

Seven Sayings of Jesus: I Am...The Bread of Life

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[0 : 00] Welcome here for this Sunday, May 7th. My name is Kent Dixon. It's my joy to be the pastor here, my true joy, my honor. So I'm going to tell you, here's an aside. So the tank is going to be full.

Oh, I'm walking away from the pulpit. Everyone's going to freak out. So this tank is going to be full on Saturday because another congregation is going to be using our baptismal tank. So I'm going to plant a seed in your head. There isn't a lot of time to think about it, but if you've been thinking about baptism, if it's been on your heart and your mind, and I see a few people nudging a few other people, I'm not going to make eye contact. But the reality is this tank is going to be full.

Next Sunday, I could baptize you in this tank. It's short notice, but that's okay. God works in short notice. But that being said, don't feel pressure. Don't feel tense. Don't feel scared.

You can wipe your hands if they're sweaty now. It's all good because we will, I promise you, fill that tank anytime. And I would love to get in that water with you. So just plant that seed for now that it's going to be full anyway, and I'm not afraid of water. So welcome to everyone this morning.

Welcome to you as you're here in person. Lots of people listen online through the phone line or on the website or other ways, our podcast. And so it was interesting for me this week, I get these podcast updates. So our sermons, I package them in a podcast format. It's available on Apple Podcasts if you're a podcast person. And so it's available through Spotify and Apple Podcasts and a few other different channels. So it's interesting. I get these updates of how many listens, where they're from.

And I love, I've told you many times, I love data, right? I like information. So it's interesting to see this week that some of the folks who listen to our sermons through the podcast are in Virginia and Germany and Israel and Prague. So weird, cool though, right? And humbling for me, for sure. So hello to whoever might be listening, because God is at work through our church and connecting with people in that way. So as I already said this morning, my name is Kent. That name is related to a Scottish word, which means to know. It's Ken, K-E-N. So I learned also that in Celtic culture, it can mean a shepherd staff, that word, Kent. Or a crook, but not that kind, of course. Not that kind. And my last name, my surname, as we call it, right, is Dixon. And I always got teased in junior high or elementary school, because kids do that. People would say, son of Richard or son of Dick, right? Which is true, right? That's where that name comes from. Son of Richard or Dick for short, right? So Dick's son is literally the son of Dick, which is where it comes from. So my father's name was Herb, though, right? So maybe I should start calling myself Herbson. Or Herbertson, perhaps, because that was his full name, right? So Dixon, it's a surname, right? It's most often Scottish, not surprisingly.

[3 : 34] It's associated with the Keith clan of the highlands of Scotland. So the Dixon family would have been part of that larger Scottish clan. So I've also learned that in Teutonic or German, the same name, that name Dixon, means strong leader. And that's not something that I knew.

But as Shakespeare said, was that a chuckle? I think I heard a chuckle. Strong leader. It's true. There's different kinds of strength. But as Shakespeare said, what is in a name? What's in a name? Because you can only know so much about something or someone by learning their name.

And so I'm leading into our new sermon series this week. So what other things besides someone's name can help us get to know them or to grow in relationship with them? Well, maybe their likes and dislikes. I hate raisins. Lots of you know that. Maybe some of their attributes or qualities. Someone has a good sense of humor. Someone is a straight shooter. They're bold and direct. Someone is honest and consistent with who they are and what they do and the things that they say. Maybe the things that they value or have meaning for them are also part of their identity. So have you ever stopped to think about how we define identity, that concept, and various aspects of it?

Well, our identity, to me, can be anchored in our roles or relationships. If you are a parent or a spouse or a neighbor or a child or a sibling, and there's so many other kinds of relationships we can list, that is part of your identity. Your skills or your hobbies. If you are a potter or a painter or a writer or any of those things, an actor, your skills or your hobbies also are part of your identity. They're part of what make you up. If you're a mountain climber, for example, your vocation also becomes part of your identity in many ways. A nurse, a doctor, an accountant, an electrician, a plumber, a painter, a pastor, these are all parts of our identity. They're not our sole identity, but they are certainly part of that. So for me to declare I am can mean many different things to both me personally, but also to others who get to know me. My identity in that statement, I am, can mean lots of different things. But they all, all of the different things that come to make up my identity are all still parts of who I am. So we're beginning a new sermon series this morning called Seven Sayings of Jesus, I Am. And so I wanted to give you a bit of background there, a little bit of context. Aren't those great eyes? I mean, this isn't obviously a rendering of Jesus, a portrait, someone's interpretation, but I see the face of Jesus. Won't that be something?

[6 : 41] So I wanted to give you a bit of context there, because we're going to be considering in these seven statements Jesus makes, Jesus' identity, what he said about himself, who he said he was, and then how we can better consider our identity in light of that context and truth. Does that make sense? So how Jesus identifies himself, his identity, and how that frames, can frame and shape our own.

And Jesus said a great deal about himself, probably lots of it you're familiar with. He said lots about his identity and his mission throughout the New Testament. And prophets in the Old Testament said a great deal about the coming Messiah as well. And guess what? That was Jesus too. So there's a lot in scripture that talks about Jesus' identity, who he was, who he is. But in this series, we're going to look at some of the ways Jesus identified himself, specifically in the Gospel of John. And as we consider some of these statements, these are the I am statements of Jesus. So these statements are important to us because they're not just ways of describing or understanding Jesus himself, although they do that, but they also serve as a guide for us in how we can grow to better understand him, how we can grow our relationship with him in context of these things. So the first I am statement, we're going to consider together, is found in John 6, 35, where Jesus declares to a crowd,

I am the bread of life. So what's our context for this statement that Jesus makes? Well, I don't know if you've ever put these pieces together. Sometimes people think of stories or chunks of scripture in isolation from one another. But guess what? Jesus talking about himself being the bread of life comes just a day after. Now, he had just performed one of the most well-known, well-recognized miracles recorded in scripture. He had fed over 5,000 people. And why do I say, well, my Sunday school told me it was a feeding of the 5,000. Well, scripture tells us 5,000 men plus women and children.

So it was a big crowd. So Jesus had been preaching and teaching to this crowd. They got hungry, as we read in scripture. And the disciples had no money to buy food in the local village. There was no food court. There was no skip the dishes. There was no Uber Eats. They had no money. So God provided.

I have some potentially obvious questions for you, but we need to consider them. It's important. What is bread and why do we need it? Well, bread is obviously food, right? It provides our body with calories, with nutrition, with sustenance. Food is fuel to function. And beyond that, I don't know about you, but I personally find that smell of fresh bread to be nearly irresistible. Have you ever gone to Olive Garden and said, no, one basket of breadsticks is just fine, thank you? Not a chance. [10 : 14] That smell of baked bread is somehow genetically ingrained into us. Ooh, jump to the communion slide. That's cheating. So that's the reality, right? Is bread is an important thing.

And you've heard the expression probably, you are what you eat, right? So this reminds us that we are literally dependent on the nutrients and the vitamins and all the nutrition that we consume. And imagine what a bread-only diet will lead to. Probably scooter transportation of some kind. But we also consume lots of other things in our lives beyond food and potentially without even realizing it. We read things. We watch things. We look at things. We listen to things. We consume things that are at the best of times may not really feed our soul or at the worst of times they can even be hurting us potentially. So we can recognize that we can also be shaped by what we don't eat.

By the things that we choose not to eat. So just as a bad diet and poor nutrition has a negative impact on our bodies, a weak spiritual diet can be just as detrimental to us in equally critical ways. So let's consider something else for a moment. Can you recognize the difference between full and satisfied? Think about that for a second. Can you recognize the difference between full and satisfied? Well, the world suggests that they're fairly similar, I think, overall, but they're actually very different. Because feeling full can bring satisfaction, sure. But that satisfaction that comes from feeling full is generally temporary. I love Asian food. You know, comedians joke about it all the time. You can feel full after eating that kind of meal, but largely because it's vegetables and other things, that satisfaction, that kind of feeling of fullness generally fades. So we should also be able to recognize that a sense of fullness can also relate to more than just food in our lives.

[12:43] So you can feel a need that maybe is met by buying yourself something nice. Does anyone ever indulge in retail therapy at times? Sometimes it works. Treating yourself to something. You know, if you've had a good day or you've had a rough day, then you can choose to...

Why don't you... That would be... It's interesting. Our wireless system, we... Leah and I have tried to figure it out, picks up, I believe, a signal from the church down the street. So that's their service. So if you're not enjoying my sermon, you can listen. So we should be able to recognize, right, that the sense of fullness can relate more to more than just food.

And our world suggests, I believe, that that's an important pursuit. Feeling full, satisfying your immediate needs. That that is important. But the world also recognizes that we need to keep pursuing that need.

Do you see that? Do you feel that in the world around us? We're to continue to try and feel full. We're continuing to try and chase after those things. In whatever way, we may need to experience that in our lives.

[13:57] So do you see how that can become a hamster wheel of ambition and disappointment? We seek it. It doesn't make us full. So we need more. We need different. And as I've said in the past, I think probably in my sermon in my very first year, it's okay that we're striving for things because that's the way we're wired.

But it's what we seek to fill that need with that is the problem, that is the challenge. Because the need that we fill, that constant hunger, that constant desire for more, is only satisfied in and by God. Only.

So bread is a definite theme in the Bible. We see it in the story of God's people fleeing slavery in Egypt. We see it in Jesus here, miraculously feeding a large group of people.

Bread is an important theme. And we see it again in Jesus defining himself literally here as the bread of life. So why is this significant? Why is this statement important?

Well, I believe it's because bread represents God's provision for his people. We see it over and over in Scripture. God provides for a need for his people through providing bread.

[15:17] God recognizes a fundamental need that we have, and he shows up to provide and meet that need, both literally and figuratively. So some of the people, we'll go to a passage here now.

Some of the people who had been miraculously fed by Jesus that previous day, follow him. We read in Scripture that they track him down. We read about this encounter in John 6, verses 26 and 27.

And you can turn there, or you can listen, and I'll read it for us. John 6, 26 and 27. So these folks come and find Jesus. Jesus answered, I tell you the truth.

You are looking for me not because you saw miraculous signs, but because you ate the loaves and had your fill. Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you.

On him, God the Father has placed his seal of approval. So Jesus calls out the crowd here for their desire to be full in a literal and temporary sense.

[16:34] They're not thinking, what a great teacher this man is. I want to hear more. They're thinking, he had a buffet yesterday. Let's see what he's got for today. What's on the menu?

So rather than seeking the spiritual food that he has come to offer them, that's the only way they can truly be satisfied, but they don't see it.

So we also read about this perspective from Jesus from Matthew 4, verse 4. And you don't need to turn, but you can. So here, here's another bread connection, right?

Jesus is being tempted in the desert by Satan. And Satan is looking to get him to fill, temporarily, fill his own needs, his own physical human needs.

So Satan says, make yourself some bread. Boom, make a loaf. You can do it. Do it right now. And Jesus' response is so important. Jesus says, it is written that man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.

[17:43] Jesus is again pointing to the deeper satisfaction that only comes through God. Scripture's clear that the only way that we can be truly satisfied as God wants us to be is by focusing on him and his word.

focusing on the spiritual bread, the eternal food that he offers to us through Jesus. So when we get our priorities straight, God has promised that he will provide for our needs when we seek him first and trust him with our practical needs.

Jesus quickly learns that these people who followed him from the day before aren't looking for satisfying, not filling, but satisfying, life-changing, spiritual bread that he has to offer.

They're just looking to be filled again. Looking to have their temporary, or their temporal needs temporarily met.

That's all they want. But when it becomes clear that Jesus is offering so much more, but also asking for them, so much more from them in following him, the crowd begins to fade away.

[19:05] When's another time in Jesus' life when people who sought him, who loved him, who followed him, faded away? My friends, are you just looking for Jesus to meet your earthly needs?

Is that it? And then you'll connect with him again when you need more of that? That road will lead you to always feeling dissatisfied and unfulfilled.

I promise you that. Only a deep and intentional relationship with Jesus can really lead to a true satisfaction in our lives.

I challenge for you. Remember, Jesus hasn't gone anywhere. If you're feeling distant from him, if you're feeling like the relationship has faded, that has happened on your end, not his.

Only by following him, returning and surrendering our lives to him every day, can we grow closer to the true peace, that true sense of satisfaction that only a relationship with God can provide.

[20:21] Think about the things in your life that occupy most of your time. Do these things, honest question, do these things bring you true satisfaction?

or do they really, ultimately, just bring you a sense of feeling full? And in thinking about how you spend your time, the things in which you invest most of your time, how does that compare to the time you spend with Jesus?

As we've noted, only by really consuming a relationship with Jesus, only by seeking to adopt his truth and example into your life as your sole source of life-giving power, only then can you find the deepest and most powerful sense of satisfaction you will ever know.

Amen. Amen.