

Letters to the Church



NOVEMBER '23

DEARLY BELOVED IN THE LORD,

In Mark 10, our Lord makes some staggering promises about the family we leave and the family we find:

Jesus said, "Truly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands, for my sake and for the gospel, who will not receive a hundredfold now in this time, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions, and in the age to come eternal life.

MARK 10:29-30



Jesus was clear in **verse 29**, "for my sake and for the gospel" there are dear people and cherished things that he expects us to leave behind. He is blunt; following him will be hard. He does not hide away the cost of discipleship in fine print. We can't turn to him without also turning away from other things. He was also clear that some of the costliest things we must leave behind will be relational. The loss of a home here does not so much refer to a deed to a property, but the association of being part of a family home. For many, especially in the 1st century, the cost of following Christ meant being shut out from their communities, and yes, even by their own flesh and blood. But even with such a high cost, Jesus assures us - he is worth it.

For many of us today, the application may not call for a literal separation from our families; however, Christ's prominence must redefine all these relationships. I've left behind the pride and the glory of the family name, and I now want all relationships to exult his name! So now, if I'm a parent, I raise my children to know the Lord. If I'm a sibling, I love as the Lord taught us to love. If I'm a child, I obey my parents in the Lord.

This should always astound us, as we instinctively feel that nothing is more important than family and that we will have no deeper bonds than our brothers, sisters, mothers, fathers, and children. Yet, Jesus steps forward into all our realities and boldly proclaims, “I’m better!” He claims to supersede the most significant human relationships we know and offer better. Moreover, he claims to be more compelling than all of them combined. He claims to be more urgent, more captivating, and more loving; and that even if you had the most incredible human family in this world, the cost of leaving them to follow him would be supremely worth it.

However, we must not leave off the promise of **verse 30**. Though some of the hardest costs for his disciples may be familial, even in just this present age, the family we find will be a hundred-fold better! We don’t just get him (which alone would be worth it), but in place of the ones we left, we get a hundred-fold more houses, brothers, sisters, mothers, fathers, and children. He promises us the deep and rich community of the church.

In Christ, we each have found this, and we each have now become to others. Ladies, you have found and become mothers and daughters in the church. Gentlemen, you have found and become brothers and fathers in the church. Children, you have become all of our children in the church. Jesus mentions three generations in his promise: the ones who are ahead of us (fathers and mothers), the ones who are alongside us (brothers and sisters), and the ones coming after us (children). To each other, we are a heavenly family.

We shared a life-together meal after the Fellowship Service a few Sundays ago. We sat in the Fellowship Hall, ate together, observed communion, and sang a hymn. I saw many tears at those tables, as many of us were deeply moved. I thought about this passage in my heart: “This is it! This is the better family that Jesus was talking about! Here are my hundred more brothers, sisters, mothers, fathers, and children.”

As a closing encouragement, the family promise is already astonishing here and now. But Jesus promises a hundredfold more to us now, and our Lord also promised, “in the age to come eternal life.” One day, we will know a family “numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands” (**Revelation 5:11**). So yes, to follow our Lord, all of us will have a cost relationally. We leave a family for him because he is worth it. However, in him, we find a better family, and one day, that table for the feast in the Kingdom will have a seat for all of us.

YOUR PASTOR & SERVANT,



SHAWN WEIR