

I Am and You are Too

“Jesus said to them, ‘I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.’”

I am...I am a woman. I am a daughter and I am a sister. I am the Rector of Christ Episcopal Church. I am someone who loves animals. I am someone who has lost her mother. I am someone who loves to ride horses, read and watch The Great British Baking Show!

We are all “I am” something. We are all complex individuals who have certain particularities that make us who we are. We have our family histories as well as our personal preferences and experiences that all go into the mix to shape us into the people that sit in this church today. Some of our “I am’s” are points of pride. When we say I am successful or I am a proud parent or I am someone who made honor roll at school, we share those parts of ourselves that we don’t mind others seeing.

But, some of our “I am’s” are not so easy to hold out in the bright light of day. We find it harder to say things like, I am depressed or I am lonely or I am in financial trouble or I am insecure. In the end, the truth of the matter is that we are all made up of a mixture of “I am’s.” Some that we are happy with and other “I am’s” that we struggle with.

We are all many things that we might call both good and bad, and more than anything else in the world, in our deepest hearts, we simply want to be known and loved for *just* who we are. We want to be able to share ourselves in an open and honest way and be loved in spite of the ways in which we find ourselves unlovable. We want to be *enough*.

This is a fact of the human condition. We want relationship. We want to share in intimacy and mutual caring with other people. We want this in our relationships with our friends, our spouses or partners, our parents and with the people we sit with in these pews.

God also wants this, and God wants it with all of us.

In Sunday’s gospel we will hear Jesus repeat, “I AM.” I am the bread of life. We are reminded of God’s words to Moses on that mountaintop. Moses asks the burning bush, ‘but whom shall I say has sent me?’ And God says, “tell them I AM has sent you.” I am that I am. God is revealing Godself to Moses as the one who hears the cries of the people and responds with mercy. In Jesus we witness God’s greatest attempt to be known by the world. In Jesus, God comes to us, in the flesh, as the supreme realization of God’s endless love for humanity.

How do we form intimate relationships? There is only one way and that is to share ourselves with one another. We tell each other our stories, we share our dreams, and we express our disappointments. Have you ever tried to grow close to someone and been frustrated by the feeling that they just wouldn’t open up?

In psychologist-speak we called this mutual self-disclosure or self-revelation. It is that precious moment in time when with deep vulnerability, we *voluntarily* reveal to others who we really are. In today’s gospel, God in Christ is saying, “here I am” and I want you to know me. I want to show you how much I love you and I want you to love me in return. In the fragility of human flesh, God offers us the gift of true bread—bread for the nurturance of our bodies yes, but also bread that transforms our soul, bread that feeds our deepest and truest hunger, which is the hunger to know God.

The hunger to know God is at the heart of the elemental human appetite. It is the hunger beneath all hungers and it is captured in the phrase “Humanity does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.”

Jesus tells us today that in order to be truly satisfied, we open our hearts and minds to God’s Word of love for us all and the world will be transformed forever. For if we truly taste and see God’s love for us just once, we can do no other than feed others out of its unlimited abundance.

This is how the world is truly fed, because as it has been said, there is no famine in the Word of God. The body and blood of Christ is food indeed.

This Sunday, we will join with Christ in the feast and then go out and pour it all back into the world. This is how we become our greatest "I am." This is how we learn to say, "I am many things, but above all, I *am* a beloved child of God."

Grace and Peace, Stephanie+