

Folks, as we embark on this new teaching series looking at the 7 'I am' sayings of Jesus, I want you to consider this question as we begin, and right throughout our series. **Who do you believe Jesus is?**

Now this might seem like a stupid question to ask all of you, because if you're sitting in here then it must be assumed like any good church-goer that you have a textbook answer ready to recite off the tip of your tongue. And yet if that is the case, why does Jesus ask the very same question of his disciples? In Matthew 16:13 he says to his disciples, "Who do people say the Son of Man is?" ¹⁴They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets." ¹⁵"But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?" ¹⁶Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God."

You see in society today, most people will have an answer for who they think Jesus was and is, and that answer will be wide and varied – everything from a baby in a manger, to a good man, to a man who healed people, to a man who hung on a cross, and yet in the middle of it some may say like Peter, he is the Messiah, the Son of the living God. And so at the outset of this teaching series, it's my deepest prayer that you rediscover who Jesus really is, as he tells you in his I AM statements, and more importantly how important he is to your life.

So as we begin let me pray.

[PRAYER]

Most of you by now may be aware that we have a new puppy in the Campbell-Smyth house. She's called Bella. Don't worry Spud is still alive. But Bella is a gundog, with an incredible appetite for energy and food. When it comes to food, she literally is never satisfied. She will bark continually. She will try to jump onto the workbench to seek out more food, and actually a few weeks ago I came into the kitchen to see her on the workbench (I've no idea how she did it) but tucking into one of our sausage rolls. From morning through to night, her mind does not rest if she thinks there's food available.

What today makes you restless until you find it? What occupies your thoughts – is it worry, is it ambition, is it security, is it health?

Augustine who lived in the 4th Century wrote this, "You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in you." He recognised that we as humans will never find true rest until we find Jesus.

Augustine realised the human hunger that can come on the soul from all kinds of temptations, and yet there came a point in his life where he realised that these were only a temporary desire, which in no way ever would fill the gap that Jesus could only fill. Augustine was lost. He was restless, and then there came the point in 386AD where his life and earthly desires were turned completely around as he gave everything to Jesus.

Today folks, Augustine is not the only one that can experience that kind of change. All of those who follow after Jesus can state those same words, "Our hearts are restless until they find their rest in Jesus". So who do you think Jesus is? If today you have a Christian faith then you know that he has changed what you once desired after. The good news is that Jesus can totally transform what humanly speaking we might think we desire and want.

And if you're not a Christian today then know that a relationship with Jesus, not a religious affiliation, but a real relationship can radically change who you are today. Jesus changes what you want and also why you want it.

So in John chapter 6, we get a glimpse into what are wrong desires and wrong thinking, because it becomes absolutely clear from this passage that Jesus is talking to the crowd about HIM being the bread of life, but they are showing signs that their human desires are dominating their behaviour.

So let's begin by thinking about human desires. If you read earlier in chapter 6 you will hear the story of Jesus feeding the 5,000. And then if you read from verse 22 you will see that the people are searching after Jesus. They board boats and travel to the city of Capernaum to find him. And when they get there, we see a series of questions being asked which tells us exactly what's going on with their human desires.

Verse 25 – Rabbi when did you get here?

But Jesus knowing their human desire doesn't answer them with something like, "oh I arrived this morning", or "didn't you hear? I walked across the water to get here". No he challenges their motivation. He challenges them that all they're looking for is another quick meal. They were interested in Jesus because he could meet their physical needs. One of the tragedies of humanity is that we often seek things for the wrong reasons. Jesus says I know what you're at, I'm not stupid. You want to know this not because you're curious about how I got here, but you're curious because you need more bread.

In verse 27, Jesus challenges them not to "work for food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life which the Son of Man will give" to them. Jesus keeps on pointing them to himself. You see they hear the first bit of the sentence, "Do not work for food that perishes", but they don't get the next bit about food that endures to eternal life. Their wrong desires cloud what they actually hear. Their wrong desires only hear what they want to hear.

Their desires cloud their judgment and their ability to see. And the truth is this still happens today. Many come to Christianity because they want a particular need to be met at that very moment, but is that the only reason why they are coming.

The second question they ask Jesus is "What must we do, to be doing the works of God" (v. 28)?

He just told them that the Son of man will give them what they need, but they're guilty of selective hearing. They say to Jesus: "Tell us what God requires and we'll do it." Their assumption is that you just have to go through the motions, certain hoops and everything will be sorted. But they still don't understand their dependence requires submission to Jesus. They don't fully trust in him, they just want the answer so they can get what THEY want. They want to stay in control, don't they? And isn't that the same with us? How often are we willing to truly hand everything over to Jesus? How much are we willing to let go? How much are we willing to realise that all we need is him?

You know if you come today broken and weary, where you feel at the end of your tether, then this could be the very beginning of the ultimate transformation for you today as you

realise that Jesus came to bring restoring life to you. You may feel rock bottom, but he's not abandoned you. So lose your control of the situation and give it to him. Trust fully in him.

So that leads to the final question that they ask in **verse 30** **“What sign then will you give that we may see it and believe you?”** Can you really believe these guys? Are they truly that blind?

The crowd want proof and refer to the manna falling from heaven in the times of Moses. But Jesus corrects their wrong understanding of the Scriptures. And in verse 33 he again tries to point them to himself. As they continue to think about the physical bread he says to them “For the bread of God is the bread that comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.” Jesus is saying “I’m the bread”. The bread from heaven was ultimately about God giving provision to you. And now I am the provision from God”, he says. But once again the crowd miss the point. They want him to prove himself to them.

And here's the sad reality of today folks - Nothing has changed. We want more proof, and in our 21st century mindset with all the scientific knowledge, we want more proof before we truly believe. Or we want to put Jesus into the corner to sort a few problems out before we truly will believe. We come to him when times are tough and say “just heal my relative and I'll believe in you, help me get this job interview and I'll trust you more. Just give me proof that you can sort things out for me and I'll give everything to you”).

The crowd still haven't got it – Jesus is the bread. He's the only one that can sustain humanity.

So where do we go next? Well probably with some of the most important statements that Jesus makes in the entire gospel. Jesus attempts to break through the seekers' misplaced desires.

Jesus tells them who he is in verse 45. He declares, “I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty”. What this says is that Jesus satisfies something so deep in the human heart that has not, nor ever will be satisfied in any other way.

It means you have been made in the image of God; you were designed to have a relationship with your creator; it means that sin has created a barrier between you and God; it creates a broken restlessness where you spend the rest of your life trying to fill that hole in your soul. And until you meet Jesus nothing will fit – no relationship, no job, no amount of money, no holiday, none of it will satisfy. It will always fall short. And Jesus says the reason why everything falls short is because HE is the bread of life.

How many of us wake up and ask ourselves, ‘is there more to life than this?’ That thing that you need in your life, that hunger will only be sustained by Jesus. And that's why we need to be praying continually for people in our families and friends who need to know this. You know there are so many people out there chasing and investing time in things, but regrettably they make no difference for their soul. So pray folks for them daily that Jesus will break into their lives. For some of you today, you may not realise, little did you know that your parents and others went to bed every night praying that God would open your eyes. And here you are today and guess what may be happening right now – the fulfilment of your friends and families prayers for you. These familiar words from Jesus may have slipped right

over you in sermons of the past, but today you've stopped and God by his spirit is prompting you to submit to him right now – to give up the search for more and more, and just come to him.

John's gospel calls you to believe. Don't allow your wrong desires and your misplaced affections to rule you one more day. But also, don't think for a moment that you'll be able to fix your own problem. Believe in Jesus. And when you trust in Jesus and you fear the old desires may come back to haunt you, rest in this promise rooted in the sovereignty of God where he says, "Whoever comes to me I will never drive away" (v. 37)

Just as I finish, let me talk briefly about wrong thoughts.

Wrong Thinking

In the final verses of today's reading, John wants us to see the tragic condition of mankind. In verse 41 we see religious leaders grumbling about what Jesus has said about being the living bread. And here's the problem – these leaders know so much that they don't know anything. The tragedy of unbelief is not just the desires that are wrong, but also the beliefs and thinking that are wrong. Their brains have totally messed up their thinking of something that Jesus reiterates time and time again. Do you know something; I worry deeply that we have been able to feed our minds with so much intellect and our own understanding and theories, that it clouds how we think about God. In fact it brings civilisation to the point of declaring, "I don't need God".

Verse 45 reminds us that we need to have a teachable heart. Jesus says "Everyone who has heard the Father and learned from him comes to me". Do you think you already know everything, or are you willing to be taught again and understand God's desire for you to come to him. We think we know it all, but actually we know nothing if we've missed out of Jesus. You see the crowd's intellect and thinking challenged them when they heard Jesus say that they were to eat his flesh and to drink his blood. But He was using a metaphor – he wasn't speaking about cannibalism. He was talking about satisfaction and delight that can only be found in him.

The point is simple and yet profound. And it is one that every one of us must address. Have you found your satisfaction in Jesus? Is he your bread? Do you live on him? Or are you walking through life and living on your desires? Are you trusting in your ability? To live on Jesus as the bread of life means that must become everything. And therefore Augustine rightly said, "You have made us for yourself and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in you." But Augustine also said something more as it relates to this text. And it was something he experienced, which I hope you have as well: "Believe and you have eaten." The idea is that Jesus is the bread of life, and when you believe you have feasted on who he is because he has said, "I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger and whoever believes in me shall never thirst."

That is how wide and life giving the person and life of Jesus is. And if you are a part of him you will never be in need. He will satisfy at a level that only he can do. So stop running after things that you think are going to meet your needs, because ultimately the only thing that will meet your needs is the bread of life.