

Well, good morning. I have not sang that song in a long time. How about you guys? Who knew that song from back in 1960? 219 72.

It's a great song. Let's just praise the Lord. Praise the Lord. Oh, thank you, Alan. We got some cool stuff happening this morning.

We are glad you're here. If you're visiting with us for the very first time, welcome to Sherwood Oaks, Bedford. Today we are, I guess, officially starting our summer series, but we're starting it in a different way. I've invited a few people to join me in just a little bit to talk about some future direction stuff with Sherwood Oaks. I think you'll be happy about it, be excited about it.

I think you'll be empowered by it. But to get us started, want to draw our attention to a story. I want to start by asking my sister a question. She's real nervous right now. Pam, when did you take, what age group was it that you went to Italy with junior high, junior high, middle school kids?

She gave a thumbs down. Do not recommend. How many kids.

Oh, my word. That's like triple what I thought it was. Okay, enough. Yeah, 20. So, yeah.

And how many? A couple years back, not long enough. Still traumatizing. So, yeah. So Pam chaperoned a bunch of middle schoolers through Italy.

Now, my experience of Italy was amazing. Saw Florence, went to Rome, Verona, where Romeo and Juliet. That happened. We were in Venice. We walked through the cathedral cathedrals.

It was amazing. The architecture was astounding. If you've been to Italy, it is an amazing trip. And so Pam got back and I said, I said, how was it? And she goes, well, first of all, peak of the tourist season, crowds were everywhere.

And I was trying to keep track of all those kids. She says, I was constantly counting heads, so I didn't see really any of that. Italy is just a nasty, horrible experience. I never want to. Do not recommend.

You're terrified if you've ever been in that situation, even with one or two, that you're going to lose one of them. And even though they're middle schoolers and you think, you know what? They've had a good life so far, they can start over in Italy. It's still. It's still anxiety inducing.

You're going to lose a child in the crushing crowd. And worse, you're going to have to explain to their parent that you lost their child. So when I was reading this story from Jesus, it, it

reminded me of this experience that Pam had. So this story comes from Luke, chapter 14 and Luke 14:15. If you got your bibles?

I want to turn to Luke 14. We're going to be in the very last verse of Luke 14. And then into the next chapter, Luke 15. Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. The first four books of the New Testament.

Luke is the third. Matthew, Mark, Luke. It's got a bunch of red letters in it. You'll know you're there when you're there. So Luke ends chapter 14 with this sentence right here.

Let's say it together. Whoever has ears, let them hear. And then the very next chapter, we see this. Now. The tax collectors and sinners were all gathered around to hear Jesus.

But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law muttered, this man welcomes sinners and eats with them. Then Jesus heard them and told them this parable. Suppose one of you has 100 sheep and loses one of them, doesn't he? Leave the 99 in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it. And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders and goes home.

And then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, rejoice with me. I have found my lost sheep. I tell you that in the same way, there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over 99 righteous people who do not need to repent. So I like this story. And I imagine this story.

It's what I do. With a lot of Jesus parables, I imagine myself. So imagine yourself. Imagine you are a shepherd in charge of a hundred sheep that act like middle schoolers because you're a good shepherd, because you're a good chaperone. You are always counting sheep.

It is exhausting. And when you're counting sheep, what happens? You get tired. Except this time. Because this time you get to 99 and your eyes jerk open.

That's not right. So you count again.

No, no, no, no. That's not right. That's not right. That's not right. One is missing, and you start to panic.

Okay. Where did we last see that little lamb? Oh, my. It was a mile back. The last time you counted was a mile back.

Okay, okay. What are we gonna do? What are we gonna do? What are we gonna do? And if you're a chaperone or a shepherd, you imagine every horrible possible scenario, don't you?

Someone has abducted this child. Maybe the sheep has fallen into a ditch. Maybe it's caught its foot in a. In a hole and can't move. It's trapped.

And now in your mind, there are a snarling pack of wolves that are surrounding the little sheep. Maybe she just wandered away and she's happily grazing on the grass. Maybe she's completely oblivious. Oblivious. Oblivious to the fact that she's alone.

She's not even looked up yet. When she looks up, she's going to be terrified and scared. And now you imagine her safe but just trauma ridden and anxiety ridden. And you're like, okay, okay, okay. We got to go find the sheep now.

It's a long time yet before you can safely put the kids to bed and go looking. No, it's a long time yet before you can put the sheep in the fold, close the gate and go looking for the sheep. It's still midday. So what do you do? You say, hey, sheep, just talk amongst yourselves and don't go anywhere.

I gotta go get the sheep.

You look around, you see if there's any potential danger, any potential concerns. And then you start running back the way you can. And your breath is. You're running out of breath. Your heart is beating, your side is aching.

You know how you run for a couple of feet and you feel like you're dying? Maybe not you, but I do. And you run and your side's aching. And like. And you're looking at you, you go.

And you're like. In your mind you're going, it's just one sheep, for crying out loud. But then you imagine that little sheep and all the potential things that could go wrong. The fact that it's alone and there are things out there that will kill and destroy a sheep. And sheep just tend to lay down at the first sign of danger and give up.

And so you picture that little sheep just giving up. And so you start running again and your side hurts again and you stop to catch your breath and you look frantically around. You're listening for a little. You can't hear anything. Can I hear a little?

Baas, bahs, bahs, bahs out there, you can't hear anything. Any looking for signs of distress, smoke? I mean, what do you look for in this sense? And you keep going and you keep going until finally you see a little speck of white amongst the dry grass. You're like, there she is.

And you run to her and what does he do? Well, he says, you are never leaving me again.

He takes a stick and he goes, I'm just going to beat you until you never make that mistake. No, he doesn't do any of that. He doesn't do any of that. What does verse five and six say? Do we have that up there?

Bode, can we get that back up he says when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders and he takes it home. And he calls his friends and his neighbors and his family together and says, look, rejoice with me because this little sheep that was lost is found. I found her.

So often, the chapter divisions and the Bible can get in their way. Have you noticed that the Bible wasn't written with chapter and verses? We have them today. It makes it easy to find things, but it wasn't written that way. So Luke 14 ends with this idea that Jesus is telling folks if they have ears, they should listen.

And Luke 15 begins with a fact that sinners are listening. Tax collectors and sinners, they're opening their ears and they're opening their hearts. Why? Because when they're with Jesus, they find the hope of God. While the religious rejected the non religious, Jesus didn't.

While the perfect despised the broken, Jesus didn't. While the saints looked down on the sinners, Jesus didn't. And here's the deal. He wants us to have the very same heart for the broken, for the non religious, for the sinners, for the broken, the lonely and the bitter, the lost, the scared, the oblivious. That he does.

So when Jesus asked his disciples to go into all the world, we call that the great commission. He's calling us to make his commission our commission, to make his mission statement. Our mission statement. And he calls each of us to look around and count who's missing and then go looking for them. I love looking around this room on Sunday mornings because I see people who are in this room right now because someone else considered you their commission, someone considered you their mission.

How does that make you feel? Do you feel like a project? Or are you so grateful that someone prayed for you, that someone cared enough about you to say, I'm going to bring their name up before the Lord and intentionally care about this person. I'm going to pray for them? No, you're so happy they did.

Jesus loves lost sheep and he loves it when we do, too. I want to be the kind of church where the non religious, the broken, the sinners, the oblivious, some of you are here this morning, the oblivious feel like they've been picked up by Jesus and brought home. Now, I think we do a pretty good job of that. But today I want to talk to two people who are committed to helping us do that. Even better, I'm going to ask Alan Burris, you know him, and my good friend Maggie Mobley to come up and join me here.

Yeah.

So, Alan, we know about you. So let's just start with you. Not because you're better than Maggie. You're not. But let's just.

Let's just know. Let's just tell us a little bit about you. Just fill us in with some details we might not know. First of all, what happened to your head? Kendra, you missed my opening line.

I said I got in a fight, or you and your clone got in a fight. And Tim Thompson's not here today. This is his clone that we've read. We've talked about this. Have we?

What do you think? Yes, I think it looks very natural. Okay, I'm getting mostly thumbs up. Well, you can talk to me later if you hate it. I fell into a barbed wire fence.

Okay. It happens when you get old. It happens. You're old. So, yeah, I really did.

Alan, give us your background here. Well, I was born and done. Let's move up. Let's go up. I started.

I was minister at Mitchell Church of Christ for 20 years. And some stuff happened, and I hung on, but I needed to leave, so I left on good terms, and I was kind of lost for a long time, and Sean Green found me. And so I started coming to church here in 20. 1920. Yeah, 2019.

And then end up being on staff at Bloomington and all the campuses in 2020. And then Covid happened. So it was my fault. So let me tell you this. So many of you don't know this.

When I took the position here, Alan and Kedra were coming every Sunday, faithfully. And so Shawn said, tim, would you be interested in this position? Because he was the pastor here before me. I said, oh, I've got Allen and Kedra. Yeah, that'll be great.

I'll have some back up there. And immediately, as soon as I said that he hired you up there, and you went away for a long time, so you're back. Yes. But you begged me for a long time to come down here. Yes.

I said, you know what? I'm a man of sophistication. I grew up in Mitchell, so I could probably handle. You can handle Bedford. You can.

Yeah. Yeah. Okay, enough about Alan. Y'all feel like if you have any other questions for Alan, you can talk to Kedra. She'll give you the real.

The real juice. Okay. Now, Maggie. So I've known Maggie now, well, almost as long as I've been at Sherwood Oaks, 17 going on 18 years. Now, I've known you for almost that time, but the position you're in now is way different than where you first began.

So tell me a little about that. Yeah. So I grew up at Sherwood Oaks Christian Church, so I've been there since I was five years old, and it's been an exciting journey. Some people say they got called into ministry because they feel like God laid it on their heart. But I got a physical phone call into ministry ten years ago.

Ministry was nowhere on my radar, and I was at a gas station in South Carolina when I got a phone call from Claudia Mitchell, which I know some of you know, and she called and she said, hey, Maggie, would you take on a five hour week position leading our kids choir? Because I'd been volunteering at that time. And I said, let me pray about it. I called and said, yes. I went in two days later for the meeting and they said, actually, would you start full time with kids ministry?

I said, oh, well, that took a quick and drastic turn. So I said yes to that. And that was ten years ago in July. It'll be ten years for me on staff. And my posture since I started ten years ago has been a posture of Hineni, and it's a hebrew word in the Bible.

It's found six times and it actually translates to the words here I am. But it doesn't mean here I am in a physical sense. It means here I am in a spiritual sense. And it really means saying yes to God before you even know what he's asking you to do. So my posture throughout my entire ministry space has just been saying yes to God when he's laid opportunities in front of me.

So I've worked in children's ministry and then women's ministry and then the director of women's ministry, and I went back to school and got my master's in ministry leadership and got ordained, and now I'm the executive of ministries. So I have just had a posture of saying yes to God in this space. It's an amazing journey for you. You do an amazing job there. Thank you.

You took Jeremy's role. I really like Jeremy. I do, too. But don't tell him. Don't get yourself in trouble, Tim.

I'm not going to say it. I'm just not going to say it. I love Jeremy. I think you're doing a great job up there. So what does that mean, executive ministry?

What does that look like up there? Sure. I try to say that my role is to keep all of the ministries and all of the people aligned, moving towards our mission. And you mentioned Jeremy. Jeremy, and I like to say so.

Jeremy was our executive minister. Now he's executive of operations and I'm executive of ministries. Jeremy leads and oversees everything non breathing in the church. So policies, procedures, systems, and I get to help guide and direct all breathing things in the church, all people, both staff and congregation. You've got a perfect personality to do that.

Well, so what is happening right now at the Bloomington campus? You guys are rolling out something that Sean and I talked about. We're going to be doing that here, too. But you guys have sort of initiated it, working out all the kinks and tell us what we're doing. Yeah.

So I like to say that the thing that we're doing right now is we are simplifying church. We're getting back to the basics. It is really easy as a church to lean into things that feel new and exciting, new fun events, all these things, which are great things. Don't get me wrong, great things. But just getting back to the basics of the great commission.

You mentioned it. I mean, we're, you know, sometimes we overcomplicate things and we need to get back to the mission that God has called us to, which is being disciples that make disciples, and getting really serious about that and reaching lost people. I love that. So we just. We've got some tools and resources and strategies that we're implementing for the first time that are going to keep us on track and moving forward long term.

We think, like, what is the impact that we can make in Bloomington and Bedford when we live out the great commission that God has called us to? And we actually think it's. It's huge. And I think, not that we've missed the. Missed the mark.

I think we've done great work and we're doing great work, but it's the, like, what if, what if we really work hard at this and reach lost people and are intentional about it? What can we do for God's kingdom? So we're simplifying everything and getting back to the great commission. One of the things I'll get to you, Alan, just. Yeah, that's fine.

So I'll face this direction so you can jump in if you can. So one of the things that we, some of us here are familiar with is this idea of one life that was. Shawn was campus pastor here when we did this. It was very impacting for me personally as I began to pray for the people in my life. Is there a connection between one life and this thing that we're moving into?

It is. It's all. It's all similar. One life was just, that is. Who's one person in your life that you can pray for and invite to, into a relationship with Jesus.

So this is similar, getting back to the basics with the great commission. I think what we were missing four, five, six years ago when we did that is kind of the sustainability, the tools to really make it work long term. So we've got some of that in place now that we didn't. And we're excited about that because that's the most important thing, is we've all got people in our lives individually that we, I mean, we know and we can create a relationship with and invite them to know Jesus, and that's what it's all about. So we have some things in place that are going to take us a lot, I think, further down the road in the process.

So the thing, I'm just going to jump on that because that's really good. I feel like one life really challenged us, but it felt a little bit like a program that we would do that and then we would go to the next thing. And this is saying, this really is us going once again. And the slow work of creating a culture of evangelism versus just a once in a while, we lean into it a little harder and heavier than others. And that's part of it, is the evangelism, which can be a trigger word for some people because that can feel scary or if you feel like you've been evangelized too, in a.

In a heavy way, I guess. But really, evangelism, we say it's just creating relationships with people so that you have a space to share Jesus. And that's really what we're focusing on, is just how we want to equip everybody and make sure everybody in this room knows how to share your story so that you can bring others to know Jesus. I think the short way to say it is, I remember when my life before Jesus was like this, and now that I know Jesus, it is like this. Fill in the link, whatever your story is, and inviting people into saying, like, what would your life look like if you knew Jesus?

How would that feel? Different. So Alan's really been a big piece of that, too, with the spiritual formation team. Okay, that's a great segue. Hey, welcome to Sherwood Oaks, Bedford.

We're glad you're here with us today. Thank you. It's good to be here. So Maggie's running and helping various ministries do this up in the Bloomington campus. How does your role going to function down here?

Okay, so my role, I do have dual citizenship in Bloomington and Bedford. Yes, of course, I'm from Lawrence county, so I'm more familiar with this culture I suppose you say no more. We know what you're really saying. Go ahead. No, but I have a multifaceted role, stepped into pastoral care, and we're developing a very robust counseling program that will be affecting Bedford as well.

And so that's going to be a part of it. It's focused on the one. Everything we're doing now has a lens of focusing on the one. So what? I've been learning all the language and learning everything as we go along, and I'm going to be helping you implement a lot of these things in Bedford.

And so part of my giftedness is kind of admin and behind the scenes, and I'm here to help you, as you know. But I want the church to know that I'm here to help you. I want you all to have that attitude. By the way, I need. The yard needs to be mowed and some kitchen work needs to be done.

So if you want to help me, this is some ways you can help. Okay. I love all of that. That is fantastic. So, I told the story of the one lost sheep.

Do you guys have a story or a parable of Jesus that kind of lands on this idea and reinforces sort of your heart for the lost or that one? I'm gonna go two ways with this, if that's okay. So I want to say, I think the biggest thing, not a necessarily different story, but in the same story you shared, it's the word rejoice. Or later on, if you read through Luke 15, I mean, so we talk about the lost sheep, and then Jesus goes on to talk about the lost coin, and then the lost son who comes home. And they use the word celebrate in that, too.

They celebrate when the son comes home. They rejoice when the sheep comes home and the sheep is found. And I think it's the rejoicing in one life. I think sometimes we feel like we

have to make. I mean, like, I'm expected to go when 200 people are for Jesus, like, do all these great things.

I mean, that'd be amazing. But I think if, again, we simplify it, that it's just one person at a time, maybe two, maybe three, if God has put those people in your life. But just really praying for and getting excited about one person, every person matters. Every life is an exciting life that we want to follow Jesus. So simplifying that, and I just tell the story when I think about the one.

It can be anyone in your life, like one who's the one person that God puts in your life or in your mind. That maybe you cross paths with. Sometimes I feel like it's people that you already know. For me, it has been my sister. Some people that know me well know that has been a story and a journey in my life that I've been praying for my sister for many, many years.

And sometimes that's just the posture. It just has to be prayer and let God do the work. Other times, there's ones that you may not know and you have to learn their names, but you're like, man, God keeps putting this person in my path, and I keep seeing them. Maybe I should reach out to them. So in what way could you find someone in your life so that you can rejoice when they know Jesus?

I love that. I love that. Alan. I just think about Luke 15 where, you know, as you said, it's set up with the church, basically the religious leaders muttering because Jesus is hanging out with potential ones, the people who are lost. And so that goes out.

You have the sheep, the lost coin, and then the lost boy, the prodigal son who goes off and is wild and all these kind of things, and then finally comes to his senses and wants to come home. I picture him getting his hair, and I think it was probably red and all that kind of stuff. But anyway, it says when the father saw him, he saw him from a distance. So to me, I always think about, the father is a hardworking man. He gets all of his work done as quickly as possible and then sits on the front porch and just looks down the long, distant, dusty road, waiting.

Just waiting. And one day it's him. And a Jewish man never runs, but this guy runs to his son and embraces him and says, let's have the biggest party we've ever had. But then, interesting piece. There's the older brother, brother who represents the 99, basically the church, who doesn't like it said, how are you going to do this with your son who squandered all of your money on prostitutes and wild living?

And the father says, he was lost. Now he's found. He was dead. Now he's alive. We're going to have a celebration.

And you. I've always tried. I've always loved you. And I will always love you. And so when we start focusing more on the one, we are the 99, and we need to celebrate the one and realize it's not so much about us.

We're going to take care of the 99. We're going to be secure, but we're really wanting to focus on the people who do not know Jesus. I love that. Yep, it's good stuff. Can I share something with that?

So I think, Alan, just to go along with that, is what we see, is that when we focus on the one, is that it's like the ripple effect. Acts one eight says, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. It starts with us, like, it starts with us and our one and then works its way out to the ends of the earth. We can't go to the ends of the earth first. I mean, it has to be.

Be the one. So I think that's what you're saying is like, the 99, we're taken care of. We know Jesus. Not that it makes it easy every day, but we know Jesus. And so how do we intentionally find someone that we can pray for and help them know Jesus?

And then that person invites in someone else and all of a sudden we're to the ends of the earth and inviting everyone to have a relationship with. I think it's really easy to turn inward as a church. I think it's very natural and it's happened throughout history. And so we're just. Just a little intentionality with language and just a mindset that we have a great church here and we want more people to know Jesus and then become a part of church.

It's focused on that one and people who are lost. And so it's really, to me, it's just living out the mission of Jesus, who came to seek and save the lost. And so here we are. So we're equipping. We want as a leadership, equip everybody to be able to share their story, to find those ones and bring them to Jesus.

Sorry, guys, I could talk about this all day. I know we have a time limit. I get really excited about it. But, Alan, something you just said reminded me, we talked about this a little bit earlier, that when Jesus is telling the story of the lost sheep, he's telling it to people so that they understand. But in that story, he doesn't say, I will go find your lost sheep for you.

He says, go find your lost sheep and bring it home. So Jesus isn't doing, I mean, Jesus is always doing work in people's hearts, but he is calling us to do it. It's not just invite someone to church and let the church and the, you know, other people do the work. No, like, it is our job. And he sends them out two by two or 70 or 70 to go do that.

If you watch a chosen, I don't know if you've watched the chosen. I love that. Yeah. Where they go out and they kind of mumble and bumble around a little bit, but the message gets out, and that's probably us. It's like, okay, I'm not sure I know what I'm doing, but I'm here.

Yeah. I always feel confident, though, that if we are confident enough and brave enough and bold enough to pray for someone and then maybe eventually say, hey, what's your story? You know, Jesus, like, start that conversation, God is going to take our bumbling, like, our faulty words, whatever it is, and he's going to make it work. I mean, we don't have to be perfect in it. There's no formula to doing this, as much as it is praying for people and starting a relationship with them, just being available.

What's your word? What is the word, your hebrew word? Oh, just being an. Why does that make me think of a restaurant? Panini?

Is that a. I'm done with you, Alan. Sit down. Hey, can we give these guys just around. They did a great job.

Panini, hanini. Panini. Panini, panera. Yeah, I can see the restaurant connection there. As we prepare for a time of communion, I want to go back to that idea of Sean.

How many of you guys remember one life and participated in that when we did it? I know Susan did, because there's an amazing story. There a few here who have been part of that. It was five years ago. Maggie was saying this idea of the one life where the one person that God naturally puts in your life, that he wants to use you to bring them into the kingdom.

And I remember when I got that little card we were supposed to fill out, and I couldn't think of one person. I thought of three. Three people I put on the card. And they seem like an interesting little trio there, but. Huh.

Okay. We'll just see what happens. Roger Gales called me with one of them. So I put that person's dad on my card. I thought.

I don't. He's young. This kid's a young guy. I'm going to put his dad on the card. So of those three people, let me just tell you this.

Two of those people currently attend Sherwood Oaks, Bedford.

Two of them I personally baptized. Yeah. Yes.

So as we've been talking about this, I know the Holy Spirit has probably brought a name, maybe two, maybe into your head while we've been talking. He may be saying. He may be saying, you are the little lost lamb. And today I want to lift you up and I want to take you home today. I want you to say yes to me and I want you to be baptized.

And I want you to join this old flock here and grow up and be surrounded by people who love you and can lead you to green pastures and still waters. And you'll have, and it'll be a good experience under the care of the good shepherd with a good flock. But if you're already in the flock, as Alan has said, and you love hanging out with your sheep buddies,

that's good. You enjoy the green pastures, you love the still waters. If that's the case, then I think Jesus is asking you to be not just a sheep, but a fisherman, a fisher of men.

So as we've been talking, I think a name, a friend, a co worker, maybe a family member has passed through your head and your heart. And so I'm going to ask you to do something. On the chairs in front of you, there was a little card. Now, here's what I don't want you to do. I don't want you to put their name, date, Social Security number, all that on there.

I want you to put their initials, their first and last initial, because you're going to put it someplace where you're going to see it and you're going to pray for them. But it's possible that they may also see it. And I don't want them to feel unnecessarily like they're being targeted. But I do want them, once they know and have come back to the fold, to know that they were loved. And I want you to be reminded to pray intentionally for them.

You may have ten, but don't overload yourself just yet. The first couple just put their initials down, maybe the first three. So those three names that I put down, all of them are in some path of their progress and walk with Jesus. Now, what did I do to do that? Did I call them and say, hey, I'm having a Bible study on my front porch, get over here, I'm praying for you and you're going to come to Jesus.

No, I didn't. All I did was pray for them. When there was an opportunity to have a conversation, I had a conversation. The second name on my list, it was a week. It was a week.

And I saw them at church and said, so, hey, what's going on? You've been coming to church. What's your next step? And go, well, I want to get baptized. I go, oh, that's, that's great.

When you want to do it. I mean, he says, well, is there water in the baptistry, I'm like, yeah. Who do you want to be? Who want to. Who do you want to baptize you?

Well, I mean, I know you would you baptize me? Yes, I would. And so we sat there on the front row with the Bloomington church, and we prayed. And then we went back and I put some waiters on, and he put some things on, and we had a baptism. It was a week.

The other was not quite a week, but I prayed for him.

And God did the work during our time of communion. Oftentimes, communion is a time where we really just focus on ourselves and maybe our sin and how imperfect we are today. Give that a rest. I give you permission to not do a deep dive into the dark and cobwebby recesses of your heart. Today, I want you to think and pray for that one person.

Jesus has invited us to a table. He's pulled out the chair and says, hey, come here and sit. And you all said yes to that. You said, thank you, I will. I would like to sit at your table.

We're gonna have a meal together. You're at the table. But there's always a couple of empty chairs around that table, and one of them has your person's name on that. And so today, I'm gonna ask you to pray for that one person. And as you take the bread and the cup, you thank God that he brought you to his table.

And I also want you to pray for that person, that the Lord would begin to work in partnership with your prayers. He says, you have not, because you ask not. So you're going to ask. You're going to ask God to draw them to his table, and you're going to be available to help them lead the way and not trip over the carpet when they come into the dining room. You're going to be there available to help.

But God's going to do the work. God's going to extend the invitation. You're going to be responsive. You're going to pray for them. That's all you're going to do.

You're going to pray for them. Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we thank you for the deep invitation we have received from you. We also were out there, and many of our stories, we call them gory glory stories because our lives were a hot mess. But a lot of us, our lives seemed perfectly fine.

We were going to hell, but we were going down a very pleasant path to get there. You loved both of us equally. The gory glory story and just the nice and easy breezy story. You loved us both. You came looking for us, and you brought us home.

You put us on your shoulders. You brought us home. And the angels rejoiced. And those who had been praying for us rejoiced when we said yes to you. So, lord, today, as we take the bread and the cup, we give thanks for your sacrificial love, leaving behind the comfort and the ease.

And you ran after us. And we pray God that just as we are thankful for that, that you make us eager to run after others. In Jesus name, amen.

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