

August 18, 2019

"I am the..."

"I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty..." John 6:35

What kind of relationship do you have with Jesus? In my own life and through my work I have become convinced that most of us do not enjoy the relationship with Jesus that he wants to have with us. I believe that Jesus longs to have a very close, intimate relationship with us and that we, more often than not, push him away.

In John's gospel Jesus uses the phrase ***"I am the..."*** seven times to define who he is and what kind of relationship he wants to build with each one of us. In the first of these statements our Lord says, ***"I am the bread of life..."*** To fully understand what the Master is teaching us here we need, I think, to consider the context both from a Jewish perspective and in the immediate context of Jesus' ministry.

Fairly early in his ministry Jesus, according to John, crossed over the Sea of Galilee to an area that was largely unpopulated. A large crowd of people, probably more than ten thousand, pursued him into this deserted area and, as Jesus sees this crowd approaching, he asks Philip, ***"Where shall we buy enough bread for these people to eat?"***

While eight months wages would not have feed these people even a mouthful, Jesus uses five small barley loaves and two small fish provided by a young boy to feed the whole crowd and afterwards twelve baskets of leftovers are gathered up. The satisfied crowd continues to follow Jesus everywhere he goes because he miraculously fed them, and in this context our Lord shows us a better pursuit than one free meal.

He tells us, ***"I am the bread of life..."*** He is helping us to understand what he so often tells us; he will provide for us; he will take care of our needs. ***"Do not work for food that spoils,"*** he teaches, ***"but for food that endures to eternal life which the Son of Man will give you."***

Think about how much time and energy we devote to the pursuit of those things that we think are necessary for our existence. And when we finally earn those things, how long do they last; how long are we satisfied? Jesus wants us, I believe, to understand two things.

Jesus already knows what we need and will perfectly provide for those needs if we constantly turn to him for sustenance. He tells us, ***"So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the Pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father know that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well."*** (Matthew 6:24-34)

He longs for us to live in a relationship where we absolutely trust that he will take care of us. Spending time with our littlest grandson Aiden reminded me of this kind of simple trust. All of us adults worked to make sure that Aiden would have the things that he needed moment by moment throughout each day. We planned for his meals, and his naps, and all of his needs. Aiden didn't even think about it. From his perspective, it just happened.

God is like us adults. He has already planned for every contingency. He has our daily meals already planned, he has our clothes already selected for us, he has all of our needs already met, but unlike little Aiden, we still run ourselves ragged trying to make sure all of those needs get met.

Jesus is trying to help us understand, that he is our bread of life, that he is our sustenance, that he will perfectly provide for our needs. Like Israel in the desert, he is providing us with our

daily needs. No matter how much we try to gather, he will provide exactly what we need; no more, no less.

So, what kind of relationship do we have with Jesus? Is it shallow or are we intimately connected to him absolutely trusting that he will provide for our every need?

*I am
the Bread
of Life*

John 6:35

