

Knox Presbyterian Church
Rev. Emma Duncan
May 4, 2025



Greetings

Call to Worship

Leader: The Bread of Life has come among us.

People: What is this Bread of Life?

Leader: It is none other than Jesus Christ, God's beloved Son!

People: We hunger for the true bread that will nourish our souls.

Leader: Come, then, to Christ who feeds us with his very life!

All: We come, ready to receive the sustenance that only God can provide. Amen.

Music: Break now the bread of life (#507, all verses)

Prayer of Adoration and Confession

Bless the Lord, O my soul. O Lord, my God, you are very great. You are clothed with honour and majesty. You set the earth on its foundations, so that it shall never be shaken. You give drink to every wild animal and bread to strengthen the human heart. Heavenly Father, you could have left us alone to our own devices. Instead, you chose to put on human flesh and walk this earth. Jesus Christ – fully divine and fully human – revealed himself to us as the Saviour of the World. In deepest humility, you have lavished us with the gifts of forgiveness, salvation, and eternal life. With all of creation, we add our voices to sing – holy, holy, holy, Lord God almighty! We will praise your name forevermore.

Redeeming Saviour, our offerings of praise and worship have barely left our lips when we start to complain. We grumble about what we have. We grumble about what we don't have. We gossip about other people so that we can feel better about ourselves. We doubt the promises contained in the Old and New Testaments. We fail to share the bounty of the earth with those who need it most. Over and over again, we reveal ourselves to be greedy, selfish, and fickle.

In great humility, we ask you to forgive our many sins. Wash us clean in the blood of the Lamb.

O Triune God, thank you for giving us grace upon grace. We do not deserve this perfect gift and yet, you freely give. Guide us by your Spirit to be people of faith who worship and serve you in hope and joy. Strengthen the Church to be bold witnesses of the resurrection who share the blessings that you have given us.

We pray all these things in the name of our risen Lord and Saviour, who taught us to pray, saying...

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy Name.

Thy Kingdom come.

Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread.

And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

Assurance of Pardon

Are you weary and worn from the cares of life? Jesus the Good Shepherd will carry you.

Are you sick and tired of being sick and tired? Jesus the Great Physician will heal you.

Are you hungry for food that will nourish your soul? Jesus is the Bread of Life.

Do you need to be forgiven? Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.

People of God – in the name of Jesus Christ, our sins are forgiven! Rejoice and be glad!
Amen.

Announcements

1. Welcome!
2. Congregational Meeting
TODAY after worship // No coffee fellowship
3. Thank you to Marlene Bray for doing the readings today.
4. Spring Concert
Sunday May 25, 1 p.m.
Circle of Harmony women's *A Capella* choir
Tickets are now available for \$20 per person
5. 180th Anniversary Celebration
Sunday June 1, 10:30 a.m.
Guest preacher: The Rev. Dr. Richard Fee,
former Moderator of the Presbyterian Church in Canada
Special Music: Dr. Peter Hanson and Carolyn Haacke, organ and piano duet
Jada Dawson, soloist
Luncheon at the Legion to follow worship service
6. Passing of Marguerite Botting
Marguerite attended Knox before the pandemic, but moved out of Burlington. She passed away suddenly and unexpectedly last week. We offer our deepest condolences to her family.

Music: This is my Father's world (#328, all verses)

Children's Time: I am the boss of this house

Prayer of Illumination:

Let us pray. Majestic God, we do not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from your mouth. Send your powerful Spirit into our lives and make us hunger for this heavenly food, that it may nourish us today in the ways of eternal life; through Jesus Christ, the bread of heaven. Amen.

Our Old Testament reading is taken from the Book of Psalms and we will be reading Responsively Psalm 104, verses 1-15.

Leader: Bless the LORD, O my soul. O LORD my God, you are very great.

People: You are clothed with honor and majesty, wrapped in light as with a garment.

Leader: You stretch out the heavens like a tent;

People: you set the beams of your chambers on the waters;

Leader: you make the clouds your chariot;

People: you ride on the wings of the wind;

Leader: you make the winds your messengers,

People: fire and flame your ministers.

Leader: You set the earth on its foundations, so that it shall never be shaken.

**People: You cover it with the deep as with a garment;
the waters stood above the mountains.**

Leader: At your rebuke they flee; at the sound of your thunder they take to flight.
They rose up to the mountains, ran down to the valleys,
to the place that you appointed for them.

**People: You set a boundary that they may not pass,
so that they might not again cover the earth.
You make springs gush forth in the valleys;
they flow between the hills,**

Leader: giving drink to every wild animal;
the wild asses quench their thirst.
By the streams the birds of the air have their habitation;
they sing among the branches.

**People: From your lofty abode you water the mountains;
the earth is satisfied with the fruit of your work.**

Leader: You cause the grass to grow for the cattle
and plants for people to use,

**People: to bring forth food from the earth and wine to gladden the human heart,
oil to make the face shine and bread to strengthen the human heart. Amen.**
**Our Old Testament reading is taken from the Book of Exodus chapter 3 and we will be
reading selected verses.**

Now Moses was tending the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian, and he led the flock to the far side of the wilderness and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. There the angel of the LORD appeared to him in flames of fire from within a bush. Moses saw that though the bush was on fire it did not burn up. So Moses thought, "I will go over and see this strange sight—why the bush does not burn up."

When the LORD saw that he had gone over to look, God called to him from within the bush, "Moses! Moses!"

And Moses said, "Here I am."

"Do not come any closer," God said. "Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground." Then he said, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob."

At this, Moses hid his face, because he was afraid to look at God.

The LORD said, "I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am concerned about their suffering. So I have come down to rescue them from the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land into a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey... So now, go. I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt."

But Moses said to God, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?"

And God said, "I will be with you..."

Moses said to God, "Suppose I go to the Israelites and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' Then what shall I tell them?"

God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: 'I AM has sent me to you.'"

Our New Testament reading is taken from the Gospel of John and we will be reading chapter 6, verses 25-35.

When they found him on the other side of the sea, they said to him, "Rabbi, when did you come here?" Jesus answered them, "Very truly, I tell you, you are looking for me not because you saw signs but because you ate your fill of the loaves. Do not work for the food that perishes but for the food that endures for eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. For it is on him that God the Father has set his seal."

Then they said to him, "What must we do to perform the works of God?"

Jesus answered them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent."

So they said to him, "What sign are you going to give us, then, so that we may see it and believe you? What work are you performing? Our ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness, as it is written, 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat.'"

Then Jesus said to them, "Very truly, I tell you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world."

They said to him, "Sir, give us this bread always."

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."

This is the Word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. Amen.

Reflection: When God says I AM – The Bread of Life

I have been preaching through the Gospel of John since January. This Gospel is by far one of my favourites because the stories are so beautifully written. They are timeless because they have helped millions of Christians – understand who Jesus Christ is and who we are called to be as a people of faith. For me personally, the Gospel of John is nourishment for my weary soul. For me professionally, it is hard to preach through this Gospel in a short period of time because there is so much soul food. This year, I had to skip over some big sections in order to line everything up for Holy Week. So...I have decided to stay in the Gospel of John for May and most of June and then I'll do something different in the summer. In this post-Easter season, we will be exploring the "I AM" statements of Jesus from John's Gospel. There are seven of them –

I am the bread of life.

I am the light of the world.

I am the gate.

I am the good shepherd.

I am the resurrection and the life.

I am the way, the truth, and the life.

I am the true vine.

I will be compressing them into a 6-week mini-sermon series.

And when I checked my files, do you know when I preached on these statements last? Exactly 5 years ago on the first Sunday of May in 2020.¹ Remember May 2020? We were in lockdown, the kids doing school remotely, and we were all trying to keep our anxiety and fear at bay. All churches were closed and I had a family friend helping me record and edit our online worship services. My reflection that week began with me walking into the sanctuary looking like this...

¹ <https://youtu.be/xrBn5EFy7ts>



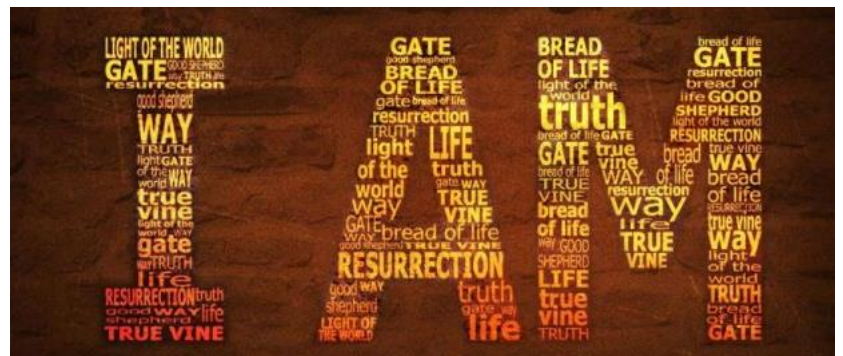
I was talking about the new ‘fashion trend’ in grocery shopping – wearing a mask, gloves, and bathing ourselves in hand sanitizer. We had to line up to get into a grocery store and then follow a maze of directional arrows to physically distance ourselves. And it was really important to have a grocery list because heaven help you if you forgot the bread!!

What a nightmare that time was for us all.

A lot has changed in 5 years and thankfully, the pandemic is behind us.

But God’s Word still speak to us.

In the 5 years since I last preached on Christ’s “I AM” statements, it is the writings of Dietrich Bonhoeffer that have helped me understand just how powerful



these I AM statements really are. Bonhoeffer was a German born Lutheran pastor during the Nazi era. He was a brilliant theologian, teacher, writer, prophet, and ultimately a spy for the resistance movement who would be executed in the final days of the Second World War for his participation in an assassination plot against Hitler.

Bonhoeffer once wrote that “When God says ‘I,’ then there is revelation. God could have let the world follow its course and kept quiet about it. Why should God find it necessary to talk about himself? When God says ‘I,’ then there is grace. ... When God says ‘I,’ [God is saying] I am the Lord – not *a* lord but *the* Lord.”²

God revealed himself in grace to Moses through the burning bush. I AM WHO I AM.

Jesus Christ revealed himself in grace to generations of believers through his I AM statements.

And our Triune God did not do this to show off or to talk about himself. The Lord was revealing his divine nature to humanity because humanity is broken. We NEED these revelations. We NEED this grace. In the story of the burning bush in Exodus chapter 3, God introduced himself as the Lord of our ancestors Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. God heard the cries of the Israelites and through his servant Moses, he rescued them and gave them manna in the wilderness. In the burning bush, God said I am *the* Lord who keeps his promises and provides for our every need.

Fast forward to Jesus’ day and he reveals himself as the Bread of Life soon after feeding a large crowd of people with 5 loaves of bread and 2 fish. After Jesus performed this miracle, the people were grateful for what he did for them, but their gratitude did not last long. Like the Israelites in the wilderness, their hunger was not satisfied. They grumbled about the manna that God provided from heaven. They wanted more because they doubted the work of God.

And 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. This bread is not made from wheat and water, but with grace and love.

This is how our Triune reveals God-self to us in Scripture.

² Bonhoeffer, Dietrich. *I want to live these days with you: A year of daily devotions*.

And how do we reveal ourselves?

Over and over again, we human beings **reveal** ourselves to be fickle in our faith. When God says “I AM,” we doubt that the Lord keeps his promises. Like Moses, we are wary about getting involved in God’s divine plans because they will disrupt our daily living. When Christ says “I am the Bread of Life,” we grumble about the bread we are given. We say to Jesus – prove who you are, show us a sign, do a magic trick.

The bread that Jesus is offering here is not some magic trick, but himself. He did not say – I have bread – in deep humility he said, I am the bread. And not just any old loaf of bread from the grocery store, but the Bread of LIFE. Jesus revealed who he is as the divine Son of God and the Saviour of the world who gives grace and hope and life. As Bonhoeffer said, God didn’t have to do this. He could have left us to our own devices, but he didn’t. Instead, he gave part of himself to become the Word made flesh. (John 1:14) And when we partake of God’s holy gift of the Bread of Life, our souls are nourished by a bread so rich and nutritious that we will receive grace upon grace. It’s been a long 5 years since the beginning of the pandemic, but no matter how much we are struggling in our lives or with our journey of faith, no matter how crazy the world is around us, Christ continues to offer us sustenance for our daily living that enables us to stay strong in our faith. Christ continues to fill us with a heavenly bread that does not spoil or rot. It will endure for eternal life.

O Bread of Life, give us this day our daily bread.

Amen.

Dedication of our Tithes and Offerings

Song of Thanks – Praise God from whom all blessings flow (#830)

Praise God from whom all blessing flow;
praise him, all creatures here below:
praise him above, ye heavenly host;
praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost.

Prayer of Dedication

Lord, you are the bread of heaven, giving life to the world. You fill our emptiness with your goodness. You come to our weakness with your strength. Take these gifts and bless them to bring in a rich harvest of your heavenly food and life-giving refreshment. Amen.

Prayers of the People

Lord Jesus, though you are God, you refused to pull rank or parade your power over us. Instead, you chose to step down into our human experience and live among us. More than that, you revealed yourself as a suffering servant - washing feet, feeding the hungry, healing the sick, and giving of yourself body and blood. You are the Messiah, the Bread of Life, and we can respond in no other way as to give ourselves to you in praise.

As we offer you our worship today, O Lord, hear our prayers on behalf of your people.

God of hope beyond hope, we pray for your peace to come to the nations who wage war against others or those who threaten war. We pray especially for peace between Ukraine and Russia, in the Middle East, and in Syria. In the past weeks, we have seen senseless acts of violence on the streets of Vancouver and even here in Burlington, there has been gun violence. Father, there are millions of victims who suffer because of these cruel acts. We may not know their names, but you do. Comfort and strengthen them. Feed them with the Bread of Life.

God of life beyond death, we pray for people who are grieving, for the loss of a loved one, the loss of love or hope or for a lost opportunity. So many young people in our society feel helpless and hopeless about what the future holds. So many families struggle with the demands of everyday living. So many seniors feel alone and isolated. So many communities struggle to solve the complex problems of poverty, homelessness, addiction, and domestic violence. Lord, be with all your people who are living through such sadness and loss. Nourish them with your love and forgiveness and amazing grace. Give them strength of mind and courage of heart. Help them to hope again.

Today we name your children by name...

Heal them. Comfort them. Give them their daily bread.

God of peace beyond our understanding, we pray for your Church, Christ's bride. Feed us with that spiritual bread that nurtures us, body, mind, and soul. Reveal yourself to us so that we may take the bread that you have so generously given and share it with the world. In the holy and blessed name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.

Music: Guide me, O thou great Redeemer (#651, all verses)

Blessing (Matthew 6:25-27, 33-34)

Sung Amen