



## Feast on Life – TouchPoint for August 11, 2021

**John 6:51-58 (NRSV)** I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats of this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.”

### TOUCH POINT

The Jews then disputed among themselves, saying, “How can this man give us his flesh to eat?” So Jesus said to them, “Very truly, I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood have eternal life, and I will raise them up on the last day; for my flesh is true food and my blood is true drink. Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood abide in me, and I in them.

Just as the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever eats me will live because of me. This is the bread that came down from heaven, not like that which your ancestors ate, and they died. But the one who eats this bread will live forever.”

### ***Grace and peace from the mystery in who we live and move and have our being***

*“I am the living bread... Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood abide in me and I in them.”*

Sometimes, I wish the Mystery was less of a mystery. I must confess, all this talk in this passage of eating flesh and drinking blood just doesn't appeal to me. Yes, I realize it is a metaphor, no one is literally taking a bite out of Jesus as he walks on this earth...and certainly we aren't after he ascends to heaven... right?

Or are we...

I mean after all, doesn't John's gospel start with the statement that in Jesus we experience the Logos, we experience that through which everything is created and in which everything exists? And doesn't God answer Moses in Exodus, when Moses asks God, “What is your name?” Doesn't God say “Is-ness,” or as we translate it, “I Am”? And doesn't St. Paul say “Christ Is all and in all”?

So if Christ is all, and in all, as St. Paul writes. And if God is that which gives “is-ness” to everything that 'is,' and if the Gospel of John is saying that, that which makes everything be, became singularly present in Jesus, maybe we are literally taking a bite of God, or “I Am”... anytime we eat anything. Because God is present in everything.

Which brings up another interesting point. If God's name is “I Am,” then when Jesus says “‘I Am' the bread of life,” is he talking about himself or God, whose name is “I Am”? Should we read that sentence, not as “I am the bread of life,” but as, “‘I Am' is the bread of life”?

Perhaps, Jesus is not pointing to himself. After all, he doesn't use his named here, but God's name. He uses the name “I Am.”

Maybe all those “I Am” statements in John, aren't about Jesus after all, but the “I Am” that he is one with and we all are one with.

*“... that they may be one as we are one—I in them and you in me—so that they may be brought to complete unity.”*

“ ‘I Am’ is the good shepherd.”

“ ‘I Am’ is the light of the world.”

Maybe all of existence is part of “I Am.” And so when we eat, we eat “I Am.” And when we breathe, we breathe “I Am.” And when we open our eyes in the morning we see “I Am.” And when we touch, and listen and take in the whole world, we are taking in “I Am.”

And when we are in touch, when we abide in the “I Am” that is in everything, then we are on the Way, we have found the Truth, and we experience Life.

“ ‘I Am’ is the Way, the Truth, and the Light.”

In other words, what if, the particular incarnation of “I Am” into Jesus, is simply a proclamation of the greater actual incarnation of “I Am” into all of us.

For too long, the church has read the gospel of John, way too exclusively. We have used the “I Am” statements of Jesus to exclude those who don’t see Jesus the same way we do, or believe in Jesus the same way we do. Rather than seeing these Jesus statements as pointing us beyond himself to the greater “I Am.”

Let me try to put it into traditional, Christian, orthodox terms. We have far too long, only seen Jesus in isolation. We have, to use the Apostles’ creed paradigm, separated out the Second Article of the creed from the First and Third articles. We don’t see Jesus through the lens or prism of the First Article (Creator/Father), or the Third Article (Spirit/Mother). We’ve tended to elevate Jesus to a higher status than the others and separate him out.

But these “I Am” statements should throw us back to the Creator/Father and a creation based theology. They should throw us back to the “I Am” who is present in everything and everyone. They shouldn’t just be an elevation of Jesus into “I Am” status, but a highlighting of the “I Am” present in all of existence...

Which is closer to the meaning of “I Am” in the book of Exodus. And which is the name that God gives Godself.

But, if you want to make this only about Jesus, then let me give you this thought. What if you thought about Jesus the way you think about a birthday party?

You know what a birthday party is, don’t you? It’s that one day in the calendar year when you take time out to say to another person, “I’m glad you were born. I’m glad you are a part of my life.”

Now, hopefully, that isn’t the only day in the year you are happy the person is born. You aren’t exclusively happy on that day, and then couldn’t care less about the person on the other days. A birthday party doesn’t exclude your feelings on all the other days of the year, it includes all the other days of the year. And a birthday party isn’t the only way you can show your love to someone. There are many ways.

No, you are happy every day of the year the person is born, but that is the day you focus all of that happiness and thankfulness into one event. One singular point in time. And it is a singular point in time,

which gives the birthday person and all those around them, a glimpse into your daily feelings about that person.

So, what if Jesus, is God's birthday party to humanity. It is one singular event that gives us a glimpse into how God is always feeling about us. God doesn't exclusively love us in Jesus, but in Jesus we see how God loves us all, every day of the year, every year of the millennial, every millennial of the cosmos.

And conversely, just as you can love someone on a day other than their birthday, and in other ways than a birthday party, maybe you can love and worship God other than through Jesus.

And now, to extend the metaphor even further, what if the birthday cake (Bread of Life?) we experience in the person Jesus, isn't exclusive to Jesus, but is a glimpse into the 'Bread of Life' we experience in all of creation. In all of "I Am."

So, every time we eat and drink, we are eating and drinking the "Bread of Life," the "I Am."

Even when we eat something as simple as bread, and drink something as simple as wine. Which somehow the church has turned into an exclusive act, that invites debate over who is worthy to eat, and who is worthy to drink.

"Lord, have mercy on us in the church."

In this understanding, Holy Communion isn't just an exclusive event in church life. It is a proclamation to the world of what takes place every time someone eats and drinks. Every time someone breaks bread with another.

"I Am" is present in every morsel of bread, and every sip of drink, and every fellow traveler with whom we share a meal.

In Christian terms, if Christ is present in the bread and drink here with me, then Christ is present in the bread and drink there with you. My words, as clergy, are not magic, or a way to make the Christ suddenly appear or be present. My words are not a way to make this bread and drink some exclusive contact with holiness.

My words are simply **stating the actual**. That Christ is present in this bread and drink, and all bread and drink. In this eating and drinking, and in all eating and drinking. In this fellowship, and in all fellowship.

**Holy Communion isn't the reduction to only this bread and drink containing the Christ, and only our small fellowship sharing Christ's presence. It is the proclamation of the Christ's presence in all bread and drink and all fellowship. It is a ritual designed to open our eyes to the greater presence of "I Am" in all things.**

And so, it's a never ending feast, rather than a once a week feast. It is daily Bread for daily Life.

We participate in the particular, to proclaim the greater actual.

Just as the particular incarnation of "I Am" into Jesus, is a proclamation of the greater actual incarnation of "I Am" into all of us.

And that just isn't food for thought, but bread for living. **Amen.**



## SPIRIT IN THE DESERT

### Opening Songs

#### **Be Still**

(The London Fox Taize Choir, Remember Me)

Be Still, know that I am God

#### **Creator Spirit, Come**

(Keith Duke, Sacred Weave)

Creator Spirit, Come. Renew the face of the earth.

Kindling Spirit, Come. Enflame our waiting hearts.

Anointing Spirit, Come. Pour forth on us anew.

### Bible Passage

*(A passage takes us from one place to another)*

### Touchpoint

*(Where God's story touches our life story)*

#### **Come O Lord and Set Us Free**

(John L. Bell, The Wild Goose Collection)

Come, O Lord and set us free. Give/Bring your people peace.

Come, O Lord and set us free. Come Lord Jesus, Come.

1. And take our guilt away. Give us your pardon Lord.
2. Free from our self-obsession. Free from each fond possession.
3. Free to affirm each other...as sister and as brother

Reshape the world you made. Let what your hand created...be always celebrated.

### The Meal

#### **Lord's Prayer**

(The Scottish Festival Singers)

### Benediction

#### **A Blessing**

(Margaret Rizza, Kevin Mayhew Ltd. Complete Chants Vol.1)

May the Lord bless you.

May the Lord protect you and guide you.

May His strength uphold you.

His light shine upon you.

His peace surround you.

His love enfold you.

May the Lord bless you.