

SERMON TRANSCRIPT

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SPEAKER

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SERIES

Follow Me

PART

6

TITLE

I Will Give You A Cross To Carry

SCRIPTURE

Matthew 10:24-39



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Well it is great to see you Providence family. And to all of our new folks here, all of our guests welcome. We're thrilled that you have joined us. I hope this time is really encouraging to you. Last week was a blessing. It always is for me. I always love to be reminded of God's enormous heart for people all around the world, and to think about how I can leverage my life to really participate in that mission. And I want to ask you to be praying for not only for me, but also Phil Ledlan and a small team.

So tomorrow, Phil and I fly over to a place that's really dark. There's very few people there who know Christ as their Savior and Lord. In fact there's very few people who have ever heard that Jesus Christ died for them and rose. And there's a lot of people that if they did actually hear, believe, and trust there would be a tremendous amount of angst in their culture, in their family towards them. So I would ask you to be praying.

So Monday to Friday it'll just be Phil and I. Then the team comes over. We'll actually fly to a new country and we'll be there next week as a team serving, to just seek to share the gospel and help people, frankly, with their teeth. And so be praying for us. So next Sunday I won't be here. I have a really special treat. I'm not gonna tell you. I'll do just a little teaser. But you won't know what it is or who it is unless you come next Sunday.

And then Sunday night we have an opportunity to vote as a church family on a young man to come and to serve. I just looked over and I see Thomas West here. And of course he feels called, he and his family to go overseas to London, to actually plant a church there. But we need to find somebody to fill his role. And so there's a little bio, amazing man and his wife. I would love for you to read over that, it's at Next Steps and that's for next Sunday night. But you pray for us and I promise you, I'll be praying for you while I'm gone. So let's pray then.

Father we thank you for your amazing grace in our life. We thank you God for what you have made available to us. And as we think about what we just sang, it is remarkable that you have satisfied the wrath that was directed to us because our sin was such an offense to you. And we are thankful, Jesus, for what you have done. And we're thankful for the bible. And as we open it up now, I pray that you would speak through weakness, that you would give glory to Jesus Christ alone, that you would help us to see that Christ is consequential in every part of our life. And God as we look at a text that in many ways is shocking, it's in some ways overwhelming, in some ways it's confusing. I pray that you would make it clear. I pray that you would help us believe, that you would give us courage. And I pray God that behind all of these difficult words that you would help our eyes to see a Savior who loves us even more than his own life.

And so we are grateful that you love us. And Jesus we're thankful that you gave your life up for us. And so we now want to look to you and say would you teach us. We pray all of this in Christ's name. Amen.

Matthew 10 is where we will be. And so would love for you to turn there. If you don't have one with you there's lots of bible in the chairs near you. And if you don't have one at home, take that home as a gift. Matthew 10 seems to imply that it was missions festival week for Jesus and his 12 disciple. Because at the very beginning of the chapter it says that he gathers them, he calls them out, he sends them out in small groups to actually take the gospel. Verse 7 says this is the message you're going to go with. You need to go and say that the kingdom of heaven, of God is at hand, it's here.

And then suddenly he changes tune just a little bit, and he talks about how hard it's going to be, starting in verse 16. And he starts saying that there's going to be people who find what you say offensive. And there's going to be animosity. And some of you will be put in prison, and some of you will be maligned, and some of you will be persecuted. And all of this is because they did this to me.

And then suddenly he says to us in verse 24 these words. He says, "A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master. It is enough, or it is good, for the disciple to be like his teacher and the servant to be like his master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more will they malign those of his household? So have no fear of them, for nothing is covered that will not be revealed or hidden that will not be known. What I tell you in the dark say in the light. What you hear whispered proclaim and the house tops. And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can both destroy soul and body in hell. Are not two sparrows sold for a penny, and not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. But even the hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not therefore, you are of more value than many sparrows. So everyone who acknowledges me before man I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven. But whoever denies me before man I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven.

"Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the Earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to set a man against his Father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law, and a person's enemies will be those of his own household. Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me. And whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And whoever does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it."

Now you're not gonna find a text where as many of its teeth are as sharp as this text. It's pretty remarkable that the natural instinct that we have when we read this is to sort of rock back on our heels, sort of take a step back to avoid the blade. It seems so sharp, it seems so unlike what we have been told all our life. That Jesus is all about love and he's all about family, and he's merciful and he's kind. And he's saying these things that seem so hard.

Some of you here, you may be here the very first time in church. You've never heard anything from the bible read to you, and that's the only thing you've ever read and you think, "So that's who this Jesus is." That is who this Jesus is. Oh he's more than that, but he's not less. That is what he said. He said more, but not less. He did say these words.

And then some of us who have already trusted Christ, we hear the strength of these words and we think, “Man, that’s, I kinda just want to fly low. Let’s just let this be a personal matter between myself and God. I want to fly low enough, or actually close enough, to enjoy the benefits that Jesus offers, and yet far enough away to avoid the cross fire.”

But aren’t you thankful that Jesus is not like a hotel? That puts its advertised price up and then you go and you stay there. And the next morning all of the fees that were hidden in the fine print show up on the bill. And you think, “Wait a minute. This wasn’t what you quoted me.” Aren’t you glad that Jesus didn’t just come and say, “I tell you what. You just trust me, say a quick prayer, I’ll forgive you and it’ll all be good.” And then suddenly we find that as we’re following him that things get difficult and we look and we go, “God what gives? Why is it like this?” Jesus comes to us in real space and time and he says this on the Earth to people who would say I want to follow Jesus. Jesus tells us the difficulties that are involved in following, and then he invites us to come.

What I want to do, I want to hang this whole passage on three hooks, okay? Now admittedly, each of these hooks, they’re a little bit sharp. But I think if you can see what he’s doing throughout, you actually see that even though it’s very difficult to follow Jesus, it’s absolutely worth it.

So the first thing I want you to see about following him is this, is that following Jesus brings hardship when we share his words. And this is what he means in verse 24-26. He says, “A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master.” And then he goes on and he says you know it’s actually a good thing for you to spend enough time that you start to sound like me. That you start to actually like me, and think like me, and tell other people what I would tell them if I was there with you. He says it is enough for the disciple to be like his teacher.

And then he says, “Let me just say. If they malign you don’t be surprised.” Why? “Because they malign the master of the house.” He said they called me Beelzebub. Matthew 12:24 among other places. When people, his enemies, looked at Jesus and what he was saying and doing, what he was claiming and what he was promising, they looked and said, “You know what? This smells more like hell than heaven.” The word Beelzebub literally means chief of demons or source of evil. It was an insult to say this comes from the pit of hell, not from the glory of heaven. This person, this teaching.

And so Jesus comes to us and he says, “Look don’t be surprised.” And you say, “Wait a minute, how will they know? How will they possibly know, I’ll just fly low. I’ll just go under the radar and nobody will know.” But then he says, “But I have an instruction for you, for all of us who want to follow.” And it’s verse 27.

And he says, “What I tell you in the dark say in the light, and what you hear whispered proclaim on the house tops.” You know what that means? That means whatever it is that Jesus tells you, you’re supposed to tell somebody else. You open up the bible in the morning and read something, you have something to share with somebody else. You’re coming here, you’re going to hear something right now, you are hearing something. And Jesus says what you hear from me, what you hear from my word it’s your responsibility to tell other people.

But then he says, “Look, don’t be surprised though. That this is going to create some animosity towards your life.” And the reason is because the things Jesus came to this Earth and said that created such animosity for him, he says I want you to simply echo my words. And I came to this Earth and I told people they have all fallen short of the glory of God. I came to this Earth and you cannot be good enough to earn heaven. You can’t be religious enough, you can’t do enough good works to get to heaven. I came to this Earth and I said I am the only way to the Father, and no one comes but through me.

You know people just don’t like. Every generation has had a math problem. We don’t one, we want two ways, or 10 ways, or a hundred ways. We want every way to everybody anyone. And Jesus says there is one way. And you know that creates a lot of animosity towards us and certainly towards him. And so Jesus comes and he says, “Listen as you tell others what you hear from me, not everyone is going to rise up and call you blessed. I said it and they cursed me. And so don’t be belligerent, don’t be arrogant, don’t be rude, don’t be proud. But also don’t be afraid of the names they may call you, because those names bind you to me.”

The fact is that Jesus knows that this causes an enormous amount of fear in our hearts. Which is why in verse 26 he says, “So have no fear.” Verse 28 it says, “So do not fear.” In verse 31 it says, “Fear not.” He knows that this kind of promise of what happens when we follow him, it naturally causes fear. But he also knows something else about us. And that is when fear passed through our hearts, is that we add all kinds of fangs, and horns, and claws to the source of our fear.

It sort of looks like this little funny picture, right? There’s a source that causes a shadow. There really is reason to be afraid. People really can say harsh things about you, they could really treat you poorly, you may be persecuted. But isn’t it interesting how those thoughts and those fears when they pass through our heart, suddenly we give them sharper teeth and those expectations. Like we just start to churn that fear over in our heart and it grows, and it grows, and it grows, and it grows. So God says, “So I’m going to help you counter balance all of that natural instinct to fear. And I’m going to give you some promises. And what I want you to do is to remember and reflect and tell each other these promises.

Now what are these promises? In the section he talks about four of them. The first is this, that the truth will be vindicated. This is great news for every single one of us. It’s not that we will be proven right, it’s that the truth will be proven right and we have believed in the truth.

You see right now even in this room, there will be people who hear what I say and they're going to walk out and they're going to say I do not believe in Jesus Christ. Some people in this room will not believe in Christ by the end of today. And you can go and you can share the gospel with other people whether it's in our city or whether it's in our state or nation or the whole world. And there will be people that reject Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord.

But the bible says that one day every single knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. There will come a day in time for every man, and woman, and boy, and girl when they stand before Jesus Christ and they recognize that everything else was a fraud. That all of the false worldviews that they were fraudulent. That all the false religions that they were fraudulent. That all the imaginary high towers that people run to to find safety for their soul, they they were all imaginary. And there was only one tower that people can run to and find safety and God and it's Jesus Christ. And every single person will bow before him and say you are Lord.

And what he's saying is this. For you and for me who have seen how consequential Jesus is to life now, we've seen in the field the treasure, we sold everything to buy the field so that we can trust Christ, so we can have Christ. And people say why would you make that decision? I see no value in a man that lived 2,000 years ago and how that's consequential to your week today. And one day they will then see what you have seen throughout your life, and that is that Jesus Christ is Lord of all. The truth will be vindicated. And so Jesus says, "Set your heart on that." Even though fear grows and it mushrooms in our heart, don't forget that the truth that we're holding onto will be vindicated forever. Forever.

The second promise that he gives us doesn't sound so great. And that is, they can only kill us. Okay? Now I'm not gonna spend a whole lot of time here because I'm never going to be able to say enough to convince you that this is a good thing. Because I don't want to die either. I'm only saying it because he said it, okay? He says, "Do not fear those who kill the body but they cannot kill the soul." What's he saying? He's saying the worst thing someone can do is take our life, which leads our soul happy and gone forever. So he says, fear me even more than them.

The third promise he makes is that God cares about us. That the suffering we endure is not due to God's apathy or indifference or ignorance. No, he's close enough to you to know how many hairs are on your head. He's numbered them. And the he says, "Why don't you look at a bird for a second. Just look at a sparrow. There's not a single sparrow that's allowed to fall to the ground dead without my Father willing it to take place." And he said, "You know what? He cares more about you than all of them combined."

And so when we face adversity because we're telling other people what Jesus said and people struggle with that. And we're trying to say it in love. If there's an adversity that comes, any hardship that comes Jesus says that's not proof that I don't care about you, or that I'm unfamiliar with your life, or that I don't care. I do care for you."

And then there's the fourth, the fourth promise. And it's that Jesus wants to associate with us. I want you to think about this the next time that you feel that fear is mushrooming in your own heart. I want you to think about this for a second. Because when you fear telling someone about Jesus and their response to it, I want you to remember that Jesus is willing, gladly willing, to associate with us. Do you see what he says here? Look at verse 32. "Everyone who acknowledges before man I also will acknowledge before my Father who's in heaven. But whoever denies me before man, I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven."

Now this denial, let's look at this side of it first. Peter denied Christ, and then he was forgiven by Christ because he was repentant. Every single one of us have times when we feel like we denied him because we didn't have the courage to say it that moment. Now if that is the pattern of our life to where we never acknowledge Christ and we always deny him he says, "You know there's probably a really good chance that you've never trusted me as Savior and Lord if you want nothing to do with me ever."

But let's look at the positive aspect of this coin when he says, "Whoever acknowledges me on the Earth I too will acknowledge before my Father in heaven." I want you just to imagine a kid. He lives in a neighborhood and most of his really cool best friends don't live in that neighborhood. But he likes to play every single day. And there's another kid who's a little odd, he's a neighbor kid. He's not his best friend, but he'll do. All right?

And so several days a week he goes out and they're playing. And they recognize that he's not as cool, same interests things like this. And so he's just kind of over here. But then any time his cool friends come he says, "You know, why don't you go home because this isn't really your crowd, you see." And so this picture that you see right here. And you think aw isn't that terrible? You got this little crew and you got one odd little boy out. And you feel like.

And what Jesus is saying here is this. He goes this is what is taking place towards me throughout the whole world. He says you want to come and you want to play when the cool kids don't want to play with you. You want me to benefit you and you want me to help you, and you want me to push you on the swing. And then the cool friends come and you say, "Why don't you go home? Why don't you go home. And I tell you what. I'll see on Sunday. We'll hang out later."

And what Jesus does is he turns this to remind us that one day we'll be that odd neighbor friend. There's going to come a day when you stand before God Almighty, and in that trinity of God the Father, Jesus and you, you are the odd person. I am the odd person. And what Jesus says in that moment is this. He says, "On that day I will not be ashamed to associate with you." Isn't that amazing? Now this is the promise that Jesus gives us to us to inspire us to not be ashamed of him.

See Providence there are a million things deserving shame on the Earth but being associated with Jesus is not one of them. One day the truth will be vindicated. And so I appeal to you, love the truth. And love people and speak that truth in love. And do not fear the face of any man. I promise you, I understand that telling people hard things is scary. I understand that people may not like what you have to say when you echo Jesus's words. But he's worth it. He's worth it. And so he promises a measure of hardship.

The second thing is following Jesus brings separation when we prioritize our love. Now this pretty stunning to me. Following Jesus brings separation when we prioritize our love. He goes on and he says, "Look. Don't think that I've come to bring peace to the Earth. I've not come to bring peace but a sword." You say what kind of sword is this? Well we do know that it's not an iron one. Because one time Peter tried to protect him by wielding a sword, he cut a guy's ear off. And Jesus said, "Would you put that thing up. That's not how this kingdom is gonna move."

So clearly that's the sword. No, the sword we read about in Hebrews 4 and it says that it's the word of God. It's the truth that we're supposed to be able to speak to other people. But it's also interesting that he says, "You know what? I've not come to bring peace to the Earth," when we find in John 14 he says, "Peace I leave with you, and my peace I give to you." So you have one passage in John 14 that says I have come to bring peace. And then you have another passage right here in Matthew 10 where Jesus says I'm not coming to give peace.

But each of those two have a context. In John's account he's talking about our relationship with God the Father. And in this context he's talking about the fact that there will be people that disagree over who Jesus is. And therefore they will not get along. There will be people who mistreat you simply because you believe in Christ, a Christ that they do not believe in.

You see, Romans 5:1 says, "Since we have been justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ came from heaven to Earth, he lived without sin, he died on a cross for our sin, he was buried in the grave, he rose from the dead and he says to everyone who saw him, "If you believe in me I'll take away all your sin and I'll give you my righteousness." That's what it means to be justified, to be declared innocent. To where God Almighty, that the entire account that there was a huge moral deficit, that it is all paid for you. So that he looks at us and he says, "Totally innocent, totally righteous." And therefore we have peace with God. Therefore we have a right relationship with God.

However this peace does not remove tensions among people who are divided over Jesus. And where he goes is the closet relationships of all, and that's the family. See in America today, the greatest core value is individualism. But most of the places it's family. In our day and age we sacrifice family for what I want. For most of the people in the world they sacrifice what they want for their family. This is clearly one of things that is not amazing about the West.

In this time, though, where he was living, it's very very clear that people never wanted to disgrace their family. You never wanted to marry someone that your mom or dad didn't approve of. You never let someone in to separate you from your family, because family was preeminent, it was the most important. Jesus comes to the Earth and he says, "I have come to set man against his father." That's like the violation of their entire social fabric. Nothing comes between the family. And Jesus says, "I've come to get between the family." He said this.

And what he means is this, that following me may divide your family. Now here where we live, like my family, my boys trusted Christ we had cake, okay? There was a celebration. You trust Christ today we're gonna hug your neck. We're going to celebrate that. But isn't it true you're in families where you trusted Christ and because of that there's animosity with family members simply because they resist and resent Christ? They resent Christianity, they resent the things that you love so much. And so it creates a divide.

This week I received an email from one of our partner missionaries where I'm going. And he spoke of a man named Mokset. Who's a young man who came to faith in Jesus Christ. He went home and he said, "You know what I've heard in private settings, I want to tell my family from the house, from the rooftop." And he goes home and he gets the tar beat out of him. Then they send him away to what they call a camp. Where they routinely flogged him from days in order to get to the place where he would acknowledge that this is not the way. He pleads for mercy, his brother says okay that's enough.

He comes home. And he says but I still believe. And he says, "All right, you're done with us, we're done with you. No family." You see for Mokset this passage makes a whole lot of sense. And for a lot of people around the world, this is what's taking place. You see in Luke's parallel passage of this same account, Jesus says this. He says, "If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brothers, and sisters, yes even his own life, he cannot be my disciple."

Hate? What do you mean hate? Well the bible introduces us to two different kinds of hate, one's an active hate where there's a lot of hostility. And one is a comparative hate. So let me tell you a story, a true story about a man named Jacob. He meets a girl, her name is Rachel and he falls in love. And he says, "I want to marry this person." So he goes to the family, "Hey what would it take?" You gotta work seven years for her. He work seven years he says because of his love for her they seem like just a few days.

Comes to the wedding and the family recognizes we got a problem here. And that is that Leah, Rachel's older sister's not married. She needs to be married first. So they trick him. Put a veil over, he marries the wrong girl without knowing. He turns around, "What gives? I said Rachel not Leah." And he goes, "Well that's true, but this is sort of where we're at. You gotta marry the one before the other. Tell you what. You work another seven years you can have Rachel, too."

Now let me just pause just for a second, okay? The bible is not a catalog of righteous behavior. Okay, you really need to remember that, okay? It's a story of broken people and God intervening in their lives. So Rachel not only married two women but they happen to be sisters. Which, let me just say this. One and only one. But if you do marry two, don't marry sisters, okay? Because just imagine the animosity between them. But the bible one, just one.

And this is what it says took place in this relationship. It says Jacob loved Rachel more than Leah and when the Lord saw that Leah was hated, he opened her womb. Now Jacob wasn't cruel to her or harsh, abusive. Comparatively though, he loved Rachel with such an intense love that his behavior toward her was interpreted as hatred.

And what Jesus is simply saying here to us, to all of us is this. He's taking all the different kinds of human love and he says, "I want to be loved and offer a love that makes all of those pale by comparison." And so let's rightly order our love to begin with Jesus. God wants to be our Rachel. But just as the brightness of the sun dims our vision to all of the stars in the middle of the day, even though they're all there, so God wants our love for him to be so bright that it makes all the other loves towards people pale in comparison.

This is what gets people to go on an airplane. This is what leads people to be baptized when family members say I don't want you to associate yourself publicly with Jesus. It's seeing in Jesus a greater love that other people may even misinterpret as a lack of love. How amazing is Jesus to you is what he's saying. It bring separation when we prioritize our love.

The third thing that takes place is this. That following Jesus brings sacrifice when we carry our cross. He says in verse 38, "Whoever does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me." Now when I man was seen walking underneath a cross like this picture that you see, everyone knew that this would be the very last thing that that man would do. He was about to go die. Everyone knew that he was arrested, that he was no longer in control, and that he now moved according to the wishes of another.

Providence, to take up our cross means to lose control. It means to be bound. It means to move at the wishes of another. When we trust Christ and believe upon him, we abdicate the throne of our heart and we give it to him. You see so many of us we spend time thinking is Jesus going to accessorize our kingdom? And so we make us the worthy one and he needs to live up to the worth of being involved in our life. But if you notice three times he says this kind of person is not worthy of me, not worthy of me, not worthy of me.

You see the reality is it's more important for us to fit into his kingdom than for us to try to figure how he can fit into ours. He is the worthy one. He is the king and we are the servants. And when we get those roles confused we start evaluating the profitability of his service in our kingdom instead of the profitability of our lives in his. Hardship, separation, and sacrifice.

Now that leads us to a really important question and it's this. Why would anyone follow a man? Why would any of us? If Jesus is walking down a path right here, he turns around, and he extends a hand to us and he says, "Come follow me. But the way, hardship, separation, sacrifice is part of this deal. That's the fine print. Come on." Who follows?

We follow because he's worthy. We follow because Jesus took up his cross so that we could live in its shadow. This is what Colossians says when he says, "Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you have died." You've taken up a cross. He's given us a cross to carry and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. And so let's submit to Jesus Christ as Lord.

This is good news for you. If you've never trusted Christ salvation is absolutely free. But following him is stunningly expensive. And at some point there will be a defining moment when you must choose between him and something else. It may be a friend, it may be a job, it may be a career path. I don't know what it is, but every single person that follows Jesus there comes a day when following Jesus becomes costly.

Is he worth it? And he answers if he's worth it in the very last sentence when he says, "Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it." You know what that means? It means that every single one of us are searching for a life. You're searching for friends, a career path, money, things, experiences. We're all building a life, we're all trying to find a life. And you know what's true of everyone of us? We're going to die and lose that life. It's going to happen.

So this what he says. He says, "But whoever loses his life for my sake will find it." What does that mean? He means if in following me you lose something of significance to who you are, what you want something you're going to lose anyway at the end of your life, following me you will receive," as we looked at two weeks ago, a hundred fold for eternity.

Providence, you will never find a kinder king than Jesus Christ. And this is why we as a church family we say we are not ashamed of the gospel of Jesus Christ. We are not ashamed of the person of Jesus Christ, the life of Jesus Christ, the death of Jesus Christ, the resurrection of Jesus Christ, the reign of Jesus Christ. We are not ashamed. And you know God gave us an amazingly simple, practical way for us to publicly and willingly affirm that we want to associate with Jesus. And it's called the Lord's supper.

So for those that will be serving us if you want to go ahead and stand up and head to the back, you want to get those elements ready for us. Thank you for serving us. This Lord's supper there's two elements. There's a cup and there's bread, symbolic of his body and his blood that was shed for us to bring us peace with God. And he tells us to take these things really for just a couple of purposes. One of the purposes is that we would remember what he did. And the other is that when holding them we would say I want everyone in the room or the world who can see that I am holding these elements that I am not ashamed to be associated with Christ.

And so we encourage to take. If you've never trusted Christ, we urge you to as the bible says, just to let these things pass. Because to take them is to say that I have been forgiven by Jesus Christ, that I am trusting in Jesus Christ. But if you have trusted in Christ we welcome you to the table. So would you pray with me?

Father in heaven as we come to you, I pray that you would search out hearts. I pray that you would search our hearts and see if there's any sin in our life that we've not confessed. And that even while these elements are being passed, that Lord you would bring that to our attention and lead us to confess that as sin. And would forgive us? So that we can take this with a clear conscious. We thank you Jesus that you are willing to associate with us, and we consider it an amazing privilege now to associate with you. And we pray this in Christ's name. Amen.



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