

Series of Jesus / AM texts in John's Gospel

SCRIPTURE: John 6:25-59

SINGING: 251 – 425:3 – 117 – 69:1, 2, 6, 7 – 3:3-4

Dear congregation,

One day a few foreigners approached Philip.
They had come from Greece to worship in Jerusalem.

It is clear that they have one desire,
"Sir, we would see Jesus."

Do you hear *your thoughts* in that statement?

Is this the longing of your heart also?

Matthew Henry's words on this statement of the Greek men are worth repeating.

He wrote, *The great desire of our souls should be to see Jesus.*

To have our acquaintance with Him increased.

To have our dependence upon Him encouraged.

To have our conformity to Him carried on.

To see Him as ours and to keep up communion with Him.

To receive communications of grace from Him.

Brethren, we miss our end or purpose in coming if we do not see Jesus.

But where would we go today to see Jesus?

Who should we ask, like the Greeks who came to Philip?

How about asking Jesus yourself, directly, throughout the day and week?

As you work, as you drive, as you lay awake in bed, as you prepare to come to church.

Plead when you enter this building, *"Lord Jesus, show me Thy glory!*

Draw me away from all vanity and distraction by showing me Thy greatness."

One place where we can see Jesus' glory best is in John's gospel.

John has seen the deepest into the glory of the Son of man, Jesus Christ.

You can sense that when you listen to him in 1 John 1:1, *"That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life ... "*

Or in John 1:14, *"... and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father."*

John's great purpose in writing this Gospel is to direct us to Jesus' glory.

Jesus' greatest glory is that He is God Himself.

He is Jehovah Who spoke to Moses at the burning bush.

That is an amazing declaration: *A Son of man is the "I am that I am, the Jehovah God."*

This Name was so sacred to Jews that they did not even speak it out loud.

Yet Jesus did not hesitate to *use* the Name. But He went further: He used it for Himself.

Can you imagine how shocked the Jews were to hear Jesus say this?

They called it blasphemy. They were ready to stone Him for it.

Imagine if a minister would begin to preach, *"I am God, or I am Jehovah, the covenant God!"*

Would you not all call out to stop the preaching of such a claim? We would excommunicate such a blasphemer.

However, Jesus did not proclaim this truth about Himself without a foundation.

Every miracle He performed supported His claim to be God Himself.

A careful count in John's Gospel shows that Jesus said *'I am'* fourteen times.

Sometimes the *I Am* stands alone. One example we can read in this chapter.

As He walked on the water in the dark and roaring storm toward His disciples, He said *"It is I; be not afraid."*

The Greek literally says, *'It is I am, be not afraid.'*

Another example of when He said, *'I am'* is on the night of His betrayal.

With a simple *'I AM,'* He declared Himself Almighty God.

Immediately the seasoned soldiers fell backwards as if pushed down by an invisible hand.

The glory of God was felt instead of seen at that moment.

It was an outburst of the Divine glory of Jesus of Nazareth.

Seven times did the Lord Jesus connect the *I AM* with words or phrases that tell us more about Him.

These *'I Am'* statements are all sermons Jesus preached about Himself.

They are His own messages inviting us to put our trust in Him for time and eternity.

With the Lord's help, let us give our attention to each of these seven.

Let us turn to John 6:35, in which we hear Jesus' declaration to be Jehovah,
"And Jesus said unto them, **I AM** the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst."

Throughout the chapter we hear Him reinforce this truth several times.

In verse 48, *I am that bread of life.*

Again, in verse 51: *I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.*

Let us consider *The Bread of Life* and consider that in three questions,

1. Why did He call Himself the Bread of life?
2. What is so special about this Bread of life?
3. What are we to do with this Bread of life?

In the first place, "WHY did Jesus call Himself Bread of life?"

The first reason He did this was to correct the people to whom He was preaching.

They had looked for Him all night and finally found Him, surprisingly, in Capernaum.

The day before Jesus had done a great miracle to feed them all.

With only five barley loaves and two small fishes, the Lord fed maybe 10,000 people.

They were so excited about this miracle that they were ready to crown Him king!

Now, as they were crowding before Him again, Jesus needed to correct them.

"My friends, you are seeking Me for your stomachs but not for your hearts!

You are only looking for a short benefit of food for your body.

But I am much more than that. I am the Bread of life.

I am the Bread that brings you salvation from sin and eternal death.

The bread you ate yesterday, and all the earthly things you are hungering for shall perish.

But the Bread which I as the Son of man give you, endures. It will last.

It will not just last for a few hours or a day, but forever.

Therefore, stop looking so hard for Me merely to fill your stomachs or meet your earthly needs while neglecting your souls."

Let us take a moment to reflect on this.

What is your focus in seeking Jesus or coming to church?

It is possible to be a seeker of Jesus only for earthly and selfish benefits.

Are we still thinking of earthly benefits like food, drink, health, success, safety or security?

Is the earthly the main thing you seek on your knees before the Lord as you get up for in the morning?

Is food in the mouth, things in the hand, pleasures to the eyes,

success in the business or school, still more important than Christ in the heart?

Of course, we all need to work in order to eat and make ends meet and may seek the Lord for these daily needs.

That is not wrong.

But it is wrong when we *do not seek the Kingdom of God and His righteousness first!*

It is wrong when we exhaust ourselves with the daily pursuit of life while we easily neglect our soul!

Are you *labouring* to obtain an interest or part in everlasting life?

Is that what your *spiritual seeking* looks like: Labouring?

Is that what your children see in you: labouring at the feet of Jesus, with His Word in your hand?

The second reason why Jesus called Himself bread is in connection to the conversation in verses 28-34.

The people inquired in response what they *must do to do the works of God.*

Having just heard about everlasting life, they want to know *what they must do to receive this eternal life.*

This question is very natural to us all.

We know that in order to be successful, we need to study or work hard.

If you want to get a promotion, you need to prove yourself and earn it.

So how natural to think like these people did: *What shall we do to work the works of God?*

Besides, these people were wrongly taught that salvation is by *being and doing good.*

Jesus' answer is in vs. 29.

"This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent."

In other words,

"Salvation is not because of your working. Salvation is the work of God!

And the way that God saves sinners is through faith in ME.

Therefore, the work God requires from you is that you would believe on Him Whom He hath sent."

In other words, the only way to eternal life is through believing in Me!

It is clear that they all understood Jesus well.

For immediately they challenged Him in verse 30: *“What sign showest Thou then, that we may see, and believe Thee? What does Thou work? Our fathers did eat manna in the desert: as it is written, “He gave them bread from heaven to eat.”*

Do you know what meant with this?

They meant that *Moses was better than Jesus*, for he fed Israel with bread *from heaven!*

That is not what the Lord Jesus did the day before. His bread came from a basket.

Besides, Moses did it for 40 years while He fed the multitude only once.

And how small was Jesus’ multitude compared to the multitude in the wilderness.

That is a sad and offensive response to the Lord Jesus!

For Moses *never* gave them a crumb from heaven.

Gently but firmly Jesus corrected them, *“Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven.”*

At that point we would have expected Jesus to say something like, *“It was Jehovah that rained the manna from heaven.”*

Instead, Jesus immediately turned their attention away from the past to the very moment they were in.

Hear verses 32-33: *“Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven: **but MY FATHER giveth you the true bread from heaven.**”*

To this mixed crowd of despisers, seekers and disciples Jesus announced that *“my Father giveth **you** the true bread from heaven.”* And that true bread is Me!

Were they all given that Bread of life?

Did Jesus really mean that **all** standing around Him were given the Bread of life from the Father’s hand just like **all** the Israelites were given the manna in the wilderness?

Yes, that is what He meant. They were sincerely offered the Bread of life!

Never doubt, friends, that the message of the Gospel is also for you. For you personally.

Do not think that because you are an unbeliever or a proud or deeply sunken sinner, the Bread is not for you!

Here is your proof.

We know that most of the people turned away from the Bread in Jesus and remained lost.

But it was not because the Bread was not given them.

It was that they did not *want* that Bread Jesus spoke about.

That brings us to our second question, What is so special about this Bread?

The specialness of this Bread is highlighted in how Jesus described Himself in this Bread.

First, in verse 32, He said that He is the *true* bread.

What does He mean with *true* bread? That it is real bread.

It is not just *temporal, or earthly, but eternal.*

Jesus strengthens this point in verses 48-49 when He stated:

*“I am that bread of life. Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness and **are dead!***

In verse 58, He repeated it again: *“This is that bread which came down from heaven:*

NOT as your fathers did eat manna **and are dead:** he that eateth of this bread **shall live forever.”**

What a needed correction did these Jews receive in this gentle answer!

Moses and his bread did not save any from death. That manna was not the bread of life!

We need this correction also.

Anything earthly, physical, or even religious, no more matter how special, cannot give us life!

Also, anything our forefathers experienced as special cannot give us life!

Only our personal eating of the **true** bread of God, which is Jesus Himself, brings real life.

And that is the second thing that is so special about this Bread.

No earthly bread **gives** life. Earthly bread only **sustains or nourishes** the living.

Earthly bread will do no good for a dead person.

But Jesus claims that the Bread of God **gives** life unto those who are spiritually dead!

To be spiritually dead means to be separated from God.

Anyone in this world, who will eat this Bread, will experience the power of this Bread.

He or she will experience life, eternal life.

With eternal life Jesus means salvation.

And salvation means to be ‘made whole.’

Salvation means that our relationship with God is restored forever.

It means that all the sins are forgiven.

It means that we will have peace with God.

It means that glory will follow this earthy life.
Eternal life is not more attainable to us by our doing.
Since our fall, eternal life is totally and only a gift of God's grace.
He does provide this life in His Son Jesus Christ, the Bread of life.

Besides the *true bread*, and the *bread of life*, there is a third special thing about this Bread.

It is the Bread of God that comes **from heaven**.

This is repeated six times in this sermon of Jesus.

What a world of beauty is captured in that revelation! What a revelation of the Father heart!

This Father of heaven and earth is the One we as mankind rejected and offended.

It is the Father we betrayed when we embraced His adversary, Satan.

And yet it is He Who prepared this Bread for sinners as a gift to give life unto us!

He desired to do this without any reason in us.

Oh, friends, stand in awe!

Pause to ponder on this revelation about Jesus, the Bread of heaven.

God so loved the world that He gave this Bread of life.

Not because you and I deserve a crumb of it.

But only because it pleased Him to show forth the riches of His gracious love.

He was willing to provide us this Bread from heaven at the highest cost for **He - spared - not - His - Son!**

This is news worth repeating over and over.

We would all be and remain a lost race perishing in a world of hunger!

We have turned Paradise into a cemetery by our sins.

We shattered the relationship of love, hope, joy, satisfaction and peace when we rebelled against our Creator.

Rightly, we have been banished from God's presence with no means of return.

All mankind has since that day been hungry and thirsty for the deep and real happiness we once possessed.

Now we need to labour in the sweat of our faces.

We bear children with pain and bring them up with expectations that often are not fulfilled.

We meet with the 'curse' in all kinds of different trials, losses and pains.

We hunger and thirst for true joy, for true meaning, for lasting relief and it eludes us!

The world with all it offers cannot answer our deep spiritual need.

The best of the earth cannot cancel the nagging guilt of our heart.

The longest and healthiest life does not fill the empty void in the depth of our being that needs God.

After having reached a new milestone of success, we thirst again.

Upon accomplishing one project, we hunger for the next.

Embracing a beloved in marriage, we discover that even marriage fails to fill the soul-void.

Getting serious and religious to make amends for a life lost and wasted, again leads to nothing.

Everywhere we meet the truth, "*The wages of sin is death!*"

Everything repeats the same refrain, "*For we all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.*"

Everything we do as best as we can is labelled the same by God, "*But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags.*"

In this spiritual wilderness, full of disappointments and needs, the **Father** brings us the *true Bread from heaven*.

Do you hear it, "*But My Father giveth YOU the true bread from heaven.*"

Do not doubt that this 'YOU' is *each of you here personally* listening today!

Do not measure yourself like, "If only I would be more spiritually minded, hungrier for this Bread, then I could perhaps believe it that I am included in this 'you.'"

Don't say, "This Bread is only given to the elect. Since I do not whether I am one of those, I dare not believe it is for me."

My friend, read what is written in verse 66, "*From that time many of His disciples went back, and walked no more with Him.*"

They were obviously not spiritually minded.

They were labouring only for the earthly bread.

They were merely looking for earthly benefits.

And yet, were they not were given the true bread from heaven?

They were—but they did not value it. They despised it.

Doubt no longer that Jesus is also speaking to you, "*But My Father giveth you the true bread from heaven.*"

Do not look upon yourself, as if the reason it would be given to you is *in you*.

Grace is never based on who or what we are.

It is only based on the good pleasure of a sovereign God Who chooses to give us the True bread.

Let us consider our last question after we sing together with Psalter 69 verses 1, 2, 6 and 7.

So far, we have considered the questions why He is called bread and what is so special about this bread. But let us now also consider the third question, **What are we to do with this Bread?**

We notice in verse 34 that the people responded to Jesus' sermon.

*"Then said they unto Him, Lord, evermore give us **this** bread."*

It appears later that the crowd is still speaking with their growling stomachs.

It was not a hunger for restoration with God that moved them to ask for this bread.

But how is that with you, as you sit here listening?

Are you hungering for a real relationship with your Maker?

Is David's heart panting for communion with the living God your longing?

Has the reality that you are without God become unbearable to live with?

Is the reality of your guilt and shame before God beclouding all that is beautiful?

David wrote in Psalm 63, *"O God, Thou art my God; early will I seek Thee;*

my soul thirsteth for Thee, my flesh longeth for Thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is.

To see Thy power and Thy glory ... because Thy loving-kindness is better than life."

Does that express your soul's longing and need also?

Elsewhere he lamented, *"I am troubled; I am bowed down greatly. I go mourning all the day long."*

And why did he lament that? Were people making his life miserable?

No, that was not the real issue, for he added, *"for my loins are filled with a loathsome disease; and there is no soundness in my flesh."*

It was his spiritual separation from God and his indwelling sinfulness that burdened him.

Congregation, do we need to be reminded why we are all in this condition since our conception and birth?

"Well," you say, "I know. It was eating from the forbidden fruit that ruined us in Paradise."

Indeed, that is true. And yet there was something **before our eating** the forbidden fruit!

We **believed**. We **trusted**! But not in God's Words. We believed in the devil's false promise!

Did you ever think about our fall like that?

The real cause of our spiritual separation from God was because **we believed the devil!**

We believed his lie and followed his direction to eat from the forbidden tree.

We trusted the devil and ate and ... died.

This death would have been forever for all of us, if the Lord God and Father had not sent His Son as the Bread of life.

Now, consider Jesus' declaration, direction, promise and explanation in verse 51.

First His declaration which we considered already: *I am the living bread which came down from heaven:*

Then His direction: *if any man eat of this bread,*

Then His beautiful promise: *he shall live forever:*

Lastly, by way of explanation, He added, *and the bread that I will give is my flesh, or my body,*

which I will give for the life of the world." Here Jesus explains that the 'bread' is His suffering and death on the cross, by which He brought atonement for sin.

It is important that we understand this Gospel direction and promise well.

Let me again contrast it with what happened when we believed Satan.

By eating the forbidden fruit, we broke our relationship with God. We died spiritually.

We so disabled and incriminated ourselves that we are all born lost and guilty.

We entered the land of no-more-hope.

But God, rich in mercy, sovereign in grace, unsearchable in greatness, prepared a way back!

He sent Jesus Christ as the Bread of life and He calls us to 'eat Him and live'.

But how can we who are dead eat this Bread of life?

Jesus answered this in this same sermon.

He also declared that 'eating' or 'believing' is also the work of the Father.

The Father must enable us to believe through the work of the Holy Spirit.

He needs to open our eyes. He needs to make us hungry for Jesus. He leads sinners to come to Jesus.

The Father, through the Spirit, brings hearts to accept and eat the Bread of life.

"No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent Me draw him."

Now do not make the wrong application of this.

Jesus did not say this excuse us.

He said this to explain **how** it is that dead sinners will come to eat Him spiritually or believe in Him.

Observe how Jesus' congregation becomes more and more unhappy with His declaration about Himself as the I AM.

If the fruit of His labor would depend on men, none would eat a crumb from this Bread of heaven.

But multitudes of men are eating this Bread of heaven.

The sole reason is that *the Father draws them*. He makes us hungry for the true Bread.

All those who did not walk away at the end, were those drawn by the Father through His Spirit.
Remember, it is the work of God to save a sinner.

Still Jesus' direction is that the Bread of life is to be eaten will it bring us eternal life.

To 'eat Him' is one of the simplest illustrations about trusting Jesus.

When you eat something it becomes part of you.

Only after eating will the food profit us as it is taken up in our body.

That is one of most simple illustrations what faith in Jesus Christ does for our soul.

To eat the Bread of life is same as to place your trust in Jesus Christ, as the Mediator between God and us.

As I place my trust in Him, in His merits, in His payment on the cross, in His perfect, obedience in His life, all that is His becomes mine.

And therefore, Jesus' promise is that once you have 'eaten Him' or 'place our trust in Him' you shall live forever.

Congregation, salvation is by **eating** this Bread of life.

For the best food will do us no good by just looking at it.

To hold it in my hand or place it on my kitchen shelf will not do me any good.

I need to eat it in order to experience the good of it.

So also with the living bread, Jesus Christ.

My friends, He will do us no good, except we 'eat' Him.

Do not understand this literally as the Jews did.

Jesus merely pictures faith in Him as the act of eating.

And what a powerful picture this is.

What I eat becomes part of me.

Then I will experience the life-strengthening effects of it.

So spiritually. When I by faith may 'eat' God's message in His Son,

or when I by faith learn to look and lean upon Jesus Christ, the Saviour,

or when I by faith come to the Mediator between God and me to seek reconciliation on grounds of His merits,

or when I by faith come to touch the hem of the promise, fearful and hesitant,

only THEN will I experience the power of salvation.

For by faith we become partakers of Jesus and all His benefits.

When I spiritually eat, or trust in the Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ, then,

by God's promise, all of Jesus' Person and work becomes part of me.

His merits become my merits before God.

His righteousness becomes my righteousness before God.

His ransom payment for sin becomes my ransom payment to God.

His Father becomes my Father again.

Oh, what a wonderful Gospel this is.

As eating from the forbidden fruit ruined us and we died,

so eating from the heavenly bread will save us and we shall live forever.

Notice the amazing contrast.

Eating from the tree of knowledge of good and evil was forbidden.

But eating the Bread of life, given from heaven, is permitted and commanded.

We read in 1 John 3:23: *"And this is His commandment, that we should believe on the name of the Son Jesus Christ."*

Someone might say: "But I don't dare to hope that this heavenly Bread is for me.

How can I be sure that I am welcome to take this Bread of life?"

Consider Jesus' own words in verse 50 your answer,

*"This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that **a man** may eat thereof, and not die."*

Do you hear His answer? That **a man may eat thereof**.

Are you a man, a person?

No, fallen angels are not given this Bread or the invitation to eat of it. But you are!

Hear Him again in verse 51, *"If any man eat thereof..."*

Do you need more certainty? Isn't the Lord's word clear enough?

Oh, doubt not that the Lord Jesus sets Himself as the Bread of life before you!

I cannot repeat it enough.

He did not say, "Talk together about this bread or think about it and analyze it."

He did not say, "Pray about this Bread."

He calls us to "eat this bread."

Like the Israelites in the wilderness, who were to gather and eat the bread God gave, so are we to eat the Bread of life that the Father gives **you** from heaven.

Picture this gentle and yet urgent Jesus, standing before the congregation in Capernaum.

Jesus sees their still hungry hearts.

He knows they are all spending their energy and resources on that which does not satisfy their real need.

Why does it not satisfy?

Because none of it reconciles us to God.

The breach or separation sin has struck is a divine-size breach.

Nothing we do or we have or accomplish can reconcile us with our Maker.

All this Jesus knew more than anyone ever understood.

Hear Him then, urging you to look to Him, to receive Him, or to eat Him.

He that cometh to Me, shall never hunger. He that believeth on Me, shall never thirst. If any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever.

Have you eaten this Bread of life? Or rather, are you daily eating this Bread?

Or, to say it easier, do you trust Him daily for your soul and body?

Are you consciously leaning the weight of your soul's need upon this Living Savior, the sinner's Substitute?

Can you sense within yourself the hunger and thirst after Him?

Is this your desire, "Oh, that I may be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, but His only?"

You are blessed if you thus exercised with the ever blessed Lord Jesus Christ.

For Augustine, the great preacher of North Africa, said it well,

"If you are able to trust in Jesus, you have eaten Him."

And if you did, then you shall never be forsaken.

For that is His promise, *"If any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever."*

Dear congregation, the living Word has spoken.

After His sermon many had enough.

It was too hard for some; it was too much for more; it was too offensive for most.

Many looked at Him with hostility.

They were offended with His Gospel claim about Himself.

Deep down we all hate God's method of salvation, for it does not give us any credit.

Jonathan Edwards observed that it does not matter how God comes to man,

unbelievers will always find an excuse to reject Him.

How sad! Actually, how wicked, how dishonorable when in our pride we reject God's way of salvation.

Examine your excuses against the truth the Lord brings us.

Examine your hopes for salvation.

Outside knowing and trusting the Lord Jesus there is no salvation.

In other words, except you eat the Bread of life,

or except you have placed your trust in Him, you have no life in you.

How unsettling is this truth!

When we are building our spiritual security on the way we live, or the things we have experienced, we remain lost!

If we do not rely entirely upon Jesus as our Priest and Sacrifice, we remain lost.

For many that was so offensive. They murmured within their hearts,

What? Does Jesus think that except we follow and trust Him, God is not pleased with us?

Doesn't He know that we are the children of Abraham and faithfully follow Moses?

Doesn't He realize that we are *the chosen people of God!*?

Doesn't He know how careful we keep the law?

Doesn't that count for something?

Who does He think He is to make such claims?"

So as Jesus finished, He read their minds.

Again, He would have signed, *Oh, who has believed our report? And to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed?*

Undoubtedly their unbelief hurt Him deeply, as not only did they offend Him, but also His Father Who sent Him.

Yet He knew and comforted Himself that all that the Father had given Him, will come, even though now they might have walked away in anger.

At the time of His Father's good pleasure, their eyes would be opened to see in Him their only hope.

Picture Him standing in front of you as He stood before His twelve disciples that still stood with Him.

He has the same question for you today. A question that needs *your answer*.

“Will ye also go away? Will you turn away from Me instead of trusting in Me?
Will you continue to cling to your rags of religion or receive my garment of salvation?
Will you believe in Me? Will you trust Me your soul’s needs?
Will you trust Me alone to make all things well between you and God?
Do you believe Who I am? Jehovah, God’s Bread, the Son of the Living God?
Will you take me and eat me by faith?”

Peter’s answer to this question is one of the most beautiful confessions.

*“Lord, to Whom else shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life.
And we believe, and art sure, that Thou art that Christ, the Son of the Living God.”*

If his confession of heart is yours also, then you are blessed indeed.

For when such a hunger after Jesus is present,

or when your heart is convinced that nothing in my hand has any value,

or when your soul pants like Paul, “Oh, to be found in Him, not having my own righteousness but His only ...”

Then it is true for you what is written in the prophets, *“And they shall all be taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto ME”*.

Amen.