



grow. pray. study.

March 26, 2023, *The I Am Sayings of Jesus*

“I AM the Bread of Life”

MONDAY 3.27.23 John 6:26-51, Exodus 3:11-14

Exodus 3 was the background for the passages from John’s gospel we’ll study this week. “In Hebrew, the word that’s translated as *I Am Who I Am* is the Hebrew word, *Yahweh*.... Throughout the Old Testament, this is the personal name for God, God’s covenant name.” * When John said Jesus used the words “I Am” (Greek *ego eimi*), that was loaded language more often than not, a claim that Jesus was not merely “godly,” but God in the flesh (cf. [John 1:14](#)).

- This dialogue followed Jesus feeding some 5,000 people with five barley loaves and two fish (cf. [John 6:1-15](#)). People said, “Give us more bread,” but Jesus replied, “I AM the bread of life.” He invited his hearers to consider what “food” they valued most (cf. verse 27). Physical food wasn’t bad—he’d just fed them bread and fish—but it didn’t give lasting life. How clear is your sense of the two kinds of food? What are some key ways to “eat” the Bread of Life?
- Pastor Hamilton wrote, “In his words, ‘I am the bread of life,’ Jesus draws from the Passover *seder* and the manna by which God sustained the Israelites in the wilderness. He does so to point to the deliverance he will bring by his death, and the way ongoing belief in him sustains his disciples.” ** John didn’t tell the story of Jesus eating the Passover with his disciples, but he taught the Supper’s meaning. In what ways do spiritual practices like the Lord’s Supper feed you spiritually?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, thank you for offering yourself as the bread of life. I trust you to satisfy my inner hunger—to fill the God-shaped hole inside me. Amen.

* Hamilton, Adam, *John: The Gospel of Light and Life*. (p. 61). Abingdon Press. Kindle Edition.

** Adam Hamilton, *John: The Gospel of Light and Life*. (p. 67.) For a fuller study of John 6, see pp. 64-68.

“I am the light of the world”

TUESDAY 3.28.23 John 8:12-14, 25-33; 9:1-7

In John 8:12 Jesus said, “I am the light of the world.” His opponents objected to that “I Am” statement, and eventually Jesus made one of his boldest “I Am” statements: “Before Abraham was, I Am” (cf. [John 8:56-59](#)). He also said that he was “from the beginning.” His enemies were furious, ready to stone Jesus for blasphemy. In John 9, John showed Jesus acting out his identity as the “light of the world,” giving sight to a man blind from birth.

- When Jesus said, “The truth will set you free” (John 8:32), his foes said, “We’ve never been anyone’s slaves. How can you say that we will be set free?” They were in denial politically—one historian called Israel’s life under Rome a “semi-slavery.” Worse, they were spiritually captive to their self-importance. Have you ever felt, “I’m fine—I don’t need what Christ offers”? Is there any part of your life now where it’s hard to accept that you need Christ’s light to set you free?
- In John 9, Jesus repeated his claim to be “the light of the world.” At what age or stage did Christ’s light first shine into your life? What were some of the first things that you remember seeing more clearly in the light of Jesus’ love and grace? Has Christ’s light helped to clear your sight in one or two meaningful ways during the Lenten season so far? Is there an area where you want to ask prayerfully for Jesus’ light to shine into a darkness you are struggling with?

Prayer: Lord, continue your heavenly “eye surgery” in me. Make it more and more true in all parts of my life that “I once was blind, but now I see.” Amen.

“I am the gate of the sheep... the good shepherd”

WEDNESDAY 3.29.23 John 10:7-16

Jesus said the spiritual blindness of Israel’s leaders didn’t just hurt them. It left the human “flock” God had entrusted to their care in spiritual danger. (He strongly echoed the prophet Ezekiel’s message—cf. [Ezekiel 34:1-16](#). Note the “LORD” in that passage—that’s the Old Testament YHWH, “I AM.”) God had promised Israel that he would shepherd them himself if their human shepherds failed. Jesus said, “I AM the promised ‘good shepherd.’” He was God, safely guiding and protecting all who trust him.

- Jesus said, “I Am the gate,” a physical fact for those who cared for sheep. Scholar N. T. Wright noted, “In many Eastern sheepfolds, the shepherd lies down at night in the gateway, to stop the sheep getting out and to stop predators getting in. Here Jesus seems to indicate the way in which the shepherd keeps the sheep safe, and, like God himself in [Psalm 121:8](#), watches over their going out and they’re coming in.” * In what ways is Jesus “the gate” who keeps you spiritually safe?
- Jesus said, “I came so that they could have life—indeed so that they could live life to the fullest” (John 10:10). In what ways do ads for everything from banks to automobiles, from alcoholic beverages to hair-care products, hold out a similar promise? How easy or hard do you find it to trust, in your day-to-day life, that Jesus’ way truly offers you the fullest, most satisfying life?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, I want to “live life to the fullest”—the way YOU define that phrase. Plant the seed of your word in my heart and grow it into a life that nourishes life in others. Amen.

* N. T. Wright, *John for Everyone, part 1*. (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2004, p. 150.)

“I am the resurrection and the life”

THURSDAY 3.30.23 John 11:11-25

Bethany is just a few miles from Jerusalem. Going there could expose Jesus to the malice of his enemies again (verse 16). Jesus intentionally waited before going to where his friend lay deathly ill (verse 15). By the time he reached Bethany, Lazarus had died. Grieving her brother's death, Martha told Jesus, “If you had been here, my brother wouldn't have died.” He answered with one of his greatest “I am” sayings: “I am the resurrection and the life.”

- Picture it: Mary and Martha worried, wept, prayed, and sent word to Jesus for help (they knew he could heal!). Yet Lazarus died. That is often our story, too--we pray for personal peace, justice, or healing. But praying sometimes forces us to realize that God's timing is not ours (see [Isaiah 55:8-9](#)). Martha greeted Jesus with a sad "if" statement. Do you have any "ifs" on your heart right now? Like Martha, express that to Jesus. Then listen and watch for the comforting hope he offers.
- Of Jesus' "I am" statements in John, his words to Martha are probably the most cherished: "I am the resurrection and the life... everyone who believes in me will never die." Jesus' responses to our "if" questions often surprise us, as they did Martha and Mary. Jesus has many ways of bringing good news, hope, and new possibilities into the messiness and grief of life. We face the same question Jesus asked Martha: "Do you believe this?"

Prayer: Lord Jesus, it is hard for me to trust you in the midst of my "if you'd acted" questions. Thank you for offering me eternal hope when I put my faith in you. Help me to trust your ways. Amen.

“I am the way, the truth, and the life”

FRIDAY 3.31.23 John 14:1-9

Just before this, Jesus told his disciples he would only be with them physically a little while longer (cf. [John 13:33-38](#)). To their troubled questions, he gave two key replies. He assured them that his Father's house has room to spare—no one need miss out. And, he said, “you know the way” there. But taking him literally, Thomas asked, “How can we know the way?” And Jesus answered with a powerful “I AM” statement: “I am the way, the truth, and the life.”

- Pastor Hamilton wrote, “Most mainline Protestants, Roman Catholics, and a sizable number of evangelicals [believe]... Jesus is the only Savior of the world.... [but] Jesus' saving grace can be given to whomever God chooses.... it appears in Scripture that many who sought to know and love God, but did not know Christ, will in the end... receive the gift of his saving grace.” * Jesus wasn't abstractly describing “people who never heard of Jesus.” He asked his disciples, who knew him well, to trust him as he died on the cross. Do you trust Jesus' words: “Whoever has seen me has seen the Father”?
- The apostle Paul said some people outside the “right” faith “instinctively do what the Law requires” and “show the proof of the Law written on their hearts” (cf. [Romans 2:11-16](#)). There were and are honest people beyond the Judeo-Christian faith who lovingly respond to God. Can you trust that Jesus' grace extends to them?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, you came to be “the way” for every member of your human family willing to be a citizen of God's kingdom. Give me a heart that knows you yearn to redeem everyone and rejoices in all who respond. Amen.

* Hamilton, Adam. *Christianity and World Religions*, Revised Edition. (p. 24-25). Abingdon Press. Kindle Edition.

“I am the vine”

SATURDAY 4.1.23 John 15:1-5

Historically, Israelites often saw themselves as part of a vineyard God tended (cf. [Psalm 80:8-18](#), [Isaiah 5:1-7](#)). Jesus went beyond that image—the deepest linkage to God’s light and life was not in a national (or denominational) identity. It lay instead in a chosen spiritual connection to him: “I AM the true vine.” When his followers stayed united to him like branches to a vine, Jesus said, their lives would bear the fruit of love. Pastor Hamilton wrote, “The measure of spiritual maturity is love.... Whenever you’re trying to decide the right thing to do, you will never go wrong by asking, ‘What is the most loving thing I can do?’” *

- You don’t have to be a great gardener to realize that any branch from a vine or tree that decided to “go it alone” would soon dry out and wither up. One key question Jesus' words trigger is: what does it look like in practical, day-to-day terms for you to “remain” in Jesus? In what ways do your fellow believers help keep you “in Jesus”? How does your personal devotional life and taking part in community worship deepen your links with Jesus? Jesus knew where his mission of self-giving love was leading: “No one has greater love than to give up one’s life for one’s friends” (John 15:13). He did that physically the very next day on the cross. But it’s rare that any of us need to make that specific sacrifice. What does it mean, again in practical, day-to-day terms, for you to love others as sacrificially as Jesus loved you? How can healthy self-care be essential to equip yourself to love sacrificially?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, keep me connected to you today. Let me be a branch through which your divine love can flow freely to bless the lives of other people around me. Amen.

* Adam Hamilton, *John: The Gospel of Light and Life*. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2015, pp. 103-104.)

Prayer Requests – cor.org/prayer *Prayers of peace and comfort for:*

To the family following the death of **Dorothy Kovar**.

To **Holly Smith** and family following the death of **Donald Smith** (Father), who died 2/18/2023.