

## **I am the Bread of Life (John 6:35)**

**Reading:** John 6:25-59

This morning as we are starting a study of Jesus' I Am... sayings, which will take us through to Easter.

In the first of those statements Jesus says, 'I am...the bread of life.'  
Now we need to understand the significance of Jesus using the preface, 'I am'.

The most self-revealing painting an artist ever produces is the self-portrait.  
Self-portraits are statements as well as disclosures.  
They are dangerous because they uncover what artists really think of themselves.

The "I AM" statements in the gospel of John are Jesus Christ's self-portraits, his own way of describing himself.

These statements not only tell us who Jesus is, but they also say something about his mission, his purpose, and his reason for taking on flesh.

The phrase "I am" in Jesus' statements is not used in the everyday sense, as in "I am hungry" or "I am tired."

Instead, Jesus' statements are meant as absolutes.  
"I am" means "I am, have been, and always will be."  
They are statements only God can rightfully make.

And this is what so angers the Jewish leadership.

The Jews of Jesus' time were fiercely monotheistic, they believed that there was only one God, Yahweh (YHWH).

As the first of the 10 commandments says, "You shall have no other gods besides Me." (Deut. 5:7) They loathed all other gods, whom they called idols.

The one and only God created everything out of nothing, and is the only Person in the entire universe worthy of worship.

Anything or anyone else that demanded worship was to be scorned.

God did not share His glory with anyone.  
And His name, Yahweh, is an unlimited name.  
It's basically translated "I AM".

In Exodus 3 Moses meets God in the burning bush and asks God's name...  
It is there that he declares "I AM Who I AM"

The name, I AM, suggests the following idea, " I AM \_\_\_\_\_ "  
I AM holy. I AM your savior. I AM merciful. I AM good.  
I am True, I am righteous.

God's name lets any and every perfection to be added to the end of it.

Then along comes Jesus, and He starts making claims about Himself that begin with the Greek phrase "εγω ειμι", or I AM.

Taken together, these statements are nothing less than a claim to be the very God of the Jews, Yahweh in human flesh.

Nothing could be more audacious, and dangerous, to say in the midst of a fiercely monotheistic people.

You see it in the reaction of the Jewish leaders who plot to get rid of this blasphemer and so preserve faith in the one true God.

Jesus claims to be God, and then adds more to it with powerful images of bread, light, and shepherding.

Here in 6:35 he makes the claim to be the bread of life.

Bread is a stable part of our diet...

Whenever Anita goes shopping she always comes back with bread and milk!

It was also the stable part of the diet in Palestine at the time of Jesus.

The bread of the well-to-do was made with wheat.

The bread of the poor...barley.

But rich and poor viewed bread as the basic element in their daily diet.

So, in a powerful way, Jesus says, 'Just like bread sustains your physical life, so I am the one who sustains your spiritual life'.

To get a better understanding of what happened we need to put it in context.

Just before the verses read this morning Jesus had performed His most popular miracle...

One that appears in all four gospels.

It began when thousands of people followed Jesus to a hill overlooking the Sea of Galilee.

John says there were 5,000 men present.

Matthew adds that there were women and children there too.  
This would take the number to somewhere like 10-15,000 people.

Well about mid afternoon Jesus turned to His disciples and compassionately pointed out the need to feed this huge multitude.

In response Andrew brought a little boy to Jesus who was willing to share his lunch of five barley loaves and two small fish.

It's probably a small miracle that this little boy hadn't eaten his lunch by mid afternoon.  
When Asher first started school his lunch didn't make it past mid morning!

Jesus then miraculously used this meal, intended to fill the belly of a small boy, to stuff the stomachs the people and there were even 12 baskets of leftovers!

Well, the day after all this happened, some of those who had eaten the bread and fish provided by Jesus searched for Him all over the countryside on both sides of the Sea of Galilee.

They finally find Jesus in Capernaum and here we have the discussion about the importance of bread and we have Jesus extraordinary claim to be the bread of life.

Jesus points out that they were looking for him for the wrong reason.

John 6:26-27 "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. Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you."

Jesus is saying that there are basically two kinds of bread.

There is bread that nourishes your bodies that will one day perish,  
and there is bread that nourishes your souls which are destined for eternity.

Jesus fed them to make them realize who he was.  
but the questions the crowd fire at Jesus indicate their eyes and their stomachs were still fixed firmly on this world.

It was Karl Marx (communist) who popularized the expression, "religion is the opium of the people".

According to Jesus the truth is the very opposite.

It is materialism that is the narcotic.

Materialism anaesthetizes people to the reality that real contentment, real satisfaction, real security are found only in the spiritual realm.

The pursuit of material things does nothing except create a descending spiral of expectation that can never be appeased.

That is why these people had tracked down Jesus.

They were not satisfied with yesterday's meal.

They wanted another miracle meal.

This year it is a new car, next year it will be a new washing machine, a new TV, or Blu-ray.

Advances in technology, new designs and planned obsolescence are used to fuel this insatiable desire.

No amount of physical bread will appease it.

But Jesus points to a way... a new way.

"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."

That bread is not a something but a Someone.

It's Jesus. He is the giver and the gift.

*"The bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world. I am the bread of life."*

You know the cycle of life - you eat, you live, you get hungry..... eat, live, hunger..... doesn't quit till we die.

Jesus, however, points beyond this cycle to a deeper hunger, one that gnaws away inside of our souls.

He puts his finger on something no amount of bread will ever be able to satisfy.

Bread **cannot** fill the emptiness of a human soul;

Bread **cannot** satisfy our inner need to be filled...

with a sense of meaning and purpose,

a sense of belonging,  
a sense of where we've come from, and where we are going one day.  
Bread cannot fill that.

We can try to fill our lives with work, hoping that achievement and success will make that inner restlessness, that inner gnawing, that inner hunger go away.

But the harder we work, the hungrier we get.  
No amount of recreational therapy - be it gold medal sports or exotic cruises -will plug the gap.  
Doesn't matter how many friends or relationships you've got,  
trying to find in someone else what we are lacking in ourselves,  
the spiritual hole in the soul will still be there.

Nothing seems to work.  
There is no food that fills,  
no drug that takes away the nagging hunger for something more,  
something real, something permanent.

The Jews milling around Jesus were impressed with the stories they'd heard about *manna*.  
And they were equally impressed with this gourmet work of Jesus.

But he stops them all in their tracks, cutting short their food fascination and challenges them to look deeper, to look inside.

*My father gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is He who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world..... 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..... I am the bread of life.... Here is the bread that comes down from heaven, which a man may eat and not die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world..... This is the bread that came down from heaven. Your forefathers ate manna and died, but he who feeds on this bread will live forever.*

Like a carpenter pounding a nail so that it cannot come loose, Jesus pounds home this great truth again and again and again.

Our stomachs are filled by the sweat of our brow...  
But it lasts only till the next paycheque

Jesus gives energy for our inner lives...

an endless source of energy that streams from heaven, through Him, into us.

Jesus brings heaven to earth.

Jesus unites God and humanity in Himself.

Jesus fills our lives with holy vitality and power.

Jesus is Bread with a capital B which gives life with a capital L.

And He comes into our lives as pure gift.

Jesus did the work for it.

The people ask, "*What must we do to be doing the works of God*".

The people wanted to know what works they had to do,

Jesus said, Just trust in me.

This claim remains an obstacle for people today.

If Jesus had said that eternal life is a matter of giving to charity,

there would be plenty who would go out and buy their spiritual insurance.

If Jesus had said that eternal life is a matter of practising yoga in your bedroom three times a day, there would be thousands who would be willing for that discipline.

Jesus could have replied with the Ten Commandments or the two commandments to love God and love your neighbour.

He could have. But He didn't.

He said that eternal life was not a possession but a gift.

A gift received through a personal relationship with Him.

Because, you see, it is not our works but God's work that counts.

It is not the works we do for God, but the work God does for us that feeds us.

Jesus is God's gift to us.

The 5000 didn't work for the loaves and the fish...

Neither do we work for this food that feeds forever.

*"This is the work of God: that you believe in the One he has sent."*

The work that feeds us with eternal food is no work on our part at all.

It is Christ's work accomplished.

All we need to do is hold out empty hands and hearts, hold them out that He may fill them.

*Come to me and you'll never go hungry; believe in me and you'll never thirst. (v.35) Whoever comes to me I will never drive away. (v.37)*

And so, today -We are called to belief.

We are called to drop the arguments,  
leave behind the hesitations,  
quit the games of self-sufficiency and independence  
and surrender our existence into His control.

We are challenged to commit, to give, our lives to Jesus Christ.  
For then, and only then, we will begin to receive from God the life energy.

So I want each of you here this morning to think carefully about where you are at...  
have you eaten the soul bread of Jesus?

When fresh bread comes along...  
it's no good to see, look and smell it to be satisfied.

No, you have to eat it, you have to take it in and swallow it and digest it.  
Only then can it nourish and strengthen you.

So it is with Jesus, the bread of life, only now in a spiritual sense.

You must not just simply know that Jesus is the Living Bread.  
You just can't have the gospel in front of you and say how good it looks and how sweet it smells to your spiritual sight and taste.

You must eat. You must accept Christ into your heart and soul.  
Without giving your life to Jesus, the bread of Life will do you no good.  
You will die in your sin, eternally disconnected from heaven, from God.

When Jesus called himself the Bread of Life that day many of His followers left.  
In verse 60 they said, This is a hard teaching. Who can accept it?  
Verse 66 it says, From this time many of His disciples turned back and no longer followed Him.

What about you? Can you accept this HARD TEACHING that Jesus is the only way to satisfy your hunger for abundant life?

Will you turn and walk away from Jesus or will you embrace Him as Saviour and Lord.

*"I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty."*

It is a wonderful and an incredible claim.

It is one that, in the midst of the hunger and thirst of our world, and of our lives, is hard at first to accept.

But it is a true claim.

Jesus is alive.

He is here.

He desire to give full life, deep life, lasting life, to you.

Will you accept Him?

Don't wait till it's too late!