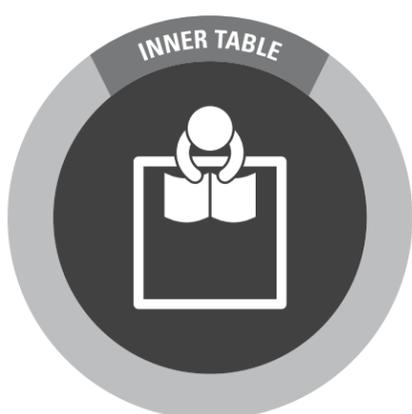


Sermon Notes

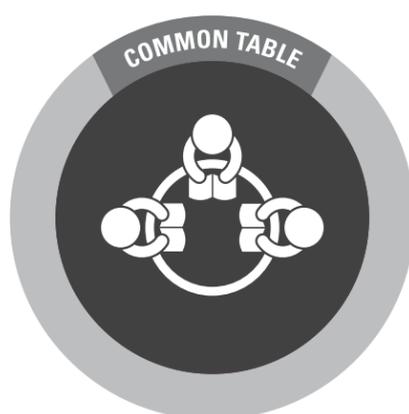
“Returning to the Fields”
December 23rd, 2018



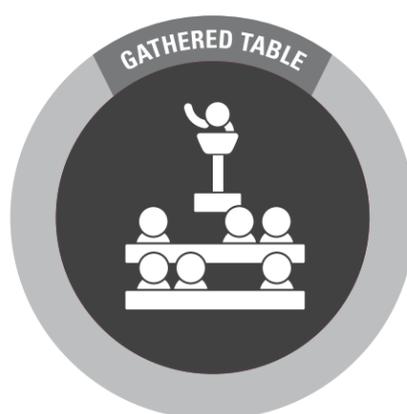
**First
Friends**
Church



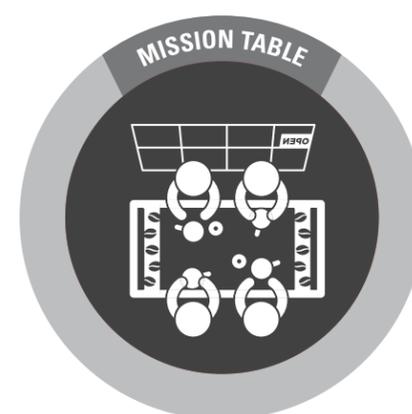
Seeking God
in Solitude



Finding God
in Friendship



Celebrating God
in Community



Reflecting God
in Relationships

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

Sermon Questions:

1. Does Jesus still amaze you? Reread the stories of what he's done. Find out about what he's still doing. Let his mercy and goodness mesmerize you!
2. Are you more likely to "treasure" the value, or "ponder" the mystery of God's gift of grace? This week, be intentional about leaning in the direction opposite your natural inclination.
3. Ask God to "open your eyes and ears" to one person you might see in the "fields" of your life this holiday season who needs to see/hear God's grace.

Additional Questions:

4. Mary took time to process the gift that God had given her. The shepherds showing up were simply further confirmation of this divine gift. Meanwhile, the shepherds "left and told" everyone about what they had witnessed. Obviously, the birth of Jesus is probably the biggest gift God has ever given to humanity, but God also gives us "little gifts" each and every day. How are we responding to these gifts? Is it with gratitude? Are we processing the goodness of God and sharing/celebrating with others what God has done?

Devotional Reading & Inward Reflection

- **Luke 2:16-20** | Simply take a moment to ponder what the incarnation of God. What does it mean that God chose to reveal himself first to the disenfranchised?
- **Luke 1:26-38** | The Spirit of God gave Mary a promise that would be fulfilled. Are we willing to trust God when he gives us a promise?
- **Luke 1:46-55** | Is there any part of Mary's song that makes you uncomfortable? How might you respond to Mary's prophetic words?
- **Jeremiah 5:12-31** | It seems consistent throughout scripture that God gets angry when we are not taking care of the poor, the widows and orphans, and the strangers. We become blind and deaf to the plight of our struggling neighbors. How might you have "eyes to see" and "ears to hear" those who are suffering around you?

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

December Discipline: Study | Reflection (p.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. Although comprehension defines what we are studying, reflection defines the *significance* of what we are studying. To reflect, to ruminate, on the events of our time leads us to the inner reality of those events. Reflection brings us to see things from God's perspective. In reflection we come to understand not only our subject matter, but ourselves. Jesus speaks often of ears that do not hear and eyes that do not see. When we ponder the meaning of what we study, we come to hear and see in a new way.

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, try to reflect on what this passage is speaking to us today. What message does it have? What prophetic word does it have to challenge us?