or service?

### Additional Questions:

4. Like the angels, who saw Jesus in opposition to Caesar during their time, should we consider Jesus to sometimes be "in opposition" to our political leaders today? Is this a good measure to "check" their power if they are wielding it as an oppressor instead of for good? Are we content with the type of "peace" our own political climate attempts to bring as opposed to a self-sacrificing peace?
5. What kind of action does your experience with Jesus drive you towards?

## Devotional Reading & Inward Reflection

- **Luke 2:13-15** | What does it look like for you to make peace with "those on whom his favor rests?" Are there folks within the body of Christ you have animosity towards?
- **Colossians 1:15-23** | What does it look like for you to live in a way that believes Christ has supremacy over all things? Are there areas in your life where you, through belief or action, don't see Christ as a sufficient ruler or lord?
- **1 Samuel 3:1-11** | Have you created a rhythm in your life where you have prepared space to hear from the Lord? If not, what would this look like for you?
- **Isaiah 6:1-13** | Just like Isaiah, God will prepare us to be sent people ("cleansing our lips"). What areas in your life do you need God's intervening to cleanse for the purposes of being sent? Are you ready and willing to be sent?

## Self-Care Disciplines *(Excerpts from Celebration of Discipline by Richard Foster)*

### December Discipline: Study | Comprehension (p.65-66)

Study is a specific kind of experience in which through careful attention to reality the mind is enabled to move in a certain direction. The mind will always take on an order conforming to the order upon which it concentrates. Perhaps we observe a tree or read a book. We see it, feel it, understand it, draw conclusions from it. And as we do, our thought processes take on an order conforming to the order in the tree or book. When this is done with concentration, perception and repetition, ingrained habits of thought are formed.

Study involves four steps. Repetition, concentration, comprehension, reflection. When we not only repeatedly focus the mind in a particular direction, centering our attention on the subject, but understand what we are studying, we reach a new level. Comprehension then is the third step in the discipline of study. Jesus, as you remember, reminds us that it is not just the truth but the *knowledge* of the truth that sets us free (John 8:32). Comprehension focuses on the knowledge of the truth. All of us have had the experience of reading something over and over and then, all of a sudden, we understand what it means. This "eureka" experience of understanding catapults us onto a new level of growth and freedom. It leads to insight and discernment. It provides the basis for a true perception of reality.

We will use the story of Jesus' birth in Luke 2 as a case study. As you read through Luke 2:8-20 this week, really look for the deeper meaning behind the text. Feel free to research or google the text to find context clues of what is there. You may be surprised that when you read scripture, context can help provide those "eureka" type moments.