**Table Talk**

**Sermon Series: God Selfie – Not Let The Unpunished Go Unpunished**

**September 29, 2019**

**Introduction (10 min)**

Welcome everyone to your Table Talk small group. Watch the introductory video and share the story below, then open up the discussion with the questions provided.

**Table Talk Video: God Selfie – Not Let The Unpunished Go Unpunished**

When I was in college, a student walked into class and punch my theology professor in the mouth. Being a good Christian, my professor forgave the student and went on with class. It recurred at every lecture that semester. He punched, and dutifully, the professor forgave. We all watched without intervening.

Was forgiving him the right thing to do? Does forgiveness look like this?

This story didn’t really happen. My professor told it as a discussion starter in class. This was his point – *Forgiveness is meaningless without justice*. Someone has to pay. To forgive without making an attempt to right the wrong allows the wrong to continue, harming both the offender and future victims. Couldn’t my professor simply forgive since he was the one assaulted? If he were the only other person on earth, maybe, but it still isn’t the right way to express forgiveness.

“Simple forgiveness” teaches the offender that their sin is OK. It teaches others that it is OK to treat people with contempt and violence. It also does nothing to show that the professor’s life or relationships have value.

Forgiveness always comes coupled with justice, or it is meaningless. That makes sense for us, but what about God? Isn’t God big enough to “simply forgive?”

The answer is rooted deeply in the Trinity. What if God the Father was the disinterested by-stander while his Son, Jesus was the professor being punched in the mouth, by us the angry students? The Father, if He is truly loving, must institute justice upon us or he is being unloving to His Son. If we show disrespect to God the Father, the Son would be unloving to His Father if he simply forgave with no nod toward justice. The Trinity demands justice.

Since God is so loving, and forgiveness demands justice, God bore the cost of justice himself. Jesus died in our place, that justice might be done and forgiveness might be issued. We see in his sacrifice the high cost of sin, the high value God places on us, and the pathway out of sin and into right relationship with Him. We forgive fully aware that God has issued justice and the Great Judge will one day right all wrongs, freeing us to labor toward reconciliation.

The Trinitarian God is both Love and Justice.

-Pastor Reggie

1. Have you ever been in a situation where you craved justice?

**Prayer (3 minutes)**

Pray that the God of justice would help you see the great lengths to which he has gone to forgive and redeem you, your group, and the whole world we are called to reach.

**Digging In (14 minutes)**

**Read Exodus 34:5-7**

1. As we focus on the last verse in this passage, what does it have to say about lasting consequences to our actions?
2. Is my sin ever just about me or does it only affect me?
3. Given the description of God’s character, why might it be so important that God doesn’t allow sin to go unpunished?
4. Has punishment or consequences for your sin ever been a beneficial thing in your own life?
5. If God allowed the guilty to go unpunished, would the rest of this selfie still be true?

**Digging Out (16 minutes)**

**Read Revelation 20:12-13**

1. Does this promise of judgment give you a sense of fear or a sense of peace?
2. Does the way you are living reflect our belief that God is recording our actions and will judge our life based on those actions?

**Read 2 Peter 3:9**

1. Do you ever feel like God seems to let people get away with too much?
2. When you look at your own sin, do wish God was swifter in carrying out justice?
3. God’s desire is that our actions would include repentance. How does repentance fit into God’s plan for justice?

**Read Jeremiah 31:29**

1. While natural consequences to our actions will continue, God no longer punishes future generations for our sin. Why did this change occur?
2. Is God still being true to his revealed nature if this has changed? Could this be possible apart from God being the one on the cross?

**Taking It Home (7 minutes)**

After discussing the Bible verses above, consider the following personal challenge.

1. How have you experienced the loving forgiveness and reconciling justice of God in your own life?
2. What kind of picture of God are you passing on to future generations through your life and example as a Christian? Does it demonstrate both love and justice in a Christ-like way?
3. Knowing that God has fulfilled justice in himself on the cross, who do you need to forgive and work with toward reconciliation?

**Wrapping Up (2 minutes)**

To the best of your ability, summarize the main points of your group’s discussion and help them make meaningful connections with the scriptures.

**Scripture Challenge (5 minutes)**

Take time to practice memorizing Isaiah 30:18. May the character of God shine through your acts of justice, mercy, and compassion this week!

**Prayer (3 minutes)**

Seek forgiveness and accept the justice of God done on your behalf. Also ask God to reveal who you need to extend forgiveness to as you trust him as the true and faithful Judge of the earth.