

The Bread of Life

He said, "I Am"

John 6:22-40

March 11, 2018

Thanks again for being here today and remembering to set your clock ahead.

I have to admit that I'm a little frustrated today. You see, Myra and I worked on our taxes yesterday. Ugh! We have to pay this year; no big refund for us. I think we spent about 5 hours on it yesterday. And those Germantown taxes? What a confused mess. We gave up trying to figure that one out. Taxes should be simple, but they are not.

The story goes that some guys decided to go fishing on a lake. It was winter, and the lake frozen, so they parked their SUV at the edge of the lake. And instead of going out on the ice to make a hole, they decided to light a stick of dynamite with a long-burning fuse, then throw it out on the lake to break the ice open. That was unfortunate and fortunate. You see, unfortunately, the dog thought the dynamite was a stick and went out after it. Fortunately, the dog retrieved it in record time and started back. Unfortunately, when they yelled at the dog to drop it, the dog ran under the SUV with the stick of dynamite in its mouth. Fortunately, the dog got burned on the muffler, came out from under the vehicle, leaving the dynamite behind. Unfortunately, the dynamite went off, transforming the SUV from a useful vehicle into a pile of junk. And there was no fortunately after that.

There are a lot of things in life that seem to be simple, or at least they should be. Taxes should be simple, but they're not. Ice fishing with dynamite should be simple, but it's not. And sometimes, a passage in the Bible should be simple, but at times, it is hard to understand.

During Lent, we are in a series called "He said, 'I Am.'" We are looking at the incredible statements Jesus made of Himself using the Greek words *ego eimi*.¹ We translate them, "I Am." *ego eimi* is the Greek equivalent to Yahweh, the Hebrew name for God. Jesus is saying, "I am God" by saying *ego eimi*.

The first week, we studied *ego eimi*, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me."² Then we looked at *ego eimi*, "I am the light of the world."³ I, God, am the light of the world. Today is the next statement of Jesus that begins with *ego eimi*.

I invite you to turn in your bulletin to page 6 as we look at John 6:22-40. Let me give you the background to this passage.

In the beginning of the 6th chapter, the Gospel writer John records the feeding of the 5,000. The miracle happened in a place called Bethsaida, which in Hebrew means "house (Beth) of fishing." Bethlehem means "house (Beth) of bread." Bethsaida means "house of fishing" as it was near the Sea of Galilee. So Jesus feeds the 5,000 at Bethsaida.

¹ εγω ειμι

² John 14:6

³ John 9:5 (NLT)

After dinner, Jesus sends the crowds home. The disciples head out across the sea towards home, to Capernaum, when a sudden storm came up, and as they were struggling to fight against the waves, Jesus walks on the water to their boat.

So, today's passage occurs the next day. From John 6:

The next day the crowd that had stayed on the far shore saw that the disciples had taken the only boat, and they realized Jesus had not gone with them. Several boats from Tiberias landed near the place where the Lord had blessed the bread and the people had eaten. So when the crowd saw that neither Jesus nor his disciples were there, they got into the boats and went across to Capernaum to look for him.⁴

Ok, we have some people who stayed in the area around Bethsaida, while others went home. I can imagine the conversations as the people told their family and neighbors about their day with Jesus. The Bible tells us that a group left Tiberias and sailed to Bethsaida. But not finding Jesus or the disciples, they decided to head to the most logical place they would be: Capernaum.

You see, Capernaum was Jesus' base of ministry in Galilee. Tradition says that Capernaum is where Peter lived, and that Jesus was Peter's honored guest whenever He was in town. The people made an educated guess that Jesus had gone back to Capernaum.

Verse 25:

They found him on the other side of the lake and asked, "Rabbi, when did you get here?"⁵

Reports were that Jesus didn't get in the boat with the disciples, so the people naturally thought He was still in Bethsaida. They didn't know He'd walked on the water. So when He wasn't where they thought He should be, they wanted to know what happened.

How often do we say that of God? "God, where did you go?" When we feel God should be at our beckoned call, when we've gotten ourselves in a mess, we wonder and ask, "Where are you, God?" like we own God and can tell Him where to go.

This is the first time the crowds don't have spiritual matters on their mind. There are several more in this passage.

Ronald Reagan could have been describing the people here when he said a speech, "A baby's digestive system is a lot like the American public today: insatiable appetite at one end and total lack of responsibility at the other end."

Jesus speaks at one level, but the people are on another level.

Verse 26 & 27:

Jesus replied, "I tell you the truth, you want to be with me because I fed you, not because you understood the miraculous signs. But don't be so concerned about perishable things like food. Spend your energy seeking the eternal life that the Son of Man can give you. For God the Father has given me the seal of his approval."⁶

In other words, He tells them not make the most important thing about food that spoils, but He offers them something far better which brings everlasting life. He is telling them to seek eternal salvation over temporary substance.

The back and forth continues in verse 28 & 29:

⁴ John 6:22-24 (NLT)

⁵ John 6:25 (NLT)

⁶ John 6:26-27 (NLT)

They replied, "We want to perform God's works, too. What should we do?" Jesus told them, "This is the only work God wants from you: Believe in the one he has sent."⁷

How often do people try to do things to earn God's favor? The foxhole prayer goes, "God, if you get me out of this mess, I will go to church every day... twice on Sunday." We try to bargain with God, when all God wants from you and me is to believe in Jesus.

Paul writes in Romans 10:9-10:

If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is by believing in your heart that you are made right with God, and it is by confessing with your mouth that you are saved.⁸

That's all we need to have eternal life: believe!

Unfortunately, the people still do not get it. Verses 30 & 31:

They answered, "Show us a miraculous sign if you want us to believe in you. What can you do? After all, our ancestors ate manna while they journeyed through the wilderness! The Scriptures say, 'Moses gave them bread from heaven to eat.'⁹

The people asked Jesus to prove that He was a prophet greater than Moses by doing greater miracles than Moses had done in the desert. Given the spectacular miracle Jesus had performed in the feeding of 5,000 just the day before, it seems incredible that they would once again need another sign.

It is possible that their request came from the teaching of their rabbis who said the Messiah would duplicate the miracle of the giving of manna that had been given originally by Moses. Since Moses provided manna 6 days a week for 40 years in the wilderness, then surely a single multiplying of fish and loaves would not constitute enough proof of Jesus' identity! After all, in their minds, one who makes the claim to be the Son of God who was sent by God to provide eternal life must provide substantial proof to be believed, right?

Then I am sure there were others who probably asked for a sign so that they could get some more free food. If they could get free food, they wouldn't have to work.

This is what Jesus says to the people's demands for another miracle. Verses 32-35:

Jesus said, "I tell you the truth, Moses didn't give you bread from heaven. My Father did. And now he offers you the true bread from heaven. The true bread of God is the one who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world." "Sir," they said, "give us that bread every day." Jesus replied, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry again. Whoever believes in me will never be thirsty."¹⁰

ego eimi – I am the bread of life.

Jesus is the bread that satisfies and gives life eternal. What He is saying here is that what bread is to the stomach, He is to the soul. All of us in life struggle to find meaning, purpose and worth. That is because God created us to be in relationship with Him, but because of sin we are separated. We are not living the life created us to live.

⁷ John 6:28-29 (NLT)

⁸ Romans 10:9-10 (NLT)

⁹ John 6:30-31 (NLT)

¹⁰ John 6:32-35 (NLT)

It was St. Augustine who noted that every single person has within them a god-shaped hole in their soul. We attempt to fill that cavity with a host of other things, but nothing fills our hunger for purpose and significance except Jesus. You will never be truly content in life without Him.

The story is told that as World War II was drawing to a close, the allied armies gathered up many hungry orphans. They were placed in camps where they were well fed. Despite excellent care, they slept poorly. They seemed nervous and afraid. Finally, a psychologist came up with the situation. Each child was given a piece of bread to hold after he was put to bed. This particular piece of bread was just to be held – not eaten. The piece of bread produced wonderful results. The children went to bed knowing instinctively they would have food to eat the next day. That guarantee gave the children a restful and contented sleep.

When Jesus had fed the crowd, none of them had earned the meal they received. It was given them freely. Now Jesus is offering them a much greater gift - eternal life.

The greatest miracle that Jesus will ever perform is the miracle of salvation that happens when we accept Jesus as Savior and Lord. I have seen amazing things in my life, but the greatest miracle I have ever seen is the miracle of a changed life.

Jesus is still offering us the free gift of salvation today. Maybe you are here today and you are searching. Perhaps you recognize that there is something in your life that is missing. Perhaps there is a hunger in your heart that you have tried to fill with so many different things, but nothing has taken that hunger away. Jesus can fill that hunger today – if you believe.

The surgeon said to the 8 year-old-boy, "Tomorrow morning, I'll open up your heart." The boy said, "You'll find Jesus there."

The surgeon continued, "I'll open your heart and check the damage."

"You'll find Jesus there," the boy said.

"When I see the damage, I will suture you back up and then think about the next step," said the surgeon.

"You will find Jesus in my heart because my Sunday School teacher told me so. She said it says so in the Bible."

The surgery took place the next day. After the surgery, the surgeon began to make notes of what he found. In his mind, there was no hope and no cure. The little boy would die within a matter of months.

The thought began to get to the doctor and all of a sudden, the doctor shouted to God, "Why did You do this to the boy? Why can't he live a normal life?"

God spoke to the surgeon's heart and said, "The boy is a part of my flock and will always be a part of my flock. When he is with Me, there will be no more suffering and pain. He will have comfort and peace. One day, his parents as well as you, will join him and My flock will continue to grow."

The next day, the surgeon went to the boy's room and sat down with the parents beside the bed. In a moment or two, the boy opened his eyes and asked very quietly, "What did you find in my heart?" With tears flowing down his cheeks, the surgeon said, "I found Jesus there."