

Rev Rita Message June 6 2021

Several times in John's Gospel, Jesus pairs "I AM" sayings with common images: bread versus hunger; light versus darkness; a good shepherd versus a hireling; a true vine versus a false one. In other words, Jesus is the answer for hunger, darkness, fear, emptiness, and so forth.

"I am the Bread of Life" is the first I Am Saying that Jesus said in response to a crowd that had followed him from the Sea of Galilee. The day before, Jesus had performed a miracle by feeding thousands of hungry people by multiplying carbohydrates and proteins... bread and fish.

This is the only miracle story, except for the Resurrection, told in all four Gospels. Matthew, Mark, and Luke report that after everyone had finished eating, they were "satisfied". John, however, says they all ate "and were full". They were full rather than satisfied. The next day they went looking for Jesus, who had gone to the lakeside village of Capernaum.

You would think Jesus would be encouraged by thousands of people searching for him, but he knew why they came. They were looking for another miracle. They were driven by a need for fullness. Therefore Jesus told them that he could give something lasting and complete. In response, the crowd asked him. "What sign are you going to give us then, so that we may see it and believe you?"

Think about that for a moment.

The crowd is fewer than twenty-four hours removed from a miracle and they are asking, "What can you do for us now?"

That is the problem with chasing fullness. There is never enough. We always need more. It keeps us on the lookout for the next miracle. Not only that, a drive for fullness makes it hard to enjoy what we have.

In the late 1800's and into the early 1900's, J. D. Rockefeller was the richest man in the U.S.A. and probably was in the top five richest men in the world at that time. Someone once asked him how much money was enough? He responded: "Just a little bit more."

Have you ever said to God, "If you'll just give me this I'll be happy," only find out that the happiness expiration date on "this" was pretty short?

When life becomes just a matter of chasing fullness, happiness is always temporary. There is always another need, another want, another crisis, another something that keeps us from being satisfied.

Rob Fuquay is the senior pastor of St. Luke's United Methodist Church in Indianapolis. He wrote a book with the title: The God We Can Know- Exploring the "I Am" Sayings of Jesus.

He shares an everyday experience that taught him about the ongoing faith challenge of chasing fullness in life rather than seeking satisfaction.

One night Rob Fuquay was ready to go to bed one night but felt a little hungry. He wanted something to eat before calling it a night, but what would satisfy? He stared into the fridge. It was full of food, but nothing was appealing. He tried a piece of leftover chicken from the supper the night before. It looked better than it tasted.

He heated up a few bites of casserole. Again, same result. Maybe something sweet. He ate a little ice cream. That tasted better, but He still wanted something more. He finally went to bed feeling full, just not satisfied.

Being full and being satisfied aren't the same; yet we live in a world that would have us think they are. In the coming week, I invite you to become aware of how full your life is and whether or not that fullness results in being satisfied.

In saying, "I am the Bread of Life," Jesus is in effect telling us, "I don't want you to spend your life just chasing fullness. I want to offer satisfaction no matter what the circumstances are. I want to give you peace and contentment. I can provide that. Let me be your source of joy, so that no matter where you are, you can say, "Today I am satisfied. God is with me. I am not alone."

One way that we can discover Jesus as a source of satisfaction...as the source of the Bread of Life is with our prayers.

What would happen if along with our prayers for what we want and need that we included gratitude believing that good things await us, things we can't yet see or even predict.

When Jesus is our Bread of Life, when we choose faith as our sustenance, we can let go of that need to get all we can for ourselves and have life our way. We are free to give and share and enjoy, we can say to God, "Lord, you've already given me what I need for satisfaction, so I'm just going to enjoy it and look for ways to share it."

Thanks be to God. Amen.