

Jan 3, 2010 "I Am the Bread of Life" John 6:22-40

The next day the crowd that had stayed on the opposite shore of the lake realized that only one boat had been there, and that Jesus had not entered it with his disciples, but that they had gone away alone. 23 Then some boats from Tiberias landed near the place where the people had eaten the bread after the Lord had given thanks. 24 Once the crowd realized that neither Jesus nor his disciples were there, they got into the boats and went to Capernaum in search of Jesus. 25 When they found him on the other side of the lake, they asked him, "Rabbi, when did you get here?" 26 Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, you are looking for me, not because you saw miraculous signs but because you ate the loaves and had your fill. On him God the Father has placed his seal of approval." 28 Then they asked him, "What must we do to do the works God requires?" 29 Jesus answered, "The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent." 30 So they asked him, "What miraculous sign then will you give that we may see it and believe you? What will you do?" 31 Our forefathers ate the manna in the desert; as it is written: 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat.'" 32 Jesus said to them, "I tell you the truth, it is not Moses who has given you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. 33 For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world." 34 "Sir," they said, "from now on give us this bread." 35 Then Jesus declared, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty. 36 But as I told you, you have seen me and still you do not believe. 37 All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away. 38 For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me. 39 And this is the will of him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all that he has given me, but raise them up at the last day. 40 For my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day."

The context: The first "I Am" statement is actually found in the OLD Testament. This is the "burning bush" scene. God had commanded him to go back to Egypt, and Moses offered five excuses why he shouldn't have to do that. His first excuse was: *"Suppose I go to the Israelites and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' Then what shall I tell them?" God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: 'I AM has sent me to you.'" (Exodus 3:13-14)*

Over these 7 weeks, we will be looking at the 7 "I AM" statements of Jesus found in John. Today's is "I AM the Bread of Life. He also says "I AM: (8) the **Light** of the World; (10) the **Gate**; (10) the **Good Shepherd**; (11) the **Resurrection & Life**; (14) the **Way, Truth, and Life**; (15) the True **Vine**. By putting it this way, Jesus was intentionally linking back with the very Name of God in Exodus 3. The Greek language is interesting in John: "ego eimi." Literally, we would say, "**I, myself...I am.**" It is a double emphasis upon the personal pronoun, "I." When Jesus said, "I Am," He not only refers to the "I Am" something...the "I Am" is sufficient within itself. By phrasing it this way, each and every one of these statements by Jesus is a direct claim to **being God**. That Jesus is like something (bread, light, gate, etc.) is secondary to the **primary** emphasis: "**I am.**" Jesus = God. That is the central claim being made.

2 Parts of this message:

I. There were 2 groups of "**Disciples**" (both groups are called "**disciples**" or "**learners**" or "**followers**")

A.) The "Outsiders." It's easy to miss the true identity of Jesus. His claims were so outside the box, that I'm easily able to relate to their reactions. They were "disciples" for several reasons:

i.) Some were **materialists**. They had a simple but direct request (Give us this bread). They wanted something to fill them up. The miraculous signs were interesting, but they were looking for food for the belly. 3 sayings: *"The way to a man's heart is through his stomach." "Eating to live vs. living to eat." "What have you done for me lately?"* There are many people who follow Jesus primarily because they believe He will give them more stuff. The problem with a Happy Meal is that they never make you Happy. We always run out. We always want more. Physical bread is important for our physical life; but life is far more than just this. We need more than this to live. This IS one level of discipleship – "What's in it for me?"

This is the YOUNGER brother (Prodigal Son) syndrome. "You don't search after me – you had your fill."

ii.) Vs. 28 Some were **legalists** "*what must we do to do the works God requires?*" Jesus said to BELIEVE.

Legalism, is an attempt to out-perform God's grace by doing good deeds. The OLDER brother in the prodigal son story was afflicted with a legalistic worldview.

iii.) Some were **spectators** They originally followed because they were curious. 3 miracles in John 6: He healed the sick, fed the multitude, and walked on water. Now they wanted him to perform another miracle:

30 *"What miraculous sign then will you give that we may see it and believe you? What will you do? When they heard the terms of His conditions, and after having their physical needs met, they grumbled (v 41), said it was a hard teaching (66), so when they heard "Take it or Leave it" they left.*

John 6:66 *"From this time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him."*

B.) The **Committed**. v68 "Many" but not "all" left Jesus. And one of the 12 who stayed "is a devil."

II. **"Jesus – I AM The Bread of Life"** *"He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty."*

27 *Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you.*

We talk about "Bread" as meaning the basic substance we need for survival. There is a physical type of bread, like **Manna**. The problem is that Manna literally **spoiled** the next day. It was before Tupperware. Hoarding materialism doesn't work. We've just gone through **Christmas**. How long does it take for the "gifts" to lose their newness? We can play with the toys, wear the clothes, enjoy the vacation – but they have a short shelf life. Parents will tell you how frustrating it is to buy toys & the kids end up playing with the boxes they come in. Jesus is saying that you have your daily bread – and that's important. Our bodies must have nutrients, water & oxygen. But there's far more than just the material. There is the spiritual.

Jesus isn't just a great prophet/teacher/philosopher/moral example/leader: He is God. If I believe this, it changes everything. We worship Him. If we don't get this we go back to vs. 28. If Jesus is God, and I've eaten of that bread, then things turn.

This is about having a relationship with Christ and grasping the depth of the God's love. We tend to go in the other places: being shame-based (like the Prodigal); or the "I gotta be good" (like the Older brother) treadmill.

We're starting a brand new year (and decade). It's a new start. But on the other hand, we don't want to load you down with a lengthy "to do" list. It's primarily about loving God. That's @ the heart of it. It may/may not touch your emotions.

The basic question is: Will I submit to God? In this context, we see 3 responses of "disciples":

- 1.) The **"Outsiders"** didn't understand the relationship Jesus was calling them to. One group of "Disciples" decided that they'd no longer follow Jesus because Jesus wasn't going to meet their expectations. He wasn't going to give them an easy life.
- 2.) There was the one, **Judas**, who was both an "Insider/Outsider." He also made a conscious decision. He didn't understand what was going on, either. At the root of his problem = he didn't want to trust God – he wouldn't align with Jesus.
- 3.) **Peter** modeled the life of faith. He didn't really understand it. He is going to make a lot of bad decisions. But he made a conscious choice to align with God's will. Perfection is not demanded or required.

Think of being in love. There are many behaviors of love. But love is more than a list of love.

We don't work for this bread – we receive it. It's a gift. It's given on a daily basis. You don't get it just once and that'll do it. You don't get it and then go stash it away somewhere. Jesus gives us His grace. We've got to maintain that primary relationship or it'll go astray. That's what spiritual disciplines are about. On the one hand, we receive God's grace freely; but on the other hand, we make intentional commitments to stay connected.

It's no coincidence that we are having the sermon, "I Am the Bread of Life" on communion Sunday. It is a reminder that the sacrament of bread is not about the physical, material bread – but is upon our receiving Jesus into our hearts. He is our enduring food, our living water, and abiding presence. We not only receive Jesus, we

also proclaim Him. Your presence this morning in Holy Communion discloses to all that: “I believe...and I receive Him into my life...and I am a witness to His love, grace and kindness.”