

4.18.2021 Easter 2 (John 10:11)

In the Gospel according to St. John, we find what are commonly called the seven “*I am*” statements of Jesus. These statements not only describe and help us understand what our Lord came to do, they help us understand who He is. These “*I AM*” statements connect Jesus to the name of God as it was revealed in the Old Testament, and they should be seen as God directly speaking to us about who He is and was and will always be.

When Jesus said, “*I am the bread of life*” (John 6:35) after miraculously feeding 5,000 people in the wilderness, He emphasized the difference between who He is, and what He can do as the God of Heaven and Earth, and what Moses did when he led the Israelites in the wilderness. Jesus said, “*Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died... I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh*” (John 6:49, 51). Jesus not only gives the bread of life, His flesh is the bread of life, given and received in Holy Communion to the end that we may live forever.

When Jesus said, “*I am the light of the world*” (John 8:12), His statement echoed the Word of God spoken in darkness at the moment of creation, “*Let there be light...*” (Genesis 1:3), and what was true in the beginning, when light pierced the darkness, is still true today, for the Son of God, by whom all things were made (Hebrews 1:2; Psalm 33:6) is the Divine light that dispels the darkness of this world. The sun sets with each passing day, leaving us in the darkness of night, yet the Son of God never leaves us or forsakes us (Hebrews 13:5). He is the light of the world that continually shines on us. The light of wisdom, holiness, joy, and understanding - guiding us to life everlasting.

When Jesus said, “*I am the door of the sheep*” (John 10:7), He identified Himself as the one way to come into the fold. He identified Himself as the only entrance into the kingdom of heaven. Christ is the door by which we enter into union and communion with Almighty God. There is a sense in which we enter into the presence of God by opening a door and walking into church, but it is by grace through faith in Christ that we truly enter into His

presence, both in His Church on this earth, and His glorious Church in heaven.

When Jesus said, *“I am the way, the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me”* (John 14:6), He boldly declared that He is the entire way, He is the beginning, the middle, and the end of this great path to God. He is the truth, the origin of all truth, and through Him truth is communicated to hearts prepared to receive Him. He is the life, the Author and Giver of life (John 11:25), who by His death purchased eternal life for all who call upon His name (Romans 10:13).

When Jesus said, *“I am the true vine”* (John 15:1), He spelled out the nature of our relationship with Him. We are the branches, and He is the vine. As you know, a branch cannot bear fruit on its own. A branch receives its power to bear fruit from its union with the vine. In the same way, a Christian cannot bear fruit apart from the sustaining power of Christ. Only the person who abides in Christ will bring forth much fruit, for apart from Him, we can do nothing (John 15:5).

When Jesus said, *“I am the resurrection and the life”* (John 11:25), He revealed the truth that with Christ, and in Christ, everlasting life, His resurrected life is ours today. Remember the Scripture we read on Easter Day, which said, *“Since you have been raised with Christ, strive for things above...”* (Colossians 3:1 BSB). For the baptized, there is a very real sense in which all that we look forward to, is ours today, because the power that will raise us on the last day, has raised us already. There was a time when death brought only despair and hopelessness, but with our Lord risen, St. Paul can proclaim, *“O death, where is your sting? O grave, where is your victory?”* (1 Corinthians 15:55). Jesus declared, *“I am the resurrection and the life,”* and therefore all who are in Christ have been raised to new life in Him. The resurrected, everlasting life has already begun.

In the Gospel passage we read this morning, Jesus said, *“I am the Good Shepherd. the Good Shepherd gives His life for the sheep”* (John 10:11). One of the most comforting images of our Savior Christ is the image of our Lord as the Good Shepherd, the Good Shepherd who loves and cares and provides

for *His people*, the Good Shepherd who lays down His life for *the sheep of His pasture* (Psalm 100:3). Once again, this is not only what God, in the Person of Jesus Christ came to do, this is who God is. He is the Good Shepherd who loves us so perfectly and so completely that He freely sacrificed His life to the end that the enemy would not be able to kill us.

This is the Person and Work of the Good Shepherd, perfectly described in these words of our Lord, “*Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down His life for His friends*” (John 15:13). It’s important for us to always be mindful of the fact that the enemy didn’t take the Good Shepherd’s life by force, Jesus freely laid down His life for us. As He said to His disciples, “*No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again...*” (John 10:18).

A striking example of His power to *lay it down* is clearly seen in another “*I AM*” statement. In the Garden of Gethsemane, when the mob came to arrest Jesus, He asked them, “*Whom do you seek?*” They answered Him, “*Jesus of Nazareth.*” Jesus said to them, “*I am he.*” (John 18:4-5). Scripture tells us that “*When Jesus said to them, “I am he,” they drew back and fell to the ground*” (18:6), and so we see that the men who came to arrest Jesus were only able to take Him because He allowed it to be so, His love for us allowed it to be so. “*No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself.*”

The “*I AM*” statements of Jesus are God directly speaking to us not only about what He came to do, but more importantly about who He is and was and will always be. The All-knowing, All-loving, All-powerful Creator of Heaven and Earth, the One True God, whose thoughts and ways (Isaiah 55:8-9) are infinitely beyond us, yet who, in the Person of Jesus Christ, uses words we can understand, and in doing so reveals Himself, His power, His love, His unceasing desire to abide with us, and in us. May we, by the grace of God, open our hearts to Him, that we may not only receive the innumerable benefits that result from all that He came to do, but to the end that we may, through Faith in our Savior Christ, receive God Himself.