

*Jesus leads us to I AM*

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So, John 6 ... our Lectionary planners keep us in John 6 for a very long time. Because it's pretty pivotal to Jesus's teachings. In the first 20 or so verses, Jesus walks on water and feeds at least 5,000 people from scant resources. Then, when the people ask for 'more, please' Jesus realizes that, even after all his talking and amazingness, they haven't quite got it.

Can we imagine Jesus at this point? Poor guy. He knows that what he's doing is so important that he's willing to die for it, and these suspicious, hungry, tired, scared, angry people are questioning his validity and just want more bread.

So, he relates another 'bread story' ... Moses trusts in God and the 'manna from heaven'. He reminds them "You don't just want bread to keep you body alive because:

**I am** the bread of life. Your ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven.

And **then**, Jesus is inspired by an earlier, ancient story of his people, another momentous moment when the Prophet Moses trusts God. The story goes .. Moses, while in hiding in fear with the sheep, meets God, who is in a burning bush, no less, to receive his orders to free the Israelites from Egyptian slavery. God orders Moses: "So now, go. I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt."

Moses inquires of God, "How will they trust me to lead them? Who will I say sent me?"

God replies, "**I am that I am**". (or "I am what I will be" or "I am who I am". The interpretation shifts a bit depending on our understanding of ancient Hebrew.) But, no matter how we define the "I AM'ness" of God, that which is the 'beingness' of God, Moses eventually gets to work and frees the Israelites from Egyptian slavery. God made it clear to Moses "You've got this, Moses!"

In our story today, Jesus took inspiration from that trusting interaction between God and Moses, to attempt to help his people understand the beingness of Jesus ... the I AM that is Jesus.

There is bread that feeds and nourishes the body ... yes. But the I AMness of Jesus is not about bread that feeds the body, but about a kind of bread that feeds the soul."

Jesus tells us "I am the bread of life". "My beingness is the Bread of Life".

Often, 'bread' mentioned in the bible indicates a 'source of divine inspiration', so Jesus may be revealing to us:

I am a source of divine inspiration

My beingness if a source of divine inspiration

How I exist in this world, is a source of divine inspiration

NOT like the manna ... the bread that came from heaven to the fleeing Israelites in the desert ... that was just bread for the body. What Jesus is talking about is his living self ... his I AM is the “true bread from heaven that gives eternal life.” “I AM the true bread from heaven that give eternal life.”

What an amazing and inspired lesson for the people who were following Jesus! Jesus brought his God-given “I AM” to the leading edge of his life. Go Jesus!

AND, Jesus pursued this I AM theme throughout John’s account, clarifying his presence over and over ... I AM light of the world (8:12), I AM the door (10:7), I AM the good shepherd (10:11, 14), I AM the resurrection and the life (11:25), I AM the way the truth and the life (14:6) and I AM the true vine (15:1).

Jesus was inspired in his true I AMness to which God had led him. On this day, Jesus knew exactly what he was. I AM ... the bread of life. I AM ... the divine inspiration that my people can follow to also be in the Kingdom of God.

“I AM” resonated with the people Jesus was leading, and “I AM” is exactly what you and I can use to keep us on the path that Jesus forged.

PAUSE

But let’s back up a bit, before this inspired revelation, to be with Jesus when the people were chasing him to get more bread to eat (remember, as we explored last week) and today when they are grumbling because he’s only the ‘son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know’.. who does he think he is, trying to grab honour above is birth? “Shameful behaviour, Jesus”.

Can you imagine ... after all the Jesus has done already ... healing, evicting demons, miracles ... walking on water, feeding hundreds of people with almost nothing? The people that need his teaching just don’t get it!

Dear Jesus, possibly disappointed, surely a bit concerned about his ability to carry out his divine work, at the very least, worried ... ahhh ... so sad.

You know I’ve been watching the Olympics these past couple of weeks ... anyone else?

One clip, a very short and rare clip, showed that amazing woman, Simone Biles (if you haven’t heard of her, google her to understand her amazing skill and drive and resilience) There was superstar Simone, on the verge of yet another test, whispering for faith... making sure she remembered. She whispered to herself, “You’ve got this”.

When doubt, anxiety and fear enter our lives, we can stand still and listen for God’s ‘You’ve got this’.

I wonder, what Simone would do if she ran full tilt at that target and missed? Fell? Tripped? I’ll bet Ms. Biles would get up train even harder, she might practice even more. I wonder what Summer McIntosh does if she’s feeling tired, or unsure, or defeated? These amazing people practice, practice, practice.

I would like us to consider, like Jesus did, our “I AM’ness. What is my I AM when I’m afraid or anxious or doubting? I AM worried. I AM sad. I AM unlucky. I AM doomed. I AM less than; I AM not worthy; I AM ashamed. Any of these I AM’s sound familiar?

If you're anything like me, they sure do sound familiar .. every day on and off. But, just like God did for Jesus, God is right there for us whispering "You've got this". The trick is, recognizing the difference between that bread that feeds the flesh (that's prone to worry and anxiety) and the bread that is from heaven and feeds the soul.

I know, for me, this takes practice. Luckily, we are in and out of doubt and worry so much that we have lots of opportunities to recognize it and practice STOPPING ... PRACTICE letting it go and trusting that God is with us showing us the bread of true life, the divine teaching that is our birthright.

You may not get the 'burning bush' face of God, that Moses received, but with some practice, we can learn to feel that nudging that is God's hand on our souls with our 'You've Got This'. Now go be the wonder that God made.

I use these amazing athletes as our example today because we're going to do some practicing, just like Simone Biles and Summer McIntosh!

### **THE PRACTICE**

When you arrived today, you were given a pencil and two pieces of paper. One paper sort of flimsy and one more like a name tag, sturdier. That flimsy paper will actually melt away when placed in the water.

At the front of our sanctuary, you will note a few bowls of water. Some of you have done this practice with us before, but for some it may be new. Don't worry, it's pretty easy.

We are going to take a few moments in quiet (not long, I promise) to write a word or two on that flimsy paper that says **how we feel when we doubt and when we feel alone and unable. Maybe 'afraid', maybe lonely, maybe worried' whatever comes to mind...**

**Perhaps how Jesus felt when he was just wasn't getting through to his people .. deflated or sad.**

Then, when you are ready, just walk to the bowls at the front and drop those 'nare-do-well' those 'life sucking' words into the water and LET THEM GO. Please feel free to stir them away and watch them disappear.

When we return to our seats, we'll sit for a minute with our encouraging 'You've Got This " and write on the sturdy paper I AM ... reminding ourselves of that truth of our humanness, loved and guided by God that created all that there is, including wonderful, so loved, so able YOU! We will write I AM ..that which is our GOD GIVEN BEST.

Now, if you like, you can tuck this paper into your pocket, or purse or some other way to keep it with you, even wear it to remind yourself of the true "I AMness" of YOU.

If anyone needs a pencil or papers, please raise your hand.

AND if you would prefer a bowl brought to you, please raise your hand and an usher will respond

So, we begin

**What is my I AM when I doubt and when I feel alone or unable or unready for the challenge? Maybe 'afraid', maybe lonely, maybe worried' whatever comes to your mind...**

**Perhaps how Jesus felt when he was just wasn't getting through to his people.**

**Write I AM ... and your doubt ... on the flimsy paper and when you are ready set it in the water and LET IT BE TAKEN AWAY.**

**WAIT** for most to have melted their paper...

**NOW ... sit for a minute, trusting and having faith, saying 'I've Got This ... I AM a wonderful human being, I AM loved and I AM guided by God that created all that there is, including wonderful, so loved, so able ME! I AM ... and write on that paper I AM ... with your true nature.**

**WAIT**

**Now, if you like, you can tuck this paper into your pocket, or purse or some other way to keep it with you, even wear it, to remind yourself of the true "I AMness" of YOUR God given self.**

Thank you for practicing together the "I AM a child of God" reminder.

Prayer ... Lord, give us the faith to bring our lives to you, to be inspired by the grace and compassion that is ours every day, in every situation. Help me feel who I AM ... I AM a child of God; I AM eating the bread from heaven that gives life eternal. AMEN