

I AM the Bread of Life
John 6:35-40
Pastor Ty Blackburn
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Turn with me in your Bibles to John 6, please. I'm real happy this morning to have some special guests with us, Charlie and Thelma Winselle, who are precious members of our church. They've been used by the Lord to really impart so many spiritual blessings to us, and so many touches of kindness through the years, but especially in the last years. Charlie has battled and struggled with Stage 4 cancer and now is going through chemo and radiation. He's set to start back on his chemotherapy on Wednesday, which is good news that he is now able to go back through another regime of chemo. He and Thelma had their family with them up in the mountains this weekend, and so we have like 20 some-odd folks from the Winselle family here. I'd like to ask you all to stand up if you would. All right, let's give them a welcome. Thank you. I hope you all had a wonderful time together. It's a blessing to get away like that, isn't it? And the whole family getting away like that to spend time together. Praise God! Thank you for coming this morning to worship with us. Charlie and Thelma, we love you guys so much.

One of the things we see in the lives of other believers when they go through suffering, and their hearts are fixed on Christ, is we see that He is sufficient. No matter what our circumstance, Jesus is all we need. The passage before us this morning from John 6 presents that reality. Here in this passage, where Jesus is opening for us, the wonder of His ministry, His work, and the powerful impact that it made. We get the glimpse of His sufficiency. I want to remind you of the immediate context in the passage. Jesus here, this bread of life discourse, is talking to an extensive crowd, probably at least hundreds of people. The day before there had been 5,000 men, upwards of 20,000, probably, who ate loaves and fish. Jesus used 5 loaves and 2 fish to feed 20,000 plus people. They saw the miracle of the feeding of the 5,000. They experienced it, they took the bread into their mouths. They were satisfied, filled, so that there were 12 baskets of pieces left over. 12 parts of those loaves of bread that were still left over. It's a glorious picture of the nature of our Savior. So we see in the passage that that was really setting a backdrop in the providence of God. Jesus has done that miracle to provide a backdrop for what He's about to say, because that really was a visible picture of an inward reality. The bread that satisfied their physical hunger yesterday is a picture that Jesus alone can satisfy their spiritual hunger today.

We're going to look this morning at Verses 35-40, which really amount to the apex of the passage. The mountaintop in particular, the crest as it were, is Verse 35. I want us to read Verses 34-40 to get the context, the question that the people asked, showing again that they're missing the point. They're thinking only of physical bread and physical needs, and Jesus is calling them to look to Him for the satisfaction of their deep, real, most ultimate needs which are spiritual. And in this one bold and clear statement of our Lord in Verse 35, He sets forth, with un mistakeable clarity, that He and He alone can meet our deepest needs.

*John 6:34 ~ Then they said to Him, "Lord, always give us this bread."
35 Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me will not hunger, and he who believes in Me will never thirst. 36 But I said to you that you have seen Me, and yet do not believe. 37 All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out. 38 For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. 39 This is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day. 40 For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life, and I Myself will raise him up on the last day."*

Let's pray together.

Our Father, we ask that You would grant by Your Holy Spirit, true and clear understanding of Your Word, that we might believe it. That we might lay hold of the One who is presented in Your Word, the living Word, Jesus Christ. We pray in His name, Amen.

A little more than a week ago, we heard the news that members of the family and entourage had grown concerned. It had been more than an hour since she had left the main room of the hotel suite to take a bath, and having been gone for over an hour, they decided to go check on her. They knocked on the door of the bathroom and heard nothing. Finally, after getting no response, they broke into the bathroom and found the body of Whitney Houston, one of the greatest female vocalists of all time. At age 48, she was gone, which ended her decades-long battle with drugs. And what seems to be, the more you hear about it, something of the curse of fame. Yesterday afternoon I watched some of the funeral service, from her New Jersey church, and was made aware that her first experiences in singing were singing gospel music at church, her Baptist church, which she attended throughout her childhood, faithfully, with her family. Her first experiences were singing about

Christ. Her first experiences of singing publicly were lifting up the name of God. The other day I heard her singing, it was a line for Barbara Walters, "Guide me, oh Thou Great Jehovah." Patti and I were reflecting on this this weekend, and it seemed all too eerily reminiscent of Elvis Presley, another of the greats of all time, who began singing first gospel music in the church. Who also succumbed to the curse of fame, and the trauma of success. They lived lives dominated by addiction and sin, knowing about Christ but enjoying nothing of the reality apparently. They were starving in the presence of plenty.

The sign that Jesus performed the day before He says these words, illustrated in a powerful way that He was the One who could satisfy every need. The Jewish people who saw that sign were made aware of that power, they personally experienced it by eating the bread and the fish. So close, and yet so far. As we follow the flow of the rest of the passage, we find that only a few of that 20,000-person mob seemed to be genuine followers of Christ. How can this be? It seems a curse of the human condition that we can have life right in front of us, and yet not be a partaker. This passage presents the tragic reality of that. In fact, Verses 36-40 really present our human responsibility to believe, and yet God's sovereignty in the process. We're going to look at those, Lord-willing, next Sunday. But today I want us to focus on just the mountain-peak majesty of Verse 35. That in that verse, in that statement of Jesus Christ, we have an awesome and clear picture of His glorious provision of salvation, of His availability, of Him offering Himself. Though we believe the Bible teaches the sovereignty of God in salvation, we also believe the Bible teaches clearly, whosoever will may come. Sovereignty and human responsibility run alongside one another in a glorious way. Jesus here is saying to these hungry people, these spiritually famished people, "I am the Bread of Life. You're hungry. Come to Me. Believe in Me."

I want us just to try to unpack the wonder of what He said, "***I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me will not hunger, and he who believes in Me will never thirst.***" This is a picture of the glorious sufficiency of Jesus Christ, the fullness of Christ that is made available to us in our emptiness. I want us to look first of all at the phrase 'I AM' and even more specifically at the personal pronoun 'I'. Jesus said to them, "***I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me will not hunger, and he who believes in Me will never thirst.***" 19 times in 6 verses, we find the first-person personal pronouns, 'I, me, my, myself'. That's something that marked the teaching of Jesus Christ.

I mentioned last week, John Stotts statement, that when I first read it I remember how striking it was. His words are:

The most striking feature of the teaching of Jesus is that He was constantly talking about Himself. It is true that He spoke much about the Fatherhood of God and the Kingdom of God, but then He added that He was the Father's Son, and that He had come to inaugurate the Kingdom. Entering into the Kingdom depended on man's response to Him. He didn't hesitate to call the Kingdom of God, 'My Kingdom'. This self-centeredness of the teaching of Jesus immediately sets Him apart from the other great religious teachers of the world. They were self-effacing. He was self-advancing. They pointed men away from themselves, saying, 'That is the truth. So far as I perceive it, follow that.' Jesus said, 'I AM the truth, follow Me.' The founder of none of the ethnic religions ever dared to say such a thing. The personal pronoun forces itself repeatedly on our attention as we read His words. For example," and cites a number of verses from John. Listen to this:

John 6:35 ~ ..."I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me shall not hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst.

John 8:12 ~ ..."I am the Light of the world; he who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life."

John 11:25-26 ~ ..."I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me, though they die, yet shall he live, and whoever lives and believes in me shall never die...

John 14:6 ~ "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but by Me.

Matthew 11:28 ~ Come to me, all who are weary and labor, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me.

*With such an opinion of Himself, Stott writes, it is not surprising that He call people to Himself. Indeed He did more than issue an invitation, He uttered a command, "Come to Me," He said, and "Follow Me." If men would only come to Him, He promised to lift the burdens of the weary, to satisfy the hungry, and to quench the thirst of the parched soul. Further, His followers were to obey Him and to confess Him before men. His disciples came to recognize the rite of Jesus to make these totalitarian claims. And in their letters, Paul, Peter, James, and Jude delight to call themselves His slaves. In one more flash, of breathtaking egocentricity, Jesus predicted, ...**I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself.** He knew that the cross would exert a moral magnetism on men and women, but in drawing them, they would be brought primarily neither to God*

nor to the church, neither to truth nor to righteousness, but to Himself. They would in fact be brought to these only by being brought to Him.

It's strong language but it's absolutely correct. It's interesting too, that He calls us to be humble, and the reality is He is humble. Humility is seeing yourself rightly. For us, if we see ourselves rightly, we're on our faces in the dust. For Him to see Himself rightly, He is the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. He is the One who alone as done well. I was thinking about this, His saying 'I AM' is a good illustration. Imagine that if I were to have a heart attack right now, I hate to say things like that. I'm not superstitious, but still I just don't like to go around saying silly things like that. But if I were to have a heart attack and fall over here on the ground, and someone says, "Hey, I watched online how to do CPR. I'm going to help him." And they're up here and they're beating on my chest. And somebody behind says, "Hey, look, I took CPR. I was trained in CPR as a life guard. Let me have at him." Then there is a doctor back there, a cardiologist, who says, "You know really, I don't want to get in the way. These guys are already doing it. I don't want to force myself on the situation." I want to tell you, I want the cardiologist. I want him to say, "Get out of the way. I don't care about your CPR course. Get out of the way, I know what I'm doing. I'm here to help. I can heal." That is what Jesus Christ is doing. "Forget everything else. I AM! Everything that you need, I AM." It is absolutely accurate and perfect, and this is said by the One Who left the glory of Heaven and was the picture of humility and coming into this world. Even in speaking and using the metaphor of bread, here again we have His condescension. The humility of God, coming all the way down to us. But the reality is, when He comes all the way down, the only way that we can go back up is for us to see Him as He is. And thankfully, He is clear. He's not someone Who practices false modesty. The cardiologist saying, "I know I know what I'm doing, but I'm just going to stay back." No, you do what you know how to do. That's not humility, that would be pride actually. A lot of times we get confused about that. "I'm not going to step forward and do what I could do because I'm too humble." In reality, no, "I'm afraid of what people might think of me if I assert myself." That's pride. Backhanded pride, but pride. So Jesus, 'I', He is saying He is the One. Look nowhere else but to Him, and He stands apart from all of the prophets the same way. They all said, "Look behind me. Someone is coming." Jesus said, "I'm here."

So, 'I', but then 'I AM'. The phrase 'ego ami', which is in itself emphatic. Ami in Greek, like many languages, the pronoun is present in the verb. In English, we don't have this. In English we always have to supply a pronoun, but in Greek, as many other languages, the pronoun is there in the verb. Verbs have person and number. First-person, singular, I. Ami, by itself, means 'I AM'. Ego ami has the

force of 'I myself am'. It's emphatic. It's this phrase that is the refrain throughout the Gospel of John. John, inspired by the Holy Spirit, recalls these different 'I AM' sayings of Jesus, and he spices his book, he seasons his book as he records the events as they happen, by recalling those glorious statements. I AM. In Verse 35, ***"I am the bread of life;...*** In Verse 48 He echoes it. ***"I am the bread of life;...*** In Verse 51, ***I am the living bread...*** Each time, ego ami, followed by a predicate. The Bread of Life, the Living Bread. The Bread of Life!

We've noted in previous weeks that this is one among many 'I AM' statements with a predicate, and I just read a couple of others from John Stotts' quotation. "I am the Light of the world. I am the Gate. I am the Good Shepherd. I am the Resurrection and the Life. I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life. I am the True Vine." Seven different statements of 'I AM' followed by a predicate nominative that illustrates what it means. Who is this person that is the 'I AM'. What is He for us? He is our Bread. He is our Light. He is our entrance into Heaven. He is our Shepherd. He is our Resurrection. He is the True Vine. He is everything. We also have the 'I AM's' that are absolute with no predicate. We encountered the first one a few weeks in John 6:20, when Jesus was out walking on the water and to help the disciples recognize Him He says, "It is I." But in Greek, 'ego ami'. 'I AM'. 'I AM' is clearly in the words of Jesus, in the teaching of Jesus, the direct claim that He Himself is the God of the Old Testament.

In Exodus 3:14-17, when Moses is called by the Lord, it's interesting too, this is the first time Jesus uses the 'ego ami' in John's Gospel. And in John recording it for us, it's interesting. He's writing, we've noted, for a primarily Jewish audience, to explain to them the reality of how could so many Jews have rejected the Jewish Messiah. So He's writing for people who are steeped in the Old Testament. They know their Old Testament, and it's amazing how this passage, we're going to see this in weeks to come, has so much imagery of the Passover and the Exodus in this chapter. It's all over the place. In Chapter 5, even setting it up, Moses made mention. It's all over this chapter in the backdrop, and the idea is that those who have read their Old Testament, the Jews steeped in the Old Testament, know the story of the Exodus. They know what happened when Moses saw a bush that was burning, but was not consumed. They know that the voice spoke out of the bush and said, "Moses, Moses take off your shoes, for the place that you're standing is holy ground." They know that the voice out of the bush was in fact God, when Moses said, "Who shall I tell them sent me? The nation of Israel, who am I going to tell them sent me? What is Your name?" In Exodus 3:14, the Lord says, "I am that I am. So you shall tell them I AM sent you." 'I AM' is wordplay. It's a form of the verb 'to be' in Hebrew. Yahweh is the third-person singular of the word 'to be'

in Hebrew. A close relation to 'I AM' in Hebrew. Not exactly that, but it's the wordplay, and the idea of God saying, "What I mean when I say that is I am Who I am, and you need to say, 'He is who He is.'" He will be who He will be. He is everything that we need, and the Lord says, 'I AM'. So, when Jesus takes this upon His lips and echoes it again and again, He is saying nothing less than He is Yahweh. In unmistakable, clear terms.

It's astonishing that Jehovah's Witnesses have the audacity to call themselves Jehovah's Witnesses. Jehovah Yahweh, pronounced with the German pronunciation. A Y becomes a J. A W becomes a V. Jehovah. They say that Jesus is not Yahweh. How can they possibly read the same Bible we're reading and say that? They are not witnesses to Jehovah. They are witnesses to a false god, and they need the Gospel of Jesus Christ because He is Jehovah, He is Yahweh. And in saying this, Jesus is clearly saying He is the 'I AM', which means He's declaring His self-existence, His eternality, the fact that He's always been. His independence. He doesn't depend on anyone. God does not need anything. He doesn't grow hungry, not in His I AM-ness. He doesn't have need. Only in that He took humanity to Himself has He even become able to relate to us, and He did that so that He could save us. But in His deity, He has no needs. He is completely independent so that He can be depended on. He is the 'I AM'. He says, 'I AM'. The first time that phrase is clearly laid out like this, in John 6, "I AM on the water and I AM the Bread of Life."

Now, let's go to the next part of the phrase. We've looked at 'I' and 'I AM' now, let's look at 'the Bread of Life'. Why this particular metaphor in this place? Well, there are two reasons. First of all, it's immediately accessible. In the context, it makes perfect sense, doesn't it? I mean, He just fed them bread. It has called up to their minds the image of the Exodus and manna which they brought up in previous verses. "Why don't You do what Moses did and give us from bread from Heaven?" Manna. Which has led Jesus to say, "You don't understand, Moses didn't give that to you, God did. And the reality is that the true Bread from Heaven is here. You ought to want the true Bread from Heaven." But they're just kind of like the Samaritan woman. Remember Jesus was trying to say, "I want to give you living water," and she says, "Hey, Lord, give me always this water so I won't have to draw. I don't want to have to come all the way here and draw." She's gone to the well with her bucket to get it. She said, "Give me that living water so I don't have to come back to get some water." She didn't understand. They say in Verse 34, "Lord, give us always this bread. We want this bread. Give it to us always. Keep giving it to us." They don't realize that once you receive the bread of life you don't have to keep receiving it. Jesus is the bread of life. It was immediately accessible

to them, and the picture they had seen the day before makes a perfect backdrop for this word picture. "I AM the bread of life." A metaphor. Jesus takes something that is immediately understood, bread, to teach something that is spiritually elusive. It clarifies that which is distant from something that is near. They understand bread. In fact, when God created us, and created us to eat bread, I think the reason He created us to eat bread was so that we could understand what Jesus was going to be about. The Lord doesn't make things up as He goes along like we do. I'm one of those people who stumble onto puns. I end up saying something and realizing, "Hey, that was pretty good." I had no intention of doing it. The Lord never does that. He doesn't ever think, "Hey, this is really cool. This is kind of like bread. This is a perfect metaphor." When He created sheep, He created sheep so that we could see what we're like. When He created us to eat, He created us to need to eat every day, at least three times a day. We could have just been like a camel, "Eat once and I'm good for three weeks." He didn't make us that way. He made us to need bread because He was trying to teach us how much we need Him. So Jesus takes this immediately accessible image and He's trying to draw these unbelieving Jewish people to Himself. It's such a glorious metaphor because it's immediately accessible to anybody in any culture, isn't it? "Let me tell you about my Savior." If you're talking to someone in the jungles of Cambodia, He is the Bread of Life. Almost every culture has bread. In fact, really the only people throughout history who have not lived on bread are the nomadic cultures. They're moving around too much to plant and they have more meat. I think a lot of times they probably stole bread though too.

It's immediately accessible, but it's also imminently meaningful. The fact that He is bread is tremendously instructive. I mean, the reality, and this is something I think that we've lost. We need to think about how it was then, and how it has been through most of history, really. Because today, what we have in our minds sometimes when we think about bread, is not what this really meant. Jesus wasn't saying, "I'm a loaf of sliced Wonder Bread." White bread. Which I like white bread, it tastes pretty good. A peanut butter and jelly sandwich on white bread is really good, but that's not the kind of bread that the people have eaten throughout history. Because white bread really does not have much nutrition in it, right? Isn't it funny? I heard the other day that coffee is good for you, because of the antioxidants, I believe. Whenever I hear that something's not good for you that I'm already doing, I just say, "Well, wait. Give them another ten years and then someone will come out and say it's actually good for you." And sure enough, it works out. And have you noticed that sugar is now en vogue? I'm old enough that I remember when Sugar Crisp had to change their name. Do you remember that? Do you remember Sugar Crisp? They had to become Honey Crisp. They must have

added a little dash of honey with all that sugar, and said, “We’re Honey Crisp,” because sugar was not en vogue. But now sugar has benefitted from corn syrup becoming the bad guy. “Oh no, we use real sugar. We don’t use corn syrup.” Well anyway, sorry for all that. I got off on this unhealthy track. Literally unhealthy. There’s another pun for you.

Bread, throughout history, has been the world’s perfect food, because bread, when you mill it into flour and eat it within a couple of days, retains 80% to 90% of its nutrients, but when you mill it and its flour is kept after three days, it loses almost all of its nutritional value. I mean dramatically. You still have some, especially with whole wheat bread. In fact, I read a study that said whole wheat bread in the store is 2.5 to 5 times more nutritious than white bread. But they’re talking about store bread that’s been in the store. It’s on the shelf, milled from flour, and messed up. But when you take the whole grain of wheat or spelt or barley, and you grind it and you make it into flour, there are different folks out there who say different things about it, but I saw one study that said the body needs 44 nutrients, and that bread freshly ground from flour contains 40 of the 44 nutrients. Vitamins, minerals, everything you need, it’s almost all there in bread. And that’s the way people ate bread. The reason bread was such a perfect food was because you could store it almost indefinitely.

Isn’t that exactly what happens in Genesis 37-50, when Joseph goes into Egypt? Remember the seven years of plenty that preceded the seven years of famine? What does he do? He stores up grain in Egypt from the seven years of plenty. He makes store houses of kernels of grain. The grain was still whole grain that then they could give out and grind into food with all that nutritional value, and people could survive the seven years of famine.

So when Jesus picks out this metaphor, He’s picking the very best metaphor. Bread is the one thing that will sustain your life when you have nothing else. It’s the basic staple throughout the history of mankind. If you have bread, you have sustenance. Think about it. You take bread into your mouth, you chew it, and it goes into your stomach. If it’s healthful bread, the nutrients are taken through the intestines, so that the vitamins, minerals, and amino acids are then released into the blood stream, so that they are carried to the cells, and so that the cells are energized and enabled to do the things they need to do to promote life. Jesus says that’s a picture of what needs to happen to you Spiritually, and He says: *I Am the Answer. I Am the Bread. You need to partake of Me.* The image is clearly metaphorical. He’s didn’t intend it the way the Roman Catholics have understood this, in a literalistic way. It’s clear this is metaphorical language. ‘I Am the Bread’ doesn’t mean that when

you pick up the bread later in the Lord's Supper, that it's really literally the body of Christ. Far be it. It means that bread is a picture of what Jesus is to the soul.

In fact, He makes it clear in this verse, because this verse actually controls the rest of the passage. He said, "***I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me...*** not, "he who eats Me". And that's actually showing us even there, that the metaphorical nature of this should govern the rest of the passage, because He's going to say later in Verse 54: ***He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood...*** is My disciple. Later we'll get at why He's saying that, but He's doesn't mean that literally the body and blood of Christ are present physically in the Lord's Supper. They're not. That's a terrible misreading of Scripture, and it's missing the point. He's saying, "Like bread, if you come to Me, if you believe in Me, that's the same as partaking of bread." The way you partake of Jesus is you believe in Him. You come to Him. You cast yourself upon Him. When you do that, then He brings life to your soul.

So He says, ***I am the bread of life;...*** and then I want us to look at the benefits in the last part of the verse. I was beginning to get into this a little bit. There are three benefits that are shown to us in the passage. It's really one benefit said three ways. He is the bread of life. Bread promotes life. Bread sustains our life. And that's underscored by Him saying it a couple different ways after that.

John 6:35 ~ ... he who comes to Me will not hunger, and he who believes in Me will never thirst.

Through this parallelism in the second half of the verse, He shows us that coming to Him and believing are the same thing. To come to Him means to believe in Him. But if you come to Him, you will not hunger, and if you believe in Him, you will not thirst. In fact, the language is emphatic. In the original, you have a double negative. ***...he who comes to me will not hunger,...*** Really it could be translated possibly better as ***...he who comes to Me will by no means hunger, and he who believes in me will by no means thirst.*** What's interesting about the second phrase is that it's actually a triple negative. It's actually a double negative followed by 'never'. It could be translated literally as ***...he who believes in Me will by no means thirst; never.*** The Lord Jesus is showing us by this strong language, that He is the One who will satisfy the needs of our souls and satisfy them completely, so that we never need to fear not being satisfied.

It's also interesting if you think about the flow of the argument. He said, "I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me will by no means hunger, and he who believes in Me will by no means thirst." It's interesting that He adds that thirst in, isn't it? He's the Bread of Life. Bread doesn't quench thirst. What's He saying? Well, in

John 4, He'd been talking about how He had Living Water to give. The two basic fundamental needs we have in order to sustain our life on a daily basis are food and water, and Jesus says, "I Am that in its entirety, Spiritually. I Am your food. I Am your drink." If you want to be alive, you have to have food and something to drink. If we don't have food, after a period of time, we will experience malnutrition and the body will begin to devour itself. In order to sustain the vital organs and to keep your heart beating and your brain firing, your body requires energy. If you don't eat, your body will begin first of all to burn fat cells and muscle, and it will eat those things. It basically takes those things for fuel. And of course, when we're trying to lose weight, we rejoice in the fact that it takes our fat cells, don't we? But when you are experiencing hunger, it begins to turn on the good cells. Your muscles go, and then other things begin to go. God has wired our body so that it keeps the most vital things til last, but it begins to devour itself until finally, emaciated, a person dies.

You can't live without water. You have to be hydrated. Depending on the individual, two thirds or more of our body is water. We need water and we need food. Jesus says, "I Am that. Spiritually, I Am all you need. He who comes to Me will by no means hunger, and he who believes in Me will by no means thirst; never." He meets our deepest needs.

What are our deepest needs? Are our deepest needs love? Significance? If we were to survey modern evangelicalism, even ourselves, sometimes we'd say we definitely need love. We definitely need to feel important or significant, but what are our deepest needs? Focusing on love and significance is something that's very common in our day. "My love tank is empty. I need to feel significant." In this modern obsession with self-esteem, people have low self-esteem, not because they don't think highly of themselves, but because they *do* think highly of themselves. The fact is that everybody loves himself.

Ephesians 5:29 ~ for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it,...

We love ourselves. The reason somebody has low self-esteem is because they think highly of themselves, and they think life's dealt them a blow. They think, "People out there aren't seeing how great I am, and I'm miserable over it." And you know that, because when people with low self-esteem talk, they talk about themselves continually. Our whole problem is we always think about ourselves. That's the nature of sin. It's all about self. So our deepest need is not love or significance or self-esteem. We do have need for love and significance, but those are not our

deepest needs. According to the Scriptures, our deepest need is that our sin be dealt with. That is the one great need that we have. What does Jesus' Name mean? The angel said:

Matthew 1:21 ~ "...and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins."

He came to save His people from their real problem. I think sometimes it's like when we focus quickly on these other things, love and self-esteem when you're witnessing to someone and sharing Christ with someone, there's a danger to focus on their felt need of love and significance and forget their real need, and you do them peril. If I were to fall over and I'm having a heart attack and my heart stops beating, there are probably several needs that I might have. And if it's a little later in the service and everybody's getting hungry, you might think, "Hey, Ty's lying on the ground. I wonder if he's hungry. One of our fundamental needs is food. Maybe he's thirsty." So you start pouring water in my mouth, or giving me food to eat, and the problem is my heart has stopped beating. I am clinically dead right now. What I need is somebody to give me CPR. I need that cardiologist to get to work. Later, food and water follow. That's the way it really is Biblically. The real need that everybody has is to deal with their sin. Later, love and significance follow. But the problem is our sin. And the reality is, when you get this right, Jesus is the perfect Savior from sin and He's also the One who addresses every other need too. The fact is, if you get Christ, you get everything.

Colossians 2:3 ~ in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

Colossians 1:19 ~ For it pleased the Father for all of His fullness to dwell in Him.

When you get Christ, you get the fullness of God. All of your emptiness is erased by His fullness. But the way that you get it is by first coming to Him as your Lord and Savior from sin. Jesus is saying, "I address the needs and the hunger." He's looking at a people who may feel at this point that they're asking Him for more bread, they feel physical hunger, they might even feel physically thirsty, but He sees in their hearts that they are Spiritually starving, that their souls are parched and dry, that they are dead Spiritually, and that they need to be made alive. Death is about separation. When you die physically, your body is separated from the principle of life that God has placed in us—our soul leaves the body. The state of every person descended from Adam is Spiritual death. We're born dead. The

Scripture says we were dead in our trespasses, our sins. What does that mean? It means that we are separated from life, Spiritually. We are disconnected.

Who is like God?

God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit—the triune God—Yahweh, Jehovah. He is Life. To know Him is life. To not know Him is death. And Jesus is the One that has come. The second person of the trinity has come to connect us to God and He is the gate. He is the Way. He brings life by dealing with our sin. He deals with our sin in the most amazing and perfect way. Let's think about two aspects. We could think of a number of these, but let's think of two aspects—the great need of every human being that has been born, other than Christ, is the need to deal with our sin. First we need to deal with the condemnation of our sin. We have guilt and condemnation. We're under the sentence of death because we have all sinned. Adam sinned and brought the race down and brought condemnation upon all men, and now we're born that way and we are in need of salvation—God's great, glorious salvation. How does that come to us? How does Jesus deal with this need of our condemnation? He comes into the world as the Savior of sinners, and He is exactly what we need. Just like bread is the perfect food, Jesus is the perfect Savior from the condemnation of sin. We are in bondage. We are dead. We need a Savior who can save us, and Jesus does everything necessary. God Himself leaves the glory of Heaven and comes into the world to save us.

One of the beautiful images in the Old Testament we looked at a few weeks ago on Wednesday night, was the image in the book of Ruth. In the book of Ruth, you have a picture of salvation where Naomi and her daughter-in-law Ruth are out of the land. Naomi is originally from Israel, from Bethlehem, which in God's providence means 'house of bread'. Where was Jesus born? The house of bread. Naomi's from Bethlehem. She and her husband moved to Moab because there is a famine in the land. In fact, one of the extraordinary things in the Bible is how many times there are famines in the Old Testament. What was that all about? More than 100 times in the Old Testament, you have famines. In fact, Abraham has a famine in Genesis 12, then Isaac has a famine in Genesis 26, then Jacob has a famine in Genesis 42 that I mentioned earlier, where Joseph delivers them. Is God such a bad planner with His people? No, the Lord is testing them and teaching them.

In fact, Deuteronomy 8:3, when you read it in context, by the Spirit of God, Moses makes it clear, "God made you hungry in the wilderness and then He fed you with manna from Heaven so that you might know that man does not live by bread alone,

but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God. God made you hungry so that you could know that what you really need is His Word.” In the same way bread satisfies us when we’re hungry, we need the Word of God. Why the Word of God? Because the Word of God reveals God to us. The Word of God deals with our sin and points us to our Savior. The Word of God saves. So He lets famines happen, and He did back in Naomi’s day, back in the story in Ruth, so that she leaves the land—the land of Canaan. Canaan is a type of Heaven. They’ve been ejected. They’re outside the land. God’s blessing and presence aren’t with them. They need to get back into the land, back to Bethlehem, back to the house of bread, and what happens is they need a kinsman redeemer, the go’el, the Hebrew word.

In that day, if you lost your land, if you were in danger of being a slave and you were impoverished, the only hope for you to repossess the land, to take your place among God’s people, was for a near-kinsman, a go’el, to pay the redemption price. Boaz is the kinsman-redeemer who pays the redemption price and brings them back. And that was all to picture how you and I can enter into God’s land. How can we take possession? How can we enter into His bread, the place of bread again? We need a Kinsman-Redeemer. We need a near-kinsman to come and pay the price. Jesus is a great Savior because He is a Kinsman-Redeemer. The author of Hebrews said:

Hebrews 2:14 ~ Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, 15 and deliver those who through fear of death were held captive all their lives.

Do you see that? He came down. We needed human blood offered. He partook of flesh and blood, so that through death, He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is the devil, and deliver those who through fear of death were held captive all their lives. He has delivered us from captivity by becoming a near-kinsman. God left the glory of Heaven and came all the way down to pay the price, and there He pays the redemption price. He, a spotless Man, a spotless Lamb—the image of the Old Testament—offers Himself, and there at Calvary, He is made to pay the full redemption price. What is the full redemption price? This is the full redemption price: To take the wrath of God for the sins of everyone who would ever believe in all history. The wrath of God measured up for the sins of everyone who would ever believe, must be poured out upon a man, a near-kinsman, and so Jesus comes, and there on the cross He is abandoned by God. Paul, the author of Romans, says in Romans 8:32 that God did not spare His own Son but gave Him up, delivered Him over. The idea is delivering over to the executioner, delivering

over to the tormenters. God didn't spare Him, but He delivered Him over. The walk to Calvary is a point where He has been judicially abandoned by the Father, and He has become the sin bearer, as 2 Corinthians 5:21 says that He who knew no sin became sin. He is treated as if He had lived our lives and He is punished and drinks the full depth of the wrath of God. He experiences hell on earth, hell on the cross. No one has yet experienced hell like Jesus experienced it on the cross. The people who are in the holding place before hell—the lake of fire is yet to be created—Jesus experienced more suffering than they've experienced. Imagine the suffering that all of us needed to experience. So the God-Man, in His humanity, in His deity, paid the price, and He says those words of triumph right before He dies:

It is finished!

Paid in full. Those words in Aramaic that Jesus spoke would be stamped on a document to say it's no longer a debt. It's paid in full. So Jesus has taken all the wrath. He's taken our sins out of the way. There remains no more wrath if you're in Christ. God has no more anger, not one piece, not one drop of anger for you in Christ, that you stand in grace. So He took our sins. That's what we needed. We needed a Savior to pay the redemption price, but we didn't just need to deal with the condemnation, we needed the gift of righteousness. We didn't just need to be not guilty, but we needed to be positively righteous. And how can that be? That's a question that you find in Psalm 24:3. This question, I think, resounds throughout the portals of eternity.

Psalm 24:3 ~ Who can ascend the hill of the Lord? Who can stand in His holy place?

Who can walk into the presence of God? The text answers it in Verse 4:

Psalm 24:4 ~ He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who has not lifted up his soul to falsehood, who has not dealt unjustly.

Who can then ascend the hill of the Lord? He who is perfectly righteous. That question is echoed throughout history from the time of the fall. For 4000 years it echoes throughout history. You can imagine an angel saying it every day: *Who can ascend the hill of the Lord? Who can stand in His Holy place? Is there any man who can walk up here and be with God? Not since the fall. 4000 years. No answer. No answer. No answer. No one can stand before the Lord but Jesus Christ.*

He was a spotless Lamb. When He came into the world, one of the reasons He didn't die as a baby, or a 3-year-old, or a 5-year-old is, He lived 33 years in this world so that He could live a life of perfect righteousness, living to do the will of the Father always.

“My meat and My drink is to do the will of Him who sent Me,” He said in John 4:34. He presents to the Father a perfect righteousness. When you trust Jesus Christ, when He's your Savior, He's paid the redemption price, He's taken your sins out of the way, but He also gives you His righteousness. That's exactly what Paul says:

2 Corinthians 5:21 ~ He who knew no sin became sin so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

Look at this picture in Psalm 24:

Psalm 24:3 ~ Who may ascend into the hill of the LORD? And who may stand in His holy place? 4 He who has clean hands and a pure heart, Who has not lifted up his soul to falsehood And has not sworn deceitfully. 5 He shall receive a blessing from the LORD And righteousness from the God of his salvation.

The picture I think is that this question has been asked throughout history, and then there's this astonished answer in Verse 7:

Psalm 24:7 ~ Lift up your heads, O gates, And be lifted up, O ancient doors, That the King of glory may come in!

Finally somebody's at the door. Somebody's at the gate of God's presence.

Psalm 24:8 ~ Who is the King of glory? The LORD strong and mighty, The LORD mighty in battle. 9 Lift up your heads, O gates, And lift them up, O ancient doors, That the King of glory may come in! 10 Who is this King of glory? The LORD of hosts, He is the King of glory. Selah.

That is picturing Jesus when He ascended to the Father having lived a perfect life of righteousness. And who is He? He is Yahweh, the I AM, strong and mighty, mighty in battle, having defeated satan in every temptation at every point, all the way to Calvary. He has defeated satan in the cross, making a mockery and a public spectacle of him, and now a Man walks through the gates of Heaven, a man flesh

and blood of the tribe of Judah. A Man with flesh and blood just like you and me, walks through the portals of eternity and takes His seat at the right hand of the throne of God. That means that now you and I can walk there with Him.

In fact, the reality is we walk in the train of His triumph. I think in glory, when we have new bodies after the resurrection from the dead, Jesus walks into heaven, we come in behind Him robed in His righteousness, perfect righteousness in His victory, because we have a Redeemer who has paid the price and who has offered righteousness. He has everything that we need. If you feel like your life is too messed up, your sins are too great, no they're not. Jesus Christ is a mighty Savior. He is able to cleanse to the uttermost and to save to the uttermost the one whose hope is in Him. He says, "I am the bread of life. Come to Me and be saved."

Let's pray together.

Our Father, we rejoice in the glory of Your Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Lord, our prayer is that You would help us all to truly be partakers of Christ, not to know about Him, not to intellectually ascent to His sufficiency, but Lord, to truly believe and to place our souls in His care, and to place our hopes firmly upon Him. Lord, help us all to examine ourselves and to see where we stand before You. Thank You that He is a worthy Savior.

Father, as we come now to celebrate the ordinance of the Lord's Supper, even as we partake, may we glory in the greatness of the salvation that Jesus has brought. We pray in His Name, Amen.

I invite the men to come forward now to serve the elements of the Lord's Supper.

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