Good morning! For those of you that don’t know me, my name is Matt Chesney and I am the director of youth and outreach here at Eagle Ridge and I am so glad that you are here today – whether that is here in Midland, or in Beaverton, or online – welcome! We are in the middle of a series focused on Hearing God’s voice. And it’s a really powerful series, I think, because we spend a lot of time learning about Jesus and maybe studying our Bibles, but we forget to consult the source! Or perhaps some of us don’t even know that we are able to hear from God directly. So, let’s review where we’re at so far…

In the last several weeks (and even in our previous series) we’ve discussed this idea that our culture and world likes to tell us that we need to do some things to get to God (stairs image). We need to work hard, be better, and earn our way into God’s heart so that he’ll either love us, give us what we want, or at the minimum let us into heaven. We’ve also been discussing that this perspective leads us to believe that God is either Angry, Ambivalent, or Absent (faces picture). Of course, this way of thinking is completely backwards to what Jesus taught and what the Bible says. It’s the way the WORLD thinks, but not the way GOD is… so, of course it’s backwards…

Last week, Pastor Bill spoke to us about a change we need to make in our thinking and mindset. We need to recognize and accept that we once we cross that line of faith and become believers, we are ADOPTED (Cross/adoption picture) into God’s family. And this is not because of anything we have done or earned, but simply because God loves us! He created us, cares for us, and wants a relationship with us! However, being adopted into a family has it’s own challenges and nuances.

\*\*Story of Brandon and TJ – Big Brother question – Becoming a Chesney.

So, that question is… What does it mean to be a child of God? Someone adopted into God’s family… Well, Jesus tells us a story about that very thing to explain it to us, so let’s go take a look at what he wanted to teach us. This is in Luke, chapter 15:

**11**Jesus continued: “There was a man who had two sons. **12**The younger one said to his father, ‘Father, give me my share of the estate.’ So he divided his property between them.

**13**“Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living. **14**After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. **15**So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. **16**He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything.

**17**“When he came to his senses, he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired servants have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! **18**I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. **19**I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired servants.’ **20**So he got up and went to his father.

“But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him.

**21**“The son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’

**22**“But the father said to his servants, ‘Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. **23**Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let’s have a feast and celebrate. **24**For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’ So they began to celebrate.

Now, when reading quickly through this story there are things we tend to pick up on easily and there are things that we don’t pick up on because we live in a different time and culture than the people that lived during the time of Jesus. We easily pick up on the instant forgiveness. We easily pick up on the joy of a father being reunited with his son. But most of us probably gloss over the part about the robe, ring, and sandals.

Robe - Position as son had been restored. Approval, Love, Mercy, and Protection. Symbol of the primary inheritance – this son was now the chief heir to all the father had.

Sandals – Only servants and slaves went barefoot. This was his son – in every possible way.

In 2 Corinthians 5:17 it says:

This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun!

Because once we understand that we have been adopted and what it means to be part of the family… there are certain family expectations that come with being in the family. Just like with Brandon and TJ – TJ had to both come to terms with the fact that a family wanted to love him, but also… he needed to learn what being a Chesney meant. In our family, we try to teach our kids to be respectful, kind, hard-working, good students, helpful to others, and so on. There are family values. As a new believer in Christ, and member of God’s family we are asked to learn the family values and exemplify them in our lives. In the case of the Prodigal Son… he had to give up his wild living.

Being adopted means adopting that family’s values.

But there’s more than that…

Now, you may have noticed that I skipped over the ring. The ring I want to focus on a little bit more than the others…

Ring – Power, authority and responsibility. Symbol of the family. Represent the family.

\*\*Story of my mother’s family store. Family business.

When we are adopted into God’s family we are also brought into the family business – with full authority and responsibility.

Being adopted means joining the family business.

Understanding our role in this business is important. If we continue down in 2 Corinthians 5 and look at verse 20, it says:

So we are Christ’s ambassadors; God is making his appeal through us. We speak for Christ when we plead, “Come back to God!”

So, we are Ambassadors (Ambassador picture). We have been given the ring – the family seal – the symbol and authority to do God’s work in this world, to join the family business. So… what’s our job description? What does it mean to be an ambassador?

\*\*Define Ambassador in general terms: Representing the one who sent them.

See, many people are so excited when they first join the family that they JUMP at the chance to be in the family business and sometimes…. Try to do the boss’ job… or EVEN… try to be the boss… They have dreams of saving the world and bringing everyone to Jesus! Going to Africa and solving the hunger and water crisis there. Moving to the intercity and fixing the homeless problem. Quitting their job and becoming a full-time ministry worker! And all of those things are great… IF that’s what God asks you to do… but here’s the thing… many times he doesn’t. Instead, he has already strategically placed you exactly where he wants you to do the work! Let’s look at Ephesians 2:8-10:

For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

God has prepared in advance what he wants you to do. That engineer job at Dow? Planned. That teaching job at Jefferson Middle School. Planned. That favorite grocery store that you visit every week? Planned. That house where you live? Planned. You are already perfectly positioned to do the work that God wants you to do.

Now, as any employee would probably tell you (even one in a family business) – you do what the boss tells you to do! Which means we have to listen to what he says to us. This means reading in the Bible the job description… and also listening to his voice and prompting on what he would have you do in your everyday life.

The Great Commission: Go and make disciples! -- How are you doing at that?

The Great Commandments: Love God and Love others! -- How are you doing at that?

Now, don’t misunderstand… I’m not asking these questions to make you feel guilty – or to suggest that I’ve got it all together and doing awesome at it.. I don’t and I’m not… I’m asking genuinely because this is what we need to ask ourselves daily. How am I doing at loving others? How am I doing at making disciples? How am I doing at being an ambassador to this world?

So, let’s go through the “job description” in the Bible so we can see what it is we’re supposed to be doing. In Luke, chapter 10, Jesus sends out 72 of his followers to practice doing this work. Here is what he says to them:

After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them two by two ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go. **2**He told them, “The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field. **3**Go! I am sending you out like lambs among wolves. **4**Do not take a purse or bag or sandals; and do not greet anyone on the road.

**5**“When you enter a house, first say, ‘Peace to this house.’ **6**If someone who promotes peace is there, your peace will rest on them; if not, it will return to you. **7**Stay there, eating and drinking whatever they give you, for the worker deserves his wages. Do not move around from house to house.

**8**“When you enter a town and are welcomed, eat what is offered to you. **9**Heal the sick who are there and tell them, ‘The kingdom of God has come near to you.’

Now, I’m not going to lie, as I was preparing for this morning and reading these verses I studied them a bit and learned something I had never really understood before… and I LOVE that!! Isn’t that cool?!? Anyway, in verse 4 he talks about not taking a purse or bag or sandals… and I always kinda understood what that meant – and if you don’t it basically means that we are to rely on God for what we need. You don’t have to know the whole Bible by heart! You don’t have to have a 4-year degree in Christian Ministry, you don’t have to know the right answer to every question! God will provide for you in every situation! However… at the end of verse 4 it says “do not greet anyone on the road.” And I never really understood that… In fact… I was kind of taken aback by it… felt like Jesus was telling these new disciples to be rude! Like, “Hey, Don’t be saying Hi to people when you walk by! You’ve got a job to do!”… and that never really sat well with me… And of course if you read the Bible and your interpretation doesn’t line up with what you know about God… You’re probably wrong! And, of course, I was wrong. Here is why he said that:

\*\*Explanation of greeting people on the road, cultural norms of the time, and trusting God to have the work prepared for you.

\*\*Story of Cultivate – trying to control the process vs. letting God take control of the process.

Being adopted means listening to your heavenly father.

See, what it all comes down to at the end of the day is trusting God and listening to him. Knowing who you are (an adopted child). Knowing that you are in the family business (as an ambassador). And being open and available to doing the work that God has already prepared for you.

So, let’s talk about my schedule… because it isn’t very conducive to doing God’s work. I was so excited to work in a church! I still am, but I thought to myself, “I’m going to get to learn about God and teach others for my job! This is awesome.” But I what that meant to me was I don’t have to worry about doing God’s work… because it will officially be my Job! And I’m a hard-worker! So, I’ll be fine! Yet, I find myself in the office “working” more than I am out doing what God wants me to do.

\*\*Bill at Burger King

 What’s your schedule like?

**Steps to being an ambassador**

1. Does my schedule make opportunities possible?
	1. What can I do to make adjustments?
2. Watch for opportunities that God has already prepared in advance.
	1. “God, What are we up to today?”
	2. Listen! And be ready to listen!
3. How am I doing loving others?