

Let us pray... Loving God, be with us today... Transform us through your living bread and embolden us to share your love with the world... Amen.

I love our Old Testament reading from First Kings today... It has such a beautiful and tasty image—cake from angels.

Now I don't know about you, but I would love to try cake from angels...

I imagine it would be the most amazing thing ever... Because cake from angels, is no ordinary cake.

This cake helped Elia sleep, and gave him rejuvenating rest... And after he woke up, it nourished and sustained him for 40 days and nights.

What a beautiful and powerful story... What a lovely narrative on hope...

Because God took time to meet Elijah exactly where he was at.

And if God did that for Elijah, then God will do that for us...

As we are loved by a God who takes time to meet us exactly where we are at...

And by doing so, God fills us with hope, strength, and courage for what is next.

And we know this is true, because there are many stories about God meeting God's people, and they are immersed in Scripture...

In fact, some stories are so saturated in Scripture that they burst from the pages and seep through time...

And one of those stories is from Exodus, chapter 3.

Here we find Moses talking to God on Mount Horeb...

This time God does not appear in the form of an angel, but rather God appears in the form of a burning bush—a bush that burns and is not consumed...

And what unfolds next, is a terrified Moses doing his best to have a conversation with God... A conversation that ends with Moses asking for what he needs... He asks for God's name...

And God's response is: I AM who I AM.

This I AM statement is so powerful, it not only resonates with Moses, but it reverberates throughout Scripture...

For example, in the Psalms: we hear, be still and know... I AM... God...

And in the Gospel of John, we hear Jesus say many times... I AM...

I AM the light of the world... I AM the door... I AM the good shepherd... I AM the resurrection and the life... I AM the way and the truth and the life... I AM the true vine... And from our Gospel today, I AM the bread of life...

Jesus's I AM statements are not by coincidence or mistake...

Rather they reveal one powerful truth... That Jesus is God...

Which is a lot to unpack, Jesus, the son of Mary and Joseph, is the great I AM?

No wonder this claim upset the people in our Gospel... Because how could this man, born of flesh, be God?

And so, Jesus answers them by saying, "I AM the living bread that came down from heaven."

Now, you may have noticed this idea is nothing new, as we have been talking a lot about the bread of life these past couple of weeks...

In fact, the last few Gospels have been so similar, it may seem like Jesus is being redundant and is repeating himself over and over...

However, that's not what is happening...

Rather, Jesus is revealing what it means for him to be the bread of life...

And to make sure we get the point; he explains this in nuanced detail.

Because Jesus knows how hard it is to grasp who he is...

Jesus knows it's impossible for us to fully comprehend him.

And so Jesus meets us where we are at... Because Jesus knows that the only way we can begin to understand who he is, is through relationship...

Which is why the bread of life discourse is so long...

This is an invitation into conversation, which in turn deepens our relationship with Jesus...

By experiencing God where we are at, in ways we can understand, in ways that are tangible to us...

And one thing that is universally tangible to all people, is food.

And bread is a symbol for food... And food plays a vital role in our world.

As theologian Peter Claver Ajer explains,

"By comparing himself to bread, Jesus makes himself as necessary to us as the food we eat..."

He is our food, enabling us to live our life's call, to be alive, our source of spiritual energy when exhausted, our consolation when we are troubled, our strength when we are weak...

Jesus, the bread of life, sustains us and restores our vigor and exhausted energies."

This is what Jesus is getting at in his lengthy bread of life discourse... He is inviting us into relationship...

And not just any relationship, this is a nurturing, sustaining, life-giving relationship that isn't bound by time or space.

A relationship that pushes beyond borders, boundaries, imaginations, and understanding.

A relationship that is not only for this life, but is the source for eternal life.

A relationship that invites playful wonder, to ponder how we can help feed the world with a love as deep and nuanced as Christ's love...

Because our world is in desperate need of this kind of love... Our world is hungry for love that nourishes the soul and sustains relationships...

Our world needs the bread of life... Our world needs cake from angels...

Especially since our world has been littered, for far too long, with pre-packaged bread, stamped with isolating labels, and self-serving purposes...

And it is time we speak up against that kind of hate and negativity.

Because it's time for us to break bread with others... The kind of bread that comes from God. The kind of bread that heals, restores, and nurtures hope.

So we can meet others where they are at, and provide a way forward, with God.

A way that is seeded by the great I AM... The momentous mystery that lives beyond our imaginations and understanding...

While at the same time, this is great I AM takes time to meet us where we are at... By abiding with us intimately—through the water we drink and the food we eat.

God continues to meet us where we are at...

Showing up when we need it the most... Giving us cake from angels...

Shining hope into tomorrow, and nourishment into today... Amen.