

**Sermon notes:** September 7, 2025  
**Focus:** Family and Priorities

[Lectionary Page](#)

---

*Luke 14: Large crowds were traveling with Jesus, and turning to them he said: “If anyone comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters—yes, even their own life—such a person cannot be my disciple.” Are you getting a little worn out of Jesus trashing the family?*

---

Back on August 17<sup>th</sup>, we had daughter against mother. Now, on September 7<sup>th</sup>, here’s another round. Context, as always, is king.

I hate 100-degree days, liars, and V8 juice (just the smell makes me gag). But “hate” can mean very different things depending on context. It’s a big word, a versatile word—like “love.” I love the Apple TV series *Severance*, my family, and eating chocolate between sips of red wine. Obviously, chocolate and my child don’t elicit the same kind of love.

You’ve probably heard the Greek lesson before—different words for love agape, philoi, etc and different nuances, but that is not today. You might not have heard a sermon about the nuances of hating father and mother. Primarily, Jesus is using allegiance language

- Greek *miseîn* (μισεῖν)= “hate,” can mean “love less / prefer less”
- Matthew softens: “Whoever loves father or mother more than me”
- Luke, though, keeps it sharp. It’s deliberately jarring.

It makes you stop and ask: Who comes first?

These extremes are not meant to turn us into family-haters. They’re there to drive home the deeper point: allegiance to God above all. And when we put our hearts in that order, everything else aligns. You know the big one:

---

*Luke 10:27 Jesus answered, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind. And, ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.”*

---

In Luke 14, Jesus isn’t calling for bitterness or estrangement. He’s calling for reorientation. Root yourself in love for God, and once grounded, then you are freer to love family, neighbor, even stranger more fully. Maybe this love blurs the lines between the three.

I was struck this week by a story on the podcast *This American Life*, in an episode called “The Other Territory.” <https://www.thisamericanlife.org/865/the-other-territory>

The hour was full of snapshots from life in the West Bank. In the second act, a reporter visits the Arab community of Tuba—a hilltop village boxed in on three sides by unsanctioned settlements. The reporter speaks with Ali Awad, a young man there who owns the only car capable of navigating the single rubble-strewn road in and out of the village.

Here's a short excerpt from *This American Life*.

*Ali is 27. He lives in a tiny village called Tuba, one of 19 villages in an area called Masafer Yatta, where they filmed that movie No Other Land that won the Oscar this year and where the intimidation and harassment has been intense. Ali had been studying for his masters in English. He wanted to be a college English teacher. But instead, he's become kind of the protector of his little village.*

*Ali's car is important to Tuba because the village is totally isolated. There's only one road in and out. Tuba is way up on a hill, and the road is rocky, valleys right below you. It requires a skilled driver and an SUV... He told me he's the taxi driver, the grocery delivery guy, and the ambulance driver, all combined.*

Then Ali talks about why he is doing this

*Ali Awad said, "I don't have kids. I don't have my own kids. I don't have other expenses than my cigarettes and my car. Spending all your life, your energy, your money on the car is to, as a driver, to make sure that everyone in your car in the journey is safe as-- as much as possible."*

Ali doesn't get sentimental. He does what needs to be done. He doesn't wax poetic about family. Even after settlers torched his car, he kept going—still trying to hold his village together. He lives inside that open-ended family Jesus kept talking about.

And that's the point: Jesus is provoking people. In the Ancient Near East, family was everything. Your safety net, your nursing home, your retirement plan. To live outside of family—like orphans and widows—was nightmarishly precarious. So when Jesus pushes back against family loyalty, he's not being careless. He's trying to equalize our love.

What if the love we give to an orphan began to look more like the love we give our own child? Unrealistic, yes—but the *journey* toward that kind of love is exactly what Jesus is calling us into.

The question is: are we willing to stop making idols of country, family, and marriage? Can faith be so central that it looks, from the outside, like we don't love our family "enough"? Can we "prefer less" the bonds we were born into, so that we can seek out a bigger family while still cherishing who we started with?

It sounds crazy. Jesus makes me wonder how many ways I could step up to love the Lord my God with all my heart, mind, and soul, which would make it easier to go deeper -- loving family and everyone else.

**Todd**