

Lunchtime Service - I am the Bread of Life

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[0:00] So we're beginning a seven-part series in John over the next couple of months, and we're going to be looking at the seven I am sayings. So in John's Gospel, seven times Jesus tells us something about himself by using the phrase I am something. I am the light of the world. I am the good shepherd.

And these seven sayings have become so well known, and they are very much worth looking at over the next seven weeks, because they are a unique insight into Jesus telling us who he is. And that is a critical thing to know in our lives. So all four Gospels have their own unique purposes for why they're written, but one thing unites them all.

They're all here to tell us who Jesus is. Because that is what is critical to be clear on in the Christian faith. And it's critical for salvation.

To get the saviour wrong is to have no saviour at all. And so if you want to know who someone is, there's no better way than for them to tell you, isn't there?

[1:13] So when you're getting to know someone for the first time, what is the best way to get to know them? You sit down with them, you ask them questions, and let them tell you about themselves.

They tell you, I'm a husband, I'm a dad, I'm a minister. It's one thing to hear rumours about someone, and you can be mistaken if you guess what someone is like.

But when someone says, this is who I am, then you truly get to know them. Well in these seven sayings, Jesus is sitting us down and saying, this is who I really am.

And it's significant that there are seven. Because in the Bible, seven is the number of fullness, completeness. And so this is kind of like a full portrait, a full self-portrait of who Jesus is and why he came.

So I'm calling this series, but who does Jesus say he is? So if you're here today, and you've heard rumours of who Jesus is, and you've made some guesses maybe, but you still haven't seen the full portrait, I encourage you to stick around for the next few weeks.

[2:32] Hear these sayings, and you will find a saviour who can change your life. But this week, we'll look at the first saying. And it's there in verse 35 of the reading.

Jesus said to them, I am the bread of life. This is who Jesus says he is. This is the true identity of the man at the very heart of the Christian faith.

Jesus says, I am the bread of life. Now what does that mean? Well, we need to see when and where Jesus is saying this statement.

And when we do, we will see that Jesus means two things when he says, I'm the bread of life. He is saying we all have a deep down spiritual hunger.

And Jesus is the only one that can satisfy him. And those are the two things I want us to see today. First, we all have a spiritual hunger.

[3:39] We all have a spiritual hunger. Look at the scene here. Back to 24. So Jesus, can you see, he's just fed the 5,000. He's multiplied loads of bread.

He's fed this huge crowd. And he's crossed the Sea of Galilee. He's come to his new hometown of Capernaum. And the crowds have followed him there in their own boats.

And they find him. And they all rush up to him. They're eagerly looking for Jesus. And Jesus knows what they're really after.

Verse 26. Jesus answered them, Truly, truly, truly, I say to you, you are seeking me not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves.

They're not really wanting Jesus. They're wanting more bread. When I was in uni, there was a vending machine in our department.

[4:41] And everyone on my course, we all discovered in one of the slots in the vending machine, you could type in the code for that product. I still remember it's 156. I remember 156.

And when you did that, you didn't need to put any money in. It was broken. And so it would just turn and push, spit out whatever was there. And if it was a good week, there'd be a double decker there. I know you're waiting for me. It would pop out. And we had a Facebook group for our group, for our course. And whenever it was restocked, we saw the man restocking it.

We would send a message on Facebook. And everyone would come rushing to the vending machine. 156. Well, that's what the crowds are doing here. That they've seen what Jesus can do. They've heard his teaching. But what they really want is they're just rushing over. And they're just looking for a loaf of havis from the vending machine. That they just don't get who he is.

[5:36] But look what Jesus says to that, verse 27. Do not labor for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you.

Do you see what Jesus is saying? He's addressing two types of hunger and two types of food for these hungers. He says to them, yes, you have a hunger in your physical stomachs now.

And you are looking for material bread from me to fix that. But the food you're after, it perishes.

It gets moldy. It wastes away. And you'll eat it. And you're just going to get hungry again. It gives you a bit of life for now. But it will leave you needing more life in a few hours.

That's the food and the hunger the crowd is obsessed with. But Jesus says there is another type of food. That satisfies another type of hunger.

[6:43] Food that doesn't perish. That doesn't leave you hungry. That doesn't leave you needing more life. But food that endures to eternal life. He's speaking here of the deep down hunger and need for spiritual life.

It's the hunger that every single person across the world, throughout all the ages, across every culture, including us. It is this hunger every single person has felt in the depths of their souls.

It is a hunger for meaning and direction. It's a hunger for peace and security and hope in life and hope after death.

It's that hunger to be known and loved and to be part of something truly meaningful in this world. It's that hunger in our hearts. Hearts struggling with guilt and pain and loss.

And we're just needing an answer to it. It is the hunger for eternal life. So when you look inside yourself and there is that longing for more.

[7:59] And maybe you can't quite put your finger on what that is. Well that is the hunger Jesus is talking about here. And so Jesus says to the crowd, seek the food that will satisfy that hunger.

Verse 27, you're after the vending machine food. But don't labor for that. Don't have that as the only and ultimate purpose in your life.

That stuff won't satisfy. No, go after the food that lasts. Because that is what we so easily do, isn't it? We live our lives obsessed with the material vending machine stuff of this world.

We chase after things that just spoil. We long for years just to own that house. But it's a house that crumbles. We grind away for that bank account to go up.

But we just want more and more. Or we pour that bank account into things, collections and hobbies and clothes and stuff. But it all perishes.

[9:10] And so it never satisfies. Not that those things are bad in themselves. But we chase after them as if they can solve this deep down hunger. It's like this never ending treadmill.

And chasing these things, it is exhausting. Lifeless. And it is a draining pursuit. And so we get these hungers and foods confused.

We long deep down for life. But we think the bread of this world will fix it. It's like when you're starving. And so you open up the cupboard and you just take all the chocolate and you stuff your face.

But you're only left more hungry. When really, you needed a steak all along. While the world is starving and we're reaching for food that might as well just be thin air.

Which means the world is in a desperate situation. It's dying. Without eternal life, it means, it can only mean eternal death.

[10:20] And so to a confused crowd, Jesus separates these hungers. And he says, the food that endures to eternal life.

That's what matters. And the Son of Man will give it to you. And what did the crowd say? Verse 34. They said to him, sir, give us this bread always.

Sir, we always want this. Come on. We want it. We see the hunger. Go on, Jesus. Give us this life. Give us this bread. Where is it? Where is it? And how does Jesus respond?

Verse 35. I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me shall not hunger. And whoever believes in me shall never thirst.

To a world starving and in desperate need of the food to fix that deep down spiritual hunger. Jesus says, this bread is not a thing.

[11:21] It's me. I am the bread of life. And this is what I want us to end up today. Jesus is the bread you're longing for.

Jesus is the bread you're longing for. As the first of all these I am's, this is a huge insight into who Jesus is and why he came. Jesus is the bread of life that this world has been craving for for millennia.

And so he has come from heaven, sent from the father with a purpose. Not just to be nice. Not just to tell us to get our act together.

No, he has come to give a dying world life. To bring you that meaning and security that we've all been longing for.

Being known and loved by the son of God. And belonging to something that truly matters. His kingdom that is not of this perishing world.

[12:25] It is forgiveness of all our sins by his death on the cross. It's being brought back to our God. And it is actual life forever.

Look at verse 40. For this is the will of my father. That everyone who looks on the son and believes in him should have eternal life. And I will raise him up on the last day.

He's come to raise the dead. To take the perishing and give us life so that we never go hungry again. Who does Jesus say that he is?

He really is food that endures to eternal life. And notice Jesus isn't saying that he's come to give this bread.

As if there is this thing called the bread of life and he's the delivery man. No, Jesus says he is the bread of life. And so to have this bread you must have him.

[13:33] And how do we have him? Verse 35. Whoever comes to me shall not hunger. And whoever believes in me shall never thirst.

We eat the bread of life by coming to Jesus and trusting him. So we eat physical bread by chewing. While we eat the bread of life by believing. But in contrast the world is trying to find life by chasing and pursuing and doing all sorts of things to fix this hunger.

That's how the crowd thinks that they can find life. Look at verse 28 again. Then they said to him, what must we do to be doing the works of God? What must we do for this?

It shows their naivety, doesn't it? It's like a starving person stranded on a desert island asking, what can I do to cook a three course meal?

[14:36] You want to say, what do you mean what can you do? There's nothing you can do. You have no food. You can't do anything. You need to be given food into your empty hands.

And so, verse 29, Jesus answered them, this is the work of God. That you believe in him whom he has sent.

He flips our expectations on the head. Life is not found in your exhausting pursuit for more and more. No, it's found in stopping and coming empty handed and believing in the one who is the bread of life.

And so, it is ultimately not about having what Jesus can give you. It is about having Jesus. Jesus is not like a vending machine that just spits out whatever we want.

No, he is the bread of life that we all desperately need. And so, we must all ask ourselves, do we have him? Have you eaten of the bread of life?

[15:45] Well, if you are hungry, and you have been looking for life everywhere, the good news is you can stop doing. And you can simply come to Jesus with all your failures and sins and emptiness.

And you can trust in him. And you will find everything that your heart has been longing for. And even for those of us who have eaten the bread of life, we can so often forget that, can't we?

When life isn't going right. When we're overwhelmed and we're driven to our knees. And we see the things of this world and we begin to chase after them again.

Thinking, that's going to help. Like these crowds, we can forget the bread of life that is right in front of us all along. And so, Jesus is telling us, when those needs arise, when trouble looms, Jesus says, don't go anywhere else.

Don't work to solve it or cover it up. Don't go after things that spoil. No, come to the bread of life. Don't go after things that are done.

[17 : 30] And so, if you are hungry, hear the words of Jesus. I am the bread of life. Let's pray. Lord God, we thank you that in this dying, this hungry world.

A world so desperately in need of life. In your grace, out of your love, you have sent your only begotten son. Who is the bread of life.

Who is exactly what we need. We thank you that we can just stop chasing all these perishing things. And we can find life. Everlasting life. In the Lord Jesus.

And we pray that we would. That we would eat of the bread of life. And that we would go nowhere else. That Jesus has all that we need. And in his name we pray.

Amen.