

Mark 10:31

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

But many that are first shall be last; and the last first.

Analysis

Peter said, 'Lo, we have left all, and have followed thee' (Ἰδοὺ ἡμεῖς ἀφήκαμεν πάντα καὶ ἠκολουθήκαμέν σοι). After the rich man departed, Peter noted the disciples' sacrifice—they left everything to follow Jesus. The emphatic 'we' (hēmeis, ἡμεῖς) contrasts disciples with the rich man. They did what he couldn't—forsook all for Christ. Yet Peter's statement hints at self-righteousness—'we left all, so what's our reward?' This prompts Jesus' promise (vv. 29-30) but also warning about pride (v. 31). Peter's question reflects natural human tendency to calculate costs/benefits and seek recognition for sacrifice. Jesus' response teaches that true discipleship doesn't bargain but trusts God's generous reward for any sacrifice made for the gospel.

Historical Context

The disciples had literally left occupations (fishing, tax collecting), families, and possessions to itinerate with Jesus. Compared to wealthy men with houses, lands, and servants, the disciples possessed nothing. Yet their forsaking 'all' was relative—they had little to leave. Jesus' later promise (vv. 29-30) guarantees hundredfold return, not material prosperity gospel but spiritual family in the church. Early Christians similarly left families, possessions, and homeland for gospel ministry (Acts 4:34-37; Philippians 3:7-8). Church history records countless missionaries, martyrs, and ministers who sacrificed worldly security for Christ. Jesus doesn't demean their sacrifice but corrects reward-seeking motivation, teaching that grace crowns service, not merit earning salvation.

Related Passages

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. How does Peter's statement 'we have left all' reveal both genuine sacrifice and subtle self-righteousness?
2. What does Jesus' response teach about proper motivation for Christian sacrifice—not bargaining but trusting God's generous reward?

Interlinear Text

πολλοὶ δὲ ἔσονται πρῶτοι ἔσχατοι καὶ οἱ ἔσχατοι
many **But** **shall be** **first** **last** **and** ^{G3588} **last**
G4183 G1161 G2071 G4413 G2078 G2532 G2078

πρῶτοι
first
G4413

Additional Cross-References

Matthew 19:30 (Parallel theme): But many that are first shall be last; and the last shall be first.

Matthew 20:16 (Parallel theme): So the last shall be first, and the first last: for many be called, but few chosen.

Luke 13:30 (Parallel theme): And, behold, there are last which shall be first, and there are first which shall be last.