

Willow River Parish: Clear Lake, Deer Park, and Faith Family

Title: I AM

Lesson: John 6:35, 41-51

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."

⁴¹ At this the Jews there began to grumble about him because he said, "I am the bread that came down from heaven." ⁴² They 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. ⁴⁵ It 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. ⁴⁶ No one has seen the Father except the one who is from God; only he has seen the Father. ⁴⁷ Very truly I tell you, the one who believes has eternal life. ⁴⁸ I am the bread of life. ⁴⁹ Your ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness, yet they died. ⁵⁰ But here is the bread that comes down from heaven, which anyone may eat and not die. ⁵¹ I 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."

The purpose of the Gospel of John is stated in John 6:38: "For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me." Therefore, the Gospel of John is a book written to explain why God sent Jesus Christ to this earth and who Jesus Christ is.

A distinctive feature of the Gospel of John is that it tells us who Jesus is over several chapters. In the Gospel of John, Jesus reveals who He is seven times.

1. In John 6, Jesus says, "I am the bread of life." (35)
2. In John 8, Jesus says, "I am the light of the world." (12)
3. In John 10, Jesus says, "I am the gate for the sheep." (7)
4. In the same chapter, Jesus says, "I am the good shepherd." (11)
5. In John 11, Jesus says, "I am the resurrection and the life." (25)
6. In John 14, Jesus says, "I am the way and the truth and the life." (6)
7. In John 15, Jesus says, "I am the true vine." (1)

The way Jesus describes Himself is very similar to how God spoke about His

name to Moses. When Moses reached Mount Horeb on the western side of the wilderness, he encountered God for the first time. The image of God appeared as a flame of fire within a bush. When God sent Moses to deliver the Israelites who were oppressed in Egypt, Moses asked God, "If they ask me, 'What is his name?' then what shall I tell them?" God said, "I AM WHO I AM." In Greek, this is called 'ego eimi.' This means 'I AM,' which refers to God.

Thus, Jesus explaining who He is using the form of 'ego eimi' in the Gospel of John means His divine nature. Among the seven 'ego eimi' statements in the Gospel of John, today we focus on Jesus describing Himself as the bread of life.

We are all spiritual beings. Being spiritual means that we constantly desire something and seek to fill our voids. For example, let's say you are hungry right now. To satisfy that hunger, you will cook and enjoy delicious food. The moment your hunger is satisfied, you will be happy. However, this happiness will not last for more than six hours. After six hours, you will feel hungry again. Not only hunger, but we also pursue and desire many things in life.

However, when we finally obtain the things we desired, we experience great joy and happiness, but as time passes, we lose interest and appreciation for what we have and take them for granted or become bored with them. In this endless cycle of longing and desire, what we ultimately seek is eternity because we all come from dust, from nothingness. Although we live in finite time, we yearn for the times when we dwelled in eternity.

Only Jesus Christ can fill our hunger and our voids. That is why Jesus came to us. We are constantly searching for and seeking the meaning of life. We can say that we pursue and desire things because we are seeking the meaning of life. However, if we do not find meaning in life, we will feel anxious, empty, and powerless.

Therefore, Jesus Christ coming to us as the bread of life means that He removes the exhaustion and emptiness in our lives and gives us meaning and fulfillment. When we believe and accept Jesus, who came to us as the gift of the bread of life, we can realize the true meaning and purpose of life.

As I mentioned last week, believing in Jesus is not about fulfilling our needs but about entrusting our lives entirely to God. Some of you may accept this statement, while others may not. I believe that many of you have prayer requests that you hold in your hearts, whether you have shared them with others or not. I am no different from you. I also have prayer requests in my heart. If my heart's desires were fulfilled, would I feel happy? Perhaps I would feel happy at least at the moment my desires are fulfilled. However, as time passes, I will begin to desire

other things again.

When I came to Wisconsin, I bought a new car. Before coming to Wisconsin, I was in Southern California, and at that time, I bought a used 2006 Toyota Camry. For the first six months after we came to America, we attended a Korean church, and through someone we knew during that time, I bought the car for \$2,000. The car was 12 years old, and it had a lot of miles on it. What could you expect from a \$2,000 car? I think you can probably imagine the condition of the car.

Still, it was my first car, and I was thankful because I no longer had to ask others for rides. But, it seemed like the previous owner smoked in the car because no matter how much I cleaned it, the smell wouldn't go away. And after driving the car for a few weeks, the check engine light came on. I was thankful for the car, but at the same time, I was anxious when driving it. Then, after coming to Wisconsin, we bought a new car, and I was grateful because I no longer felt anxious while driving, and I loved the new car smell.

However, after about two years, my car model was redesigned, and whenever I saw the newer model of the same car while driving, I started comparing it to my own car and no longer felt thankful. So, friends, if I sell my current car and buy the newer model, would I be happy? Would that happiness last long? Probably not. After a few years, I would no longer feel thankful for what I have and take it for granted.

Without Jesus in our lives, there is only exhaustion, lack, comparison, and unhappiness. These things lead to complaints and resentment. That is why God sent His Son, Jesus Christ, as the bread of life to this earth to fill the hunger that we cannot fill ourselves.

However, people continued to doubt Jesus Christ and did not know who He was. What do we need to do first to see something? We need to open our eyes first. Even if our eyes are open, if we are in darkness, we will not be able to see clearly. People did not recognize Jesus Christ because there was no light in their hearts and no desire to see the truth.

Even when Jesus explained who He was and why He came to them, they would only say: "Is this not Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How can he now say, 'I came down from heaven?'"

The people of Jesus' time had their eyes and ears closed. Therefore, they could not understand the true meaning of the words Jesus spoke. When Jesus said He came from heaven, it did not mean He came from the sky, but it meant He came

from God.

When the Israelites followed Moses and stayed in the wilderness for 40 years, God provided them with manna every day. However, even though they ate manna, they could not escape death. But Jesus Christ is different. He is the living bread from heaven, from God. When we believe, accept, and eat Jesus Christ, the bread of life, we can enjoy the eternity of God.

Eternal life means living a life intimately connected with God, beyond the constraints of time. Eternal life does not mean living for 1,000 years or 10,000 years. Living an eternal life means living in an intimate relationship with God, believing in Jesus Christ, and following the path that Jesus walked.

Although we will eventually face physical death as we live on this earth, if we live our lives closely connected to God, following the life of Jesus Christ, valuing others, and sharing our time and lives with them, even when we face physical death, we will remain in the eternity of God.

Friends, when a baby is in its mother's womb, if the baby thinks it's good inside and refuses to come out when the time is right, what would happen? The baby would never be born into this world. Our lives are the same. Although we may feel sad when we have to say goodbye to our loved ones, knowing that we will not see them on this earth again, we should remember that they have returned to the arms of God, which they have longed for all their lives, and have become residents of God's kingdom. That's why we call it a celebration of life rather than a funeral.

Friends, just as a baby in its mother's womb must do its best to take in nutrients and grow at the right time, we must all do our best to dwell in God's kingdom while we are on this earth. We must follow the life of Jesus Christ, value others, live a life of sharing our lives as the bread of life, and live in intimate fellowship with God. I earnestly pray in the name of the Lord that we all remain intimately connected with God. Amen.