

I AM...

Bread of Life Frankton –3/6/16

Scripture: John 6.33-35 I am the bread of life

Proposition: Jesus is what we need for spiritual vitality

We are continuing a Lenten sermon series that I have titled: [SLIDE] I AM. For the seven Sunday in Lent, we are studying the “I am” sayings of Jesus that occur in the gospel of John. In seven different situations, Jesus refers to himself as something by saying “I am...” Here’s the list: light, gate, good shepherd, bread of life, true vine, way, and resurrection. We’ve already talked about Jesus being the light in a world of darkness. We’ve talked about Jesus being the human gate that guards us. Last week, we talked about Jesus being the good shepherd that tenderly cares for his sheep to the point of sacrificing his life for his sheep. Today, we’re going to talk about Jesus as the bread of life. This is actually the first time that Jesus speaks the Hay-yaw word. I know I’ve den it out of order in the series but it fits so well with communion Sunday that I felt like I needed to do it this way.

Jesus and his disciples were sitting on the mountain near the Sea of Galilee when he noticed a large crowd coming toward them. The Passover festival was near so many of these folks were travelers and had limited provisions. Jesus knew they would need to be fed. The disciple Andrew found a young boy with five barley loaves and two fish. Jesus had the crowd, about five thousand in all, to sit down. Then he gave thanks for the food and distributed it to the crowd. They ate until they were about to burst. No one went away hungry. However, the next morning the crowd discovered they were hungry again. Only Jesus was nowhere to be found. They deduced that he had crossed over the lake and went to Capernaum. Therefore, they got into boats and went seeking him. And they found him. When they found him, they said, “Rabbi, when did you come here.” It was almost like “Wow, Jesus. [SLIDE] Imagine bumping into you again.” Jesus was not buying it. He told them they were not there because they were seeking signs; they were there because they wanted their bellies filled again.

So the crowd tries a different approach. They said, “We want to perform God’s works, too. So, what should we do?” In other words, they are saying, “Give us a set of rules and regulations that we must keep. We are good at keeping rules and regulations. Then after we have done these things, we can have our buffet.” They are wanting a set of [SLIDE] “thou shalt and thou shalt nots” that they can follow. It easy to follow the rules if the rules are explicitly laid out – and if you know the consequences for not following them and the rewards for following them. It’s kind of like lab rats: they know the reward for running through the maze is a piece do cheese, so they run through the maze.

We also love our “thou shalt nots.” We search God’s word for what is right and what is wrong. When we discover what is right we have a tendency to follow it but also we have a tendency to use it to judge others. When we discover what is wrong we have tendency to point out to others where they are wrong and to make excuses if we are guilty. And, if we get the balance right and do the right and not the wrong, we are tempted to make demands upon God. “God, I lived up to my part. I have done everything right. Now you owe me. You made these promises and now I

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expect you to keep your side of the bargain.” God did not give us rules to earn his favor. He gave us rules to protect us. Jesus told those seeking food “There is only one God wants from you: [SLIDE] Believe in the one he has sent.” The same is true for us today. This is all God wants from you. Believe in Jesus. To truly believe in Jesus leads to wanting to serve him and follow his commands.

So “bumping” into Jesus while they are hungry is not getting the crowd fed. And being legalistic asking for rules and regulations isn’t getting them fed. They finally try another approach. They answered, “Show us a miraculous sign if you want us to believe in you.” In other words, [SLIDE] “Prove it! What can you do? After all, our ancestors ate manna while they journeyed through the wilderness! Just do something miraculous and then you can feed us all. It is what Moses did.” Jesus told them “Moses did not feed you with his miracles.” And Jesus would tell us “We do not have to seek after miracles or sensationalism.” God is the source. We need to seek God.

The crowd is still looking for bread. So finally, Jesus reveals this truth to them: The true bread of God is the one who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world. [SLIDE] *I am the bread of life.* [35] The crowd began to complain among themselves. They did not come for a sermon. They came for a meal. And they certainly did not come to hear a carpenter’s lunatic son make such claims. But Jesus goes on speaking and reminds them a couple more times of his claim of: *I am the bread of life.* [48,51]

What was the crowd’s response? At this point many of his followers turned away and deserted him. Jesus had pushed a button. This was too much they thought. He basically claimed to be God. They just wanted another meal. Then tomorrow another meal and so forth. But Jesus did not want to provide for just their physical need but more importantly their spiritual need. He was not going to feed them anymore so they decided it was time to move on. We should take note that those who turned away and deserted him were some of his followers. They have heard his teachings. He had allowed them to become a part of his circle. They were witnesses to miracles. But now they reject him.

Jesus offers us the Bread of Life. Jesus said in the Beatitudes: [SLIDE] *God blesses those who hunger and thirst for justice, for they will be satisfied.* [MT 5.6] We are to hunger for what is right. We are to be found doing what agrees to God’s standards. We are to have the ability of determining the correctness of a matter. We are not able to achieve these goals by feasting on what the world offers. The world does not have the ability to do what is right due its selfish nature. It is impossible for the world to agree to God’s standards due to its sinful nature. The world does not believe in absolute truth making it impossible for it to determine the correctness of a matter. Only the Bread of Life is able to satisfy the emptiness found in our souls. And feasting of the Bread of Life allows God to pour his favor upon us.

Some folks are materialist, like the crowd wanting bread. They try to find their satisfaction in possessions or what they can get. They rush out the door on Sundays bypassing the offering box so they can plop their money down at a restaurant, which will leave them hungry tomorrow. God says this type of temporal food will do you no good. However, if we eat of the eternal Bread of Life our inner being will be satisfied. Or they substitute other material possessions for food. They think a faster car or a bigger house will satisfy them. They think a better looking wife or a husband who makes more money will satisfy them. They think playing on the football team or being a

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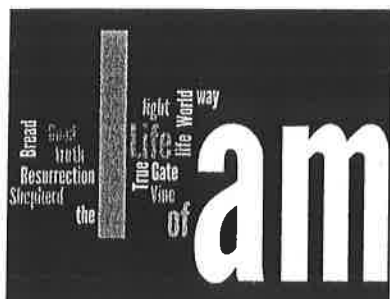
cheerleader will satisfy them. And all those things might, but just for a little while. Then they “hunger” pangs come again and they want something else: something bigger, faster, better.

Some are legalist like those in the crowd who wanted a list of ‘thou shalt and thou shalt not’s’. Their relationship with God is based on regulations that are found in the Bible. They take great pride in living these rules and condemning those who do not. They forget that when God started to clean up the mess sin had made of this world, he chose Abraham and promised him a sea of descendants if he would just have a relationship with God. Following the rules wasn’t the way to fix the problem; having a relationship was. Strict regulations will rob you of the strength that grace offers. While we are to strive to live in perfection, failure to do so will damage your relationship with God unless you partake of the grace offered by the Bread of Life.

Some may be sensationalist like the ones in the crowd who wanted Jesus to do miraculous signs. Their idea of a spiritual meal is when the Holy Spirit manifests himself in some supernatural way at every worship service. And when he does not, then the church is not spiritual enough. God’s desire is for us to seek him above everything.

In his book entitled God’s Psychiatry, Charles Allen, a Methodist pastor in the southern US, tells this story: 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 solution. Each child was given a piece of bread to hold as they were put to bed. This particular piece of bread was just to be held—not eaten. The piece of bread produced wonderful results. You see, 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.

[SLIDE] What are you holding too at night when you go to sleep? Is it a slice of bread that you will consume the next day and need to search for more? Or do you sleep holding on to the Bread of Life?



**Imagine
bumping in to
you again!**

**Thou shalt...
and
Thou shalt not...**

**Believe in the one
he has sent.**

John 6.29

Prove it!

**I am the bread of
life.**

John 6.35

**God blesses those who
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Matthew 5.6

