



“I AM” WHO JESUS SAID HE IS

WEEK 1: THE BREAD OF LIFE

SERMON STUDY GUIDE

Daily Readings and Reflections
for Personal or Family Study



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MONDAY

BACKGROUND

John, in his account of the life of Jesus, gives us seven self-descriptions of Jesus introduced by “I am”. This July through August sermon series will focus on these truth claims about our Lord. Our attempt is to unpack these scriptures to help us understand Jesus better.

When Moses was confronted by God in the burning bush in chapter 3 of Exodus and told to take God’s message to the Israelites, Moses asked God, who he should say sent him. God’s answer was “I AM WHO I AM”. Implicit in God’s self-description is that God is eternal (timeless—no tense), self-existing, self-sufficient, Creator and sustainer of all. God considered that name sufficient to explain Himself. We will find in Jesus’ “I am” statements a similar depth for understanding God, the Son.

Our first reading provides context for Jesus’ statement “I am the bread of life”.

READING: John 6:15-29

¹⁵ Jesus, knowing that they intended to come and make him king by force, withdrew again to a mountain by himself.

Jesus Walks on the Water

¹⁶ When evening came, his disciples went down to the lake, ¹⁷ where they got into a boat and set off across the lake for Capernaum. By now it was dark, and Jesus had not yet joined them. ¹⁸ A strong wind was blowing and the waters grew rough. ¹⁹ When they had rowed about three or four miles, they saw Jesus approaching the boat, walking on the water; and they were frightened. ²⁰ But he said to them, “It is I; don’t be afraid.” ²¹ Then they were willing to take him into the boat, and immediately the boat reached the shore where they were heading.

²² 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.

Jesus the Bread of Life

²⁵ When they found him on the other side of the lake, they asked him, “Rabbi, when did you get here?”

²⁶ Jesus answered, “Very truly I tell you, you are looking for me, not because you saw the signs I performed but because you ate the loaves and had your fill. ²⁷ Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. For 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.”

THINGS TO PONDER

1. What do you think the people are looking for?
2. How does what Jesus want, and what the searchers want, differ?
3. What do you want (or need) from Jesus?

PRAYER

Lord,

In this topsy turvy world it is hard to keep our heads on straight about what is and what is not important. Today help me to love You with all that I am, and love others as I do myself. Help me to be patient with others and not easily offended.
Amen.

TUESDAY

BACKGROUND

Imagine Mexican cuisine without tortillas, Indian food without nan, Middle Eastern food without Pita or any Italian food without bread. Bread in some form is a vital food source almost everywhere.

Jesus had just fed 5000 with two fish and 5 small loaves of barley bread with 12 baskets of leftovers.

The hearers were primed to hear what Jesus had to say about bread.

Bread would provide a fitting metaphor to explain man's need for God and what He has to offer. Would the crowd listen, would they really process His message?

It seems that God expects us to pay attention, meditate, ponder, and dig in at times. Come hungry, savor each bite, really taste, to get the most---out of what He says.

READING: John 6:30-40

³⁰ So they asked him, "What sign then will you give that we may see it and believe you? What will you do?" ³¹ Our ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written: 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat.'"

³² Jesus said to them, "Very truly I tell you, 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 the bread that comes down from heaven and gives life to the world."

³⁴ "Sir," they said, "always give us this bread."

³⁵ Then Jesus declared, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever 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 those 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 those 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 them up at the last day."

THINGS TO PONDER

1. How is Jesus like manna?
2. What promises does Jesus make in verses 35-40?
3. It is easy to read the Bible with all kinds of distracting thoughts. What helps you to focus and really process?

PRAYER

Lord, You know that I come to spend time with You pretty scattered at times. Help me to realize that You are present and listening. Help me today to listen to guidance as I navigate this world. Help me to also listen and pay attention to the needs of others. I love You God. Amen.

WEDNESDAY

BACKGROUND

It seems like we are prone to grumble. When we don't agree with statements or actions, we hunt down someone to hear our complaint, share our grumble, or our peeve. We are less likely to turn to the source for clarification or discussion. Often, that may not be possible.

In today's reading the Jews are grumbling and Jesus says, STOP. Their recourse was obvious, ask Jesus. Jesus' does not soft pedal the truth.

When we have issues or questions God wants us to lean on Him for understanding. Sometimes, we are left with trusting alone.

In today's reading Jesus is explaining Himself to an audience who doesn't want their established thinking disturbed. He addresses their complaint which challenges them even more.

When you don't understand, things don't fit, do you tend to grumble or press on for understanding or truth?

READING: John 6:41-50

⁴¹At this the Jews there began to grumble about him because he said, "I am the bread that came down from heaven." ⁴²They said, "Is this not Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How can he now say, 'I came down from heaven'?"

⁴³"Stop grumbling among yourselves," Jesus answered. ⁴⁴"No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws them, and I will raise them up at the last day. ⁴⁵It is written in the Prophets: 'They will all be taught by God.' Everyone who has heard the Father and learned from him comes to me. ⁴⁶No one has seen the Father except the one who is from God; only he has seen the Father. ⁴⁷Very truly I tell you, the one who believes has eternal life. ⁴⁸I am the bread of life. ⁴⁹Your ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness, yet they died. ⁵⁰But here is the bread that comes down from heaven, which anyone may eat and not die.

THINGS TO PONDER

1. What tends to push your grumble button? Can you see a better solution or avenue to take other than complaining or bickering? Explain.
2. What claims is Jesus making in today's reading?
3. For the rest of the day, replace grumbling or complaining with prayer or thanksgiving.

THURSDAY

BACKGROUND

One of the ways we can look at today's scripture is through physiology. Our bodies take in proteins and carbohydrates for fuel (energy) and to build and repair. We, in truth, become what we eat. Just looking at, and admiring food will do nothing for the body.

We can likewise, collect the sayings of Jesus in many Bibles, look at them, caress them, dust them daily without spiritual effect. An active process of taking into our mind His thoughts, Jesus' desires, His principles, and the Holy Spirit, and submitting to Him can change us into a new creature.

Jesus is explaining to us and these grumbling Jews the spiritual process of becoming a new eternal creation using a bread analogy.

READING: John 6:51-59

⁵¹I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats this bread will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world."

⁵²Then the Jews began to argue sharply among themselves, "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?"

⁵³Jesus said to them, "Very truly I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. ⁵⁴Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise them up at the last day. ⁵⁵For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink. ⁵⁶Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in them. ⁵⁷Just as the living Father sent me and I live because of the Father, so the one who feeds on me will live because of me. ⁵⁸This is the bread that came down from heaven. Your ancestors ate manna and died, but whoever feeds on this bread will live forever." ⁵⁹He said this while teaching in the synagogue in Capernaum.

THINGS TO PONDER

1. What do you think Jesus means by "eating His flesh and drinking His blood"?
2. What part of this reading is hard to understand?
3. What is necessary to move from looking at words in your Bible, to eating and gaining energy from the material for growth?

PRAYER;

Lord, stimulate my hunger and thirst for You. May I go more from sitting at the table and watching the meal to purposeful consumption.

FRIDAY

BACKGROUND

This week's reading may not be appetizing fare for the seeker-friendly service. Even some of the disciples are grumbly and about to throw in the towel. When Jesus asks His disciples for a gut check, Peter replies that there is nowhere else to go to for Jesus is the Holy One of God. Peter knows the truth and intends to remain steadfast.

Today Christians may face increasing challenges, and lack of favor with some who are antagonistic. We, like Peter, can decide to be steadfast, for there is nowhere else to go for the words of eternal life from the Holy One of God.

READING: John 6:60-71

⁶⁰ On hearing it, many of his disciples said, "This is a hard teaching. Who can accept it?"

⁶¹ Aware that his disciples were grumbling about this, Jesus said to them, "Does this offend you? ⁶² Then what if you see the Son of Man ascend to where he was before! ⁶³ The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you—they are full of the Spirit and life. ⁶⁴ Yet there are some of you who do not believe." For Jesus had known from the beginning which of them did not believe and who would betray him. ⁶⁵ He went on to say, "This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless the Father has enabled them."

⁶⁶ From this time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him.

⁶⁷ "You do not want to leave too, do you?" Jesus asked the Twelve.

⁶⁸ Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. ⁶⁹ We have come to believe and to know that you are the Holy One of God."

⁷⁰ Then Jesus replied, "Have I not chosen you, the Twelve? Yet one of you is a devil!" ⁷¹ (He meant Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, who, though one of the Twelve, was later to betray him.)

THINGS TO PONDER

1. Why do you think that Peter and the rest of the 12 decided to stay?
2. What keeps you from throwing in the towel when things seem to fall apart?
3. How can you encourage others who are struggling? Many are struggling just with living in this new reality of Covid. Encourage someone today by text, in person, or a note. Realistically, there is probably no one who could not use a gesture of care.