

Sunday Sermon

3/10/24

Series: I AM

Passage: John 6:28-40

Title: I AM the Bread of Life

Good morning, Church! It's mid-March. We are officially kicking off our new series, "I AM" this week. We'll be in John 6 this morning. This series will be a six-week, 7-sermon series that will take us right through Good Friday, Easter, and beyond. In this series we will be unpacking the 7 "I AM" sayings of Jesus in the Gospel of John.

7 is a significant number in scripture. It is a number signifying fullness and completeness. On the 7th day of creation God rested. Why? Because the work was complete. In the OT, blood was sprinkled 7 times on the sacrificial altar as a symbol of complete forgiveness. In the story of Joshua and the battle of Jericho, the Lord told Joshua to march around the city for 7 days with 7 priests blowing 7 rams horns leading the procession, and on the 7th day after marching around the city 7 times with the 7 priests blowing the 7 trumpets, all the people needed to do was shout and the walls came down because the Lord had already given them Jericho.

In the Gospel of John Jesus makes 7 "I AM" statements. "I AM" is also a significant statement as, in the OT, it is the name that God used to reveal himself to Moses. Exodus 3:13, **"Then Moses said to God, 'If I come to the people of Israel and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' what shall I say to them?' God said to Moses, 'I AM WHO I AM.' And he said, 'Say this to the people of Israel: 'I AM has sent me to you.'"**

Listen: Naive are those who dispute that Jesus never claimed to be God. Jesus uses the statement "I AM" frequently throughout his ministry. Only instead of saying, "I AM has sent me to you." Jesus says of himself, "I AM."

Matthew 14:27, Jesus says to his disciples, "Take heart. I AM. Do not be afraid."

In the Garden of Gethsemane at his arrest, those arresting Jesus state they want Jesus of Nazareth and Jesus answers them, "I AM" and every one of them drew back and fell to the ground.

And here in John's Gospel, Jesus uses 7 "I AM" statements as a reference to his divine identity. Namely, that he was completely, fully, the One True God.

C.S. Lewis, in his book *Mere Christianity*, says, **"You can shut him up for a fool, you can spit at him and kill him as a demon or you can fall at his feet and call him Lord and God, but let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about his being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to."** – C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*

This series is intended to bring into focus for us the identity of Jesus Christ. I AM. But even in that statement, people are still left with a question: You are what? It's great that you are – you're the self-existent one – but what difference does that make for me? How does the fact that you intersect with my life? What does a relationship with you, an encounter with you, attachment to you, devotion to you bring to my life? Jesus says, "Ah. Let me tell you what my being I AM means."

So this morning we will be unpacking the first of his I AM statements: I AM the Bread of Life. So let's open our bibles to John chapter 6 this morning. We'll be reading verses 28-51.
(read and pray)

I hope you don't mind, but I brought with me this morning my absolute favorite food of all time. These are Buffalo Bites from the Winfield Grill on the corner of Winton and Mayfield in the city of Rochester. Specifically, they are hot Buffalo Bites with extra sauce. These things are spectacular. Growing up I always thought of myself as a steak and potatoes kind of guy and would have said that that was my favorite food until I came across these little slices of heaven, and they changed my life.

In fact, I wouldn't be all that surprised to hear that, back in the kitchen of the Winfield grill, the chef receives these things, like manna in the wilderness, straight from the hand of God every morning. That is of course except on Sunday because apparently God is busy resting on Sundays and cannot distribute his manna from heaven, just ask Chick-fil-a.

The thing is: these things are so good, I could just eat them until I explode. But I have a problem, eventually they run out. Like a drug, I might get my fix for a moment, but I'm never really satisfied. Even when I get to the end of my meal and I'm stuffed, I still kinda want more. And then tomorrow, I really want more. The filling is temporary. The satisfaction is fleeting.

Jesus says, ***"I AM the Bread of Life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst."***

Now obviously we know that Jesus isn't talking about our calorie intake. It's not like as Christians we never need to eat again. What Jesus is going after here is concerning the deepest longings of the human heart. It was G.K. Chesterton who said, ***"Every man who goes into a brothel is looking for God."***

Philosopher and theologian Blaise Pascal, echoes this sentiment stating, ***"There is a God-shaped vacuum in the heart of each man which cannot be satisfied by any created thing but only by God the Creator, made known through Jesus Christ."***

Question: What do you long for this morning? The desires of your heart, the goals for your life, the drivers behind your actions, what are they?

Why do you want those things? More money, better job, good marriage, family time, long vacations, secure retirement, leisure activities – we do we want those things? I would

propose that at the bottom of all of those things is the human search for this thing called life. Good life, meaningful life, fulfilled life, abundant life.

When Jesus says, "I am the Bread" what are the next two words? "Of life" – He's not talking about food. He's talking about life. 8 times he uses the word life in this passage.

Jesus is making the point that their problem is not that they don't have food, it's that they don't have life. True life. Life that comes from heaven. Life that can only come from God the source of life. Without a relationship with him, we are missing something.

And in that Jesus uses the image of bread. Now to fully understand this, it's helpful to understand how they understood bread because, in a world of garbage plates and sour patch kids and buffalo bites, we look at bread and we go, "bread? So what? Who wants bread? What are you having for thanksgiving? Bread. What are you having for a late night snack? Bread." This would connect way more with some of us if Jesus said, "I am the ice cream of life that comes down from heaven." We would be like, "Yes! Now you're scratching my itch. Give me some of that Tonight Dough! I need some more Panda Paws in my life." But instead we're like, "Bread?"

But what we need to understand it that for many cultures and peoples in the world having bread is to have food. Bread is a gift. It is used for the basic nourishment of the body. We all have watched the prison movie where the inmate is locked up and the guard slips him once a day, if he's lucky, bread and water. Why bread and water? Because it's enough to keep you alive.

It's like what Israel went through wandering in the wilderness after God delivered them from Egypt but before they entered the promised land. In Exodus 16, we read that the people began grumbling against Moses because they had no food. They wanted to go back to slavery, back to Egypt, because at least there they knew they had food. And God said to Moses, "**Behold, I am about to rain bread from heaven for you...at twilight you shall eat meat, and in the morning you shall be filled with bread. Then you shall know that I am the Lord your God.**" And for 40 years, the Lord faithfully proved himself to be an unending source of life for his people. Providing bread from heaven.

That's what is being referenced in John 6:31 when the people say to Jesus, "**Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat.'**"

You know, there is another interesting story about bread in scripture that was pointed out to me this week. If you would flip over to Genesis 18 with me for a moment. If you don't know the story of Genesis. The first 11 chapters of Genesis is the origin story – Creation, Fall, Sin, Human Depravity and our need for God to do something. Starting in chapter 12, is the story of God doing something, starting with choosing a people out of the nations to be his own. This work began with God calling Abraham telling him that he would become the father of a great nation – the nation of Israel. Problem is that Abraham didn't yet have the offspring that God had promised, and Genesis 18 is a story about the Lord with some of his angel

friends visiting Abraham and his wife Sarah with the message that a son, Issac, is coming. That's the context. Look with me at verse 3. When Abraham saw the men has ran out to greet them and says to them, ***“O Lord, if I have found favor in your sight, do not pass by your servant. Let a little water be brought, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree, while I bring a morsel of bread, that you may refresh yourselves, and after the you may pass on – since you have come to your servant.”***

So they say, “Sure.” And Abraham goes and tells his wife to take 3 “se’ahs” or “measures” of fine flour and make cakes of bread.

Now, this doesn't sound all that interesting until we understand what a measure of flour is. 1 measure of flour was enough to make approx. 25 lbs of bread. Abraham had his wife make 3 measures – that's 75 lbs of bread. That's a ridiculous amount of flour and a ridiculous amount of bread for three people.

What's going on here? For Abraham it isn't about supplying the men with enough bread for the day. It's about supplying them with enough bread for the journey. Bread in abundance so that they would never lack.

Now turn with me to Matthew 13:33. Jesus is teaching his disciples and the crowds around him about the kingdom of heaven. And he says to them, ***“The kingdom of heaven is like leaven that a woman took and hid in three measures of flour, till it was all leavened.”***

And we say, “Huh, that's a strangely specific, strangely large amount of flour.” You don't think Jesus has the story of Abraham and Sarah in his mind? What's he trying to say? That like Abraham wasn't solely concerned with just supplying the men with enough for the day but the journey, Jesus is making the connection saying, “The kingdom of heaven is like that.” God wants to be your abundant source and abundant supply. And like leaven, it just starts with a small amount, but if you let it permeate your life, God is enough to fill the whole thing.

It's about life. An abundance of life. Your father's ate manna in the wilderness and they died. Temporary satisfaction. It wasn't enough to give them eternal life. Chris ate his buffalo bites, and guess what, it wasn't enough, he needs something more. In our lives we chase fun, and wealth, and rest, and companionship, and meaning, and pleasure, and security. We hunger for those things. But they don't satisfy. God says, “I satisfy.” Have you received my bread from heaven? Have you encountered my Son? He is the Bread of Life.

We began our reading this morning in verse 28. Here at the end, I want to go back there because I think it frames well all that Jesus is saying in this passage.

In verse 28 the question that the crowd asks Jesus is, ***‘What must we do, to be doing the works of God?’ Jesus answered them, ‘This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent.’***

This proposes a fundamental question for each of us this morning: Who is Jesus Christ? Scripture tells us that God, in his love, only sees people in two ways: those who have life and those who do not have life. 1 John 5, ***“This is the testimony: that God gives us eternal***

life, and this life is in his Son. Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life. - 1 John 5:11-12

Jesus says, "I AM the Bread of Life." Who he is to you is important. He is God's gift to humanity. Our true life, including our eternal life, is found in him. Would you believe his testimony: The work of God is to believe in the One he sent. Jesus is the bread of God who gives his true, abundant, eternal life to the world. That his life is the only thing that can satisfy our hungry and thirsty souls. That when we come to him he will never cast us out, but will raise us up with him on the last day.

David says, ***"As the deer pants for stream water, so my soul pants for you, oh God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God."***

As we close, I'll just ask all of you to close your eyes for a moment. I want to ask you a question: What do you hunger for? I'm not talking about lunch, but your heart. What do you hunger for? Do you hunger for God?

In your desires, does the Lord make the top 10? How about the top 20?

When it comes to the longings and desires of our lives, God is actually what we are looking for, but we've packaged him wrong.

Football is a great game, but it makes a lousy god.

Travel brings us much enjoyment, but it makes a lousy god.

Pleasure can be exciting in the moment, but it makes a lousy god.

The pursuit of worldly things will never satisfy the deepest longings of the human heart.

They make a lousy god.

Jesus says, "I am the Bread of Life." He alone can fill you with life, and in every situation, be your abundant supply. As Abraham made enough bread for the entire journey, so Christ is more than enough for the entirety of our journey. But his question to you is "Will you eat?" Will you feed on his Word? Drink from his cup? Follow his truth? Let him fill you?

Because here's the truth: When we come to him with a genuine heart and press into him to see if he's really enough, we encounter the God who stands before us and says to us, "I AM."

I AM



Then Moses said to God, "If I come to the people of Israel and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' what shall I say to them?" God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM." And he said, "Say this to the people of Israel: 'I AM has sent me to you.'"

- Ex. 3:13

“You can shut him up for a fool, you can spit at him and kill him as a demon or you can fall at his feet and call him Lord and God, but let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about his being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to.”

– C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*

“Jesus said to them, ‘I AM the Bread of Life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.’”

- John 6:35

“Every man who goes into a brothel is looking for God.”

- G.K. Chesterton

“There is a God-shaped vacuum in the heart of each man which cannot be satisfied by any created thing but only by God the Creator, made known through Jesus Christ.”

- Blaise Pascal

“Jesus said to them, ‘I AM the Bread of Life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.’”

- John 6:35

“Then the Lord said to Moses, ‘Behold, I am about to rain bread from heaven for you...at twilight you shall eat meat, and in the morning you shall be filled with bread. Then you shall know that I am the Lord your God.’”

- Ex. 16:4,12

***“Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness;
as it is written, ‘He gave them bread from
heaven to eat.’”***

- John 6:31

“O Lord, if I have found favor in your sight, do not pass by your servant. Let a little water be brought, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree, while I bring a morsel of bread, that you may refresh yourselves, and after the you may pass on – since you have come to your servant.”

- Gen. 18:3-5

“And Abraham went quickly into the tent to Sarah and said, ‘Quick! Three seahs of fine flour! Knead it, and make cakes of bread.’”

- Gen. 18:6

“The kingdom of heaven is like leaven that a woman took and hid in three measures of flour, till it was all leavened.”

- Matthew 13:33

“Then they said to him, ‘What must we do, to be doing the works of God?’ Jesus answered them, ‘This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent.’”

- John 6:28

“This is the testimony: that God gives us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.”

- 1 John 5:11-12

“As the deer pants for stream water, so my soul pants for you, oh God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.”

- Ps. 42:1-2