

JOHN 6:35
(OT: Ex 3:7-15; NT: Jn 6:22-35)

[SERIES INTRO]: Start new series today – and it’s all about Jesus.

- Going to learn about his person/work – who he is/what he’s done – by listening to what he has to say about himself → *Jesus in his own words.*
- Throughout history people have had all sorts of opinions about Jesus:
 - No shortage of pronouncements...
 - Napoleon, Jefferson, Nietzsche, Gandhi, Einstein, your mother-in-law.
- But what did Jesus say about himself?
 - We’ll attempt to answer this question by looking at the I AM... sayings of Jesus.
 - 7x in John’s gospel, Jesus tells us about himself by saying, *I AM...* and then giving us a description.
- What would you say after I AM...?
 - I AM... a husband, father, pastor.
 - I AM... a son, brother, friend.
 - I AM... things I don’t want you to see: Insecure, emotional, afraid.
- In his I AM sayings Jesus gives us a full/frank picture of himself.
 - We’ll look at one each week for next seven weeks.
 - Invite you to enjoy him as we go.
 - Start with first one today as Jesus says: *I AM... the bread of life.*

[SERMON INTRO]: *I AM... the bread of life.*

- Curious, right? Not obviously descriptive/immediately clear what that means.
 - Doesn’t come with something concrete like: I AM... the Son of God.
 - Instead, gives us picture/image → As often does, inviting us to lean in/reflect.
- What is Jesus teaching us in this phrase?¹ Consider three observations with me...

Transition: First, in calling himself the Bread of Life, Jesus is teaching us that...

1. WE NEED HIM.

Illustrate: How long do you think you could go without food?

- **David Blaine** – magician, illusionist, and all-around weird dude – once went 44 days without food while suspended in a glass box by the river Thames.
- Australian **James Scott** survived 43 days while lost in Himalayas during winter – Drank melted snow, took shelter under rock ledge until finally spotted by helicopter.
- As impressive as these feats may be, there’s a limit to human endurance.
 - That limit for starvation seems to be around 60 days.
 - Sadly, know this bc that’s when people who’ve gone on hunger strike tend to die.²
It doesn’t matter who you are – eventually we all need to eat.

State: Here Jesus tells us that what’s true physically is true spiritually as well.

- Bible tells us that **death** came into world through eating:
 - In Eden, Adam tasted forbidden fruit...
 - And all death and hell came with it.
- But now Jesus tells us that **life** comes through eating too:

- When we receive Christ through faith...
- It's like we've taken him to our lips, eaten of him if you will...
- He's the only thing that can satisfy our spiritual hunger:
That's why he calls himself the bread of life.

Apply: Do you sense the urgency of this?

- In describing himself as bread, Jesus is teaching us that we NEED HIM.
 - Like physical food → We can't do without him, and nothing can replace him.
 - Nothing else – no achievement/promotion/relationship/bank balance/possession – can satisfy our deep spiritual hunger or save our hungry souls from the starvation of eternal death.
- **One commentator** puts it this way: *“Jesus is the difference between living and dying, between being condemned in our sins and having life. He is absolutely necessary.”*³

Transition:

- Jesus is the Bread of Life – WE NEED HIM.
- Second, in calling himself the Bread of Life, Jesus is also teaching us that...

2. WE CAN HAVE HIM

Illustrate:

- If we're honest, most of us don't really know what it's like to be hungry.
 - Say we're starving when we're just in the mood for a snack.
 - (One of the reasons fasting is so good for affluent cultures like ours → reconnects us to feelings of dependency and need.)
- But have you ever been in a position where you really didn't have enough to eat?
 - Some of you know what it's like to have kids at table but cupboards that are bare.
 - It's an uncertain/vulnerable feeling → When you really need something but you're not sure if you can have it.
- Here Jesus calls us not to fear: Not only do we need him, but we can have him.

State: He makes this point by contrasting himself to manna – see this in **VV32-33**.

- **V32:** Truly, truly, I say to you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but my Father gives you the true bread from heaven.
 - Reference to a time back in Israel's history:
 - People have left Egypt – no longer enslaved – but now find themselves wandering in wilderness.
 - During this season when they were in the desert without food → God provided food for them:
 - Miraculous bread-like substance came down from heaven...
 - Lay on the ground each morning for them to eat.
 - They called it manna, which literally meant “What is it?”
Facing starvation, the people ate of it and lived.
 - Now Jesus says that bread – that OT story of how God provided for his people – was just an illustration of the true/greater bread that was to come.
- **V33:** For the bread of God is **he who comes down from heaven** and gives life to the world.
 - Jesus came down from heaven:

- Born in Bethlehem, which means “house of bread.”
 - And **V35**, **whoever** eats of him will live.
- We need Jesus but we can have him.

Apply:

- This is great difference bt Xnty/every other religion → and why Xnty is such good news.
 - Other faiths give you steps to make your way *up* to heaven.
 - Xnty says heaven has made his way *down* to us.
 - The emphasis is not on what we must do to eat.
 - The emphasis is on the fact that the bread of life is already here.
- We desperately need Jesus → but we can have him.
 - He has come down, he’s within reach, here for the taking → Anyone can eat this bread and live.
 - There are no qualifications, there is no cost, we can all partake of this feast.

Transition:

- Jesus is the Bread of Life – WE NEED HIM, WE CAN HAVE HIM.
- Finally, in calling himself the Bread of Life, Jesus is teaching us that...

3. HE’S GOOD

Illustrate:

- Ever ordered something you thought would be good, but turned out to be terrible?
 - I had that experience with gazpacho.
 - Looks like a delicious tomato soup; it is in fact a cold, red, oil slick.
- Maybe you like gazpacho – we all have different **tastes**:
 - Some of us like to experiment, others like to play it safe.
 - Some love olives, brussels sprouts, pineapple on their pizzas → others would rather taste death.
- Then some of us have different **needs**:
 - You might be gluten-free or dairy-free.
 - You might have certain allergies.

State: Here’s the point:

- Whatever your preferences, tastes, dietary needs → The bread of life satisfies us all.
- **V35: I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.**
 - No **sin** he can’t forgive, no **strength** he can’t supply, no **hunger** he can’t satisfy.
 - When you eat the bread of life, you **taste and see that the LORD is good! (Ps 34:8).**

Apply: Important to emphasize that to taste Jesus is to taste the LORD – to taste God.⁴

- Jesus makes this clear in the language that he uses.
 - NT written in Greek.
 - Normally, to say *I AM*... in Greek you use word EGO – where we get our word *ego* for your sense of self or importance.
 - But there’s another option in Greek: you could also use word EIMI – that means *I AM*... as well.

- You've got two options – pick whichever one you like – but strange thing is that Jesus uses both.
 - He says: *EGO EIMI... the bread of life.*
 - If translated literally it would sound like he's stuttering: *I AM, I AM... the bread of life.*
- What's Jesus up to here?
 - Casting minds back to OT and Ex 3 where God appears to Moses in burning bush.
 - Moses takes sandals off bc it's holy ground → Asks God, "What is your name?"
 - Do you remember how God replies?
 - Moment of divine self-disclosure, God answers: **I AM WHO I AM (3:14).**
 - He uses two I AMs...
 - **One commentator says:** "*Here is the God of the Bible: he is the eternal, unchangeable, glorious God whose name is I AM. And now Jesus applies that designation to himself.*"⁵
 - Why would Jesus do that? Why would Jesus apply OT name of God to himself?
 - Bc he is the God of OT! And God of the NT. And God of all eternity.
 - We take our sandals off before him → But bc he has come down as bread we can also enjoy him.
- To taste Jesus is to taste the goodness of God.

Summary: Jesus is the bread of life – WE NEED HIM, WE CAN HAVE HIM, HE'S GOOD.

Transition: Two quick application points as we close...

THE CLOSE

[Unbeliever]

- How long can you survive without food?
 - Maybe you could David Blaine your way to 44 days → Gut it out to 60?
 - But eventually there's a limit to human endurance and you will not make it to eternity without the bread of life.
- Why would you go hungry when he's inviting you to eat?
 - Jesus calls you to come: **V35: I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.**
 - We come by believing we need forgiveness and that Jesus died/rose to save us → Do that and he will satisfy you forever.
- Why would you go hungry when he's inviting you to eat?
 - There is nothing in Jesus that would stop you from becoming a Xn today.
 - You can become a Xn today by agreeing that you need him, you can have him, and he's good.

[Believer]

- Jesus is the Bread of Life – Keep eating... savor him.
 - In OT, didn't take long for Israelites to become complacent about manna.
 - In fact, they even started to complain about it! (See Numbers 11:4-6.)
- We'd laugh were we not so like them.

- How quick we are to get distracted/dissatisfied.
- Fill our minds/hearts/lives with so many things that we forget to stop/savor Jesus.
 - Instead of focusing on him as the essential food we need to survive.
 - We push him to the periphery of our lives.
- Maybe you're doing that in this season?
 - Believe in Jesus but not really living for him and certainly not experiencing the joy that can only be found in him.
 - Spiritual life feels a little flat, listless.
- Start of the New Year is a great time to bring him back to the center of your life.
 - Make him your refuge/strength.
 - Remember that he is enough.
- Lots of ways to do that of course, but here's one small thing that helps me...
 - When Jesus is getting pushed to the edges of my life...
 - When I want to bring him back into the center...
 - Whenever you eat, give thanks for the bread of life.*
 - Say grace – a prayer of thanks – before every meal.*
- Great way to be more mindful of Jesus throughout the day.
 - Every time you eat, talk to him.
 - Jesus, thank you for this food.
 - And thank you for being the bread of life.
 - You provide for us in every way.
 - Strengthen us that we might follow you today.
 - Say it like you mean it...
- [Final Notes]:
 - **Family/friends/roommates:** Do this together → Make it a normal thing.
 - **Husbands/Dads:** I think it's our responsibility to take the initiative in this.
 - **And parents:** Teach your kids...
 - Teach them what to say...
 - Have them take turns when you eat as a family...
 - Build this spiritual discipline into them so they're thinking about Jesus multiple times a day.
 - When they leave and go off to college, you want them thinking about Jesus as they sit in that dining hall...

Jesus said: I AM... the bread of life.
For this we can all give thanks:
We need him, we can have him, and he's good.

RESOURCES AND ENDNOTES

Resources

This list contains some of the resources that were used to prepare this sermon series. Check them out if you want to dig a little deeper.

- James Montgomery Boice, *The Gospel of John, Volumes 2 and 3*.
- John Calvin, *Commentary on the Gospel According to John*.
- Iain D. Campbell, *I AM... Exploring the 'I am' sayings of John's Gospel*
- D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John*.
- Matt Chandler, *I AM*.
- Ray Cortese, *To Believe*.
- Paul Jeon, *Life Eternal: The Gospel of John*.
- Timothy Keller, *The Timothy Keller Sermon Archive*.
- Logos Bible Software.
- Brennan Manning, *The Ragamuffin Gospel*.
- Tim Mackie, *Read Scripture: Illustrated Summaries of Biblical Books*.
- R. C. Sproul, *Knowing Christ: The I AM Sayings of Jesus*.

Endnotes

¹ I owe my understanding of this passage primarily to Iain D. Campbell, *I AM... Exploring the 'I am' sayings of John's Gospel*.

² These stats and stories come from a BBC article, "Who, What, Why: How long can someone survive without food?" Accessed [here](#) 1/4/23.

³ Campbell, 19.

⁴ I owe this section to R. C. Sproul, *Knowing Christ: The I AM Sayings of Jesus, part 1 – The Bread of Life*.

⁵ Campbell, 12.