

# Get Real

John 6:1-29

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Video and audio versions available online:

<https://relentless-love.org/sermons/get-real-2/>

Transcript document prepared by: Heather Eades.

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## Message

Video clip: *E.T. the Extra-Terrestrial*  
Universal Pictures (1982)

*Scene opens with a white van coming to a sliding fast stop in a park. The back doors fly open, and steam is coming out of the van. Three boys on bikes watch as the back doors open and reveals ET in a white lab coat, with his chest glowing red. Elliott [Henry Thomas] emerges next to ET and explains what's going on.*

Elliott	Okay. He's a man from outer space and we're taking him to his spaceship.
Greg [K.C. Martel]	Well, can't he just beam up?
Elliott	This is reality, Greg.

I love that line: "This is reality, Gregg." Get Real, Gregg.

Little children don't know what's real and what's unreal. They haven't spent much time in this world, like adults. And so, they have the best dreams and the worst nightmares.<sup>i</sup> When I was a little boy, I dreamt that a Chinese Tornado dressed in a silk robe was standing outside of our family room window about to kill us all...And then I remember shaking and sobbing on my father's lap, so glad to be awake and so glad to be home — in the bosom of my father.

Little children don't know what's real or unreal, or what things cost (cause and effect). When my children were little, we had a real problem with each of them just giving away their lunch money, "You need money? You can have mine — I get it from my dad who has all that I need." And they would talk to things, as if everything should be alive. It used to be embarrassing: My son Jonathan used to make me stop and have conversations with VW Bugs in the parking lot at the grocery store.

"Soon after her brother was born, little Sachi began to ask her parents to leave her alone with the new baby," writes Don Millman. They spied on her one day, as she put her face close to her baby brother and whispered, "Baby, tell me what God feels like. I'm starting to forget."<sup>ii</sup>

Little Children don't know what's real. They have not developed a cogent epistemology of ontology as a philosopher might say. They don't know what's real, whereas adults do know what's real — and apparently, according to the Bible... all adults are wrong. “You must become like a little child to enter the Kingdom,” said Jesus.

“The long, dull monotonous years of middle-aged prosperity or middle-aged adversity are excellent campaigning weather...” Says Screwtape, the elder demon to Wormwood, the younger demon in *The Screwtape Letters* by CS Lewis:

*“That is why we must often wish long life to our patients; seventy years is not a day too much for the difficult task of unravelling their souls from Heaven and building up a firm attachment to Earth. While they are young, we find them always shooting off at a tangent. Even if we contrive to keep them ignorant of explicit religion, the incalculable winds of fantasy and music and poetry — the mere face of a girl, the song of a bird, or the sight of a horizon — are always blowing our whole structure away. They will not apply themselves steadily to worldly advancement, prudent connections, and the policy of safety first. . . . Whatever you do, keep your patient as safe as you possibly can.”*

When I was a Youth Pastor in California, we'd take about 150 kids to camp every year, and at the end of camp, we'd have a sharing time. Kids would share about their new faith in Jesus. Some would share thoughts of suicide, and how they now had hope. One girl shared memories of abuse and this new knowledge that God is Love. There'd be hugging, sobbing, laughing... Faith Hope and Love. Then invariably — God bless them — a middle-aged volunteer counselor would stand up and say, “This is so great, but let me challenge you, ‘What difference will your new faith make when you get back to the real world.’”

I always sympathized with the question but also wondered what they meant by “real world.” As if our little banquet of Grace wasn't real, and their world of grocery lists, taxes, and responsibilities was real.

Philosophers have always told us that these questions, “What is real (ontology)?” and “How would we know what's real (epistemology),” are a profoundly challenging set of questions. As we learned at the start of this series, even physicists argue that all that's real came into existence from nothing, which means the nothing is more real than something — which means, it's hardly nothing. And of course, Scripture refers to the nothing that is more real than any something as “I Am that I Am” or “Yahweh.”

In Exodus 3:13, Moses says to a voice coming from a burning bush, “If [Israel] asks, ‘What is God's name?’ what shall I say to them?” And God says to Moses, “‘I Am who I Am.’ And He said, ‘Say this to the people of Israel: I Am has sent me to you.’” God also said to Moses, “Say this to the people of Israel, ‘YHWH (Yahweh).’”

It appears that the name Yahweh comes from the verb *hayah* (to be). So, the name of God means something like “I am that I am” or “I am ‘amness.’” In Greek “*Ego eimi ho on*” (where we get the word “ontology,” logic of being) “*Ego eimi ho on*” or simply “*Ego eimi.*” In Isaiah 43:25,

Yahweh says “I, I Am . . . he who blots out your transgressions.” In the Greek Septuagint, that verse reads, “*ego eimi, ego emi*—I am I am—he who blots out your transgressions for my own sake.” All that to say: I Am — that is, *Ego Eimi* — in Jesus’ day, was a personal name for the uncaused cause, necessary beingness, or ground of all being that defines all things and can be defined by nothing else — that is, God: ultimate reality. *Ego Eimi*, I Am.

As we’ve learned, even physicists now say that there is an uncaused cause beyond everything that we think is anything. And even weirder, that uncaused cause appears to be in us, for human consciousness collapses the quantum state of subatomic particles of which everything that we thought was anything is composed. All that to say that there’s something more real than real beyond the entire universe, and something more real than real inside of you. And those two things appear to be separated from each other, for we keep asking the question, “What’s real?” And “how would I know what’s real?” And “I don’t feel very real; how do I become real?” In other words, “How can I go home?” You see: It’s as if I have been exiled from my own garden — who it is that I am. Or perhaps, “I am that I am” has been fragmented into 8 billion fragments.

In Deuteronomy 30:20, Moses says to the Israelites, “Choose life... loving Yahweh Elohim, obeying his voice, and holding fast to him for he is your life.” So, my life (which is who it is that I am) needs to hold fast to I am that I am, which is what it must be to “Get Real.” Perhaps, I Am that I Am has been fragmented into 8 billion fragments trapped within 8 billion I Am Nots. That is, 8 billion true selves have been lost in 8 billion false selves, and so constantly ask, “Who is it... that I am?”

I’m sure that confuses you, because it sure does confuse me. But I hope that you would all agree that we all need to “get real,” and we aren’t always sure what realty is, or how we would know what it is.

This may be my favorite depiction of a biblical epistemology of ontology — that is, a biblical way of knowing what’s real. John Nash was one of the world’s greatest mathematicians — he could do the math, but he struggled to know what reality is... he was mentally ill. His life story was depicted in the movie *A Beautiful Mind*. In this scene, his helper, his bride, helps him know what reality is.

Video clip: *A Beautiful Mind*  
Universal Pictures (2001)

*Scene opens on Alicia Nash [Jennifer Connelly] standing in a bedroom doorway. John Nash [Russell Crowe] is sitting on the bed, looking at her, unresponsive.*

Alicia        Rosen said to call if you try to kill me or anything.

*Alicia enters the room and kneels in front of John.*

Alicia        You want to know what’s real?

*Alicia reaches up and strokes the side of his face.*

Alicia        This.

*Alicia takes his other hand and presses it against the side of her face.*

Alicia        This.

*She moves his hand to her heart.*

Alicia        This. This is real. Maybe the part that knows the waking from the dream, maybe it isn't here.

*She moves her hand from his face to his heart.*

Alicia        Maybe it's here.

Now, I know that I haven't answered any questions so far; I've just raised them. And that's because I think they're all being raised by our text this morning. We started preaching on this text two weeks ago in the sermon that I titled, "The Abundance of Shared Poverty."<sup>iii</sup>

In John 6, John recounts the feeding of an immense crowd with just the lunch of one little poor boy — five barley loaves and two pickled fish.

**Sign #1:** Water to Wine at a Wedding Feast

**Sign #2:** Healing the Body of the Father's Sick Child

**Sign #3:** A Lame Body That Becomes the Temple of Mercy

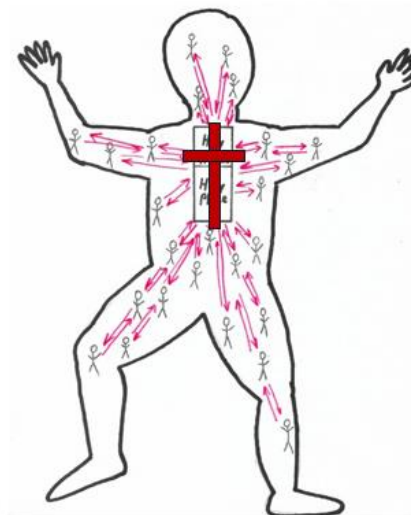
**Sign #4:** Broken Bread That Becomes a Party in a Field by the Sea.

**Sign #5:** Sight to the Man Born Blind

**Sign #6:** One Man (Lazarus) Raised From the Dead

**Sign #7:** ***"Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up."***

It's the fourth sign of seven public signs which John builds his Gospel around.

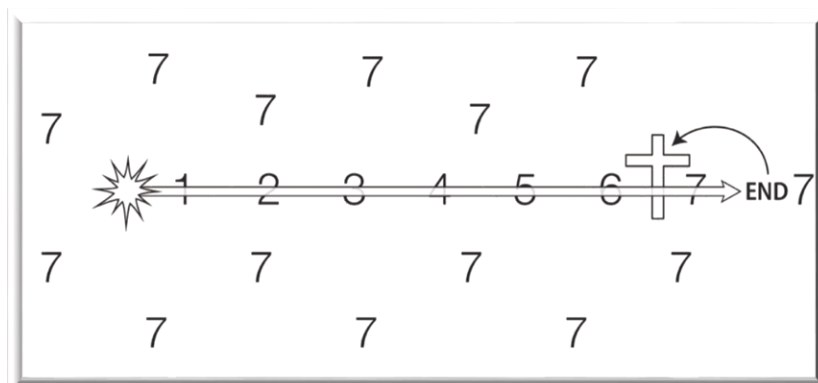


The Last (eschatos) Thing

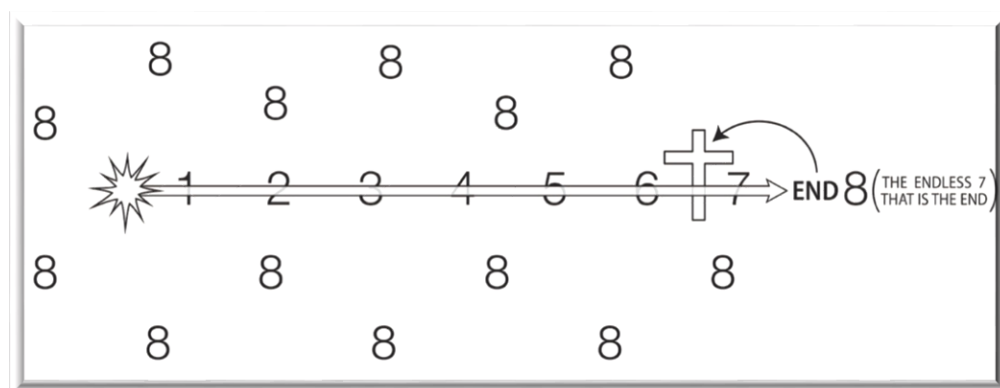
The 7<sup>th</sup> Sign that is the Substance

***"Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up."***

The first six signs all point to the seventh sign, which is also the substance, which is the destroyed temple, resurrected and rebuilt in three days.



Seven signs, like the seven days of Creation. But some count eight signs, because chapter 6 includes an amazing miracle in the middle of the chapter; however, it's not public, and John never really comments upon it.



But even if there are eight, the scheme still works, for you may remember that in Hebrew thought, the eighth day is an endless seventh day.

Whatever the case, you can think of John chapter 6 as a “Sign Sandwich.”



- John 6:1-14 is all about multiplying bread (one side of the sandwich).
- John 6:22-59 is all a teaching given to the same crowd about the bread (that's the other side of the sandwich). And in the middle of the Sandwich...
- John 6:15-21, Jesus walks on the stormy sea, but only for his twelve disciples to see. And it all raises this question, "What's real?"

In John 6:1-14 Jesus multiplies five barley loaves and two fish. But think about that: If you were one of the 20,000 or so, you'd probably think, "Did that just happen? Was that real?" You probably wouldn't even be able to see Jesus as He hands over the first loaf; you'd just discover that people were handing loaves over to you.

In the last century, when people had trouble believing in miracles, it was common for liberal theologians to argue that Jesus didn't really multiply the loaves; He just pointed to the beautiful example of the little boy, and everybody started sharing what they had already brought with them. Kind of a nice idea, but we don't classify that as a miracle.

In John 6:15-21, Jesus escapes from the crowd that tries to make him king, and he is separated from The Twelve but then comes to The Twelve, walking on the raging sea. Conservative theologians love this, especially when he calls out to his twelve disciples saying, "*Ego Eimi*: I Am. Have no fear." It means that Jesus is more real than the wind and the waves, and even implies that He's Yahweh. It's the middle of the sandwich. It answers one question, but it raises even more questions. So, yes — He's entirely capable of multiplying loaves and fishes, but it creates more questions like:

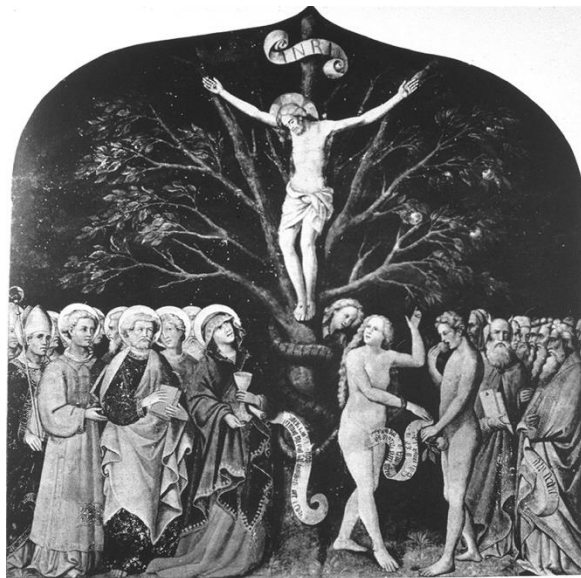
1. Why did he take that little boy's lunch? He didn't need that little boy's lunch; he could've made bread fall from heaven and all the fish jump out of the sea... AND
2. Why didn't he walk on the water for everyone to see? "Prove to me that your no fool, walk across my swimming pool. If you do that for me, then I'll let you go free... Come on you king of the Jews." That was king Herod's song in Jesus Christ Super Star. Herod is asking the obvious question: if you have power like that, why would you be standing here about to be crucified and broken into 8 billion pieces? Just think: if Jesus walked on water in public, he'd draw an incredible crowd, he'd get elected president, and surely the conquest of Rome would come next. Why didn't he walk on water for all to see, AND
3. Why don't we walk on water? As far as I know, no disciple of Jesus ever walked on water... except for Peter but only for a few seconds and then never again. In John 14, Jesus famously says, "whoever believes in me will do the works I do; and greater works that these will he do...." So, was Jesus lying? Or is walking on water not "a greater work" . . . What does Jesus consider to be a "great work?"
4. Why did Jesus and John act like this was no big deal? In the Gospel of Mark, Mark records that Jesus was just intending to walk on by. Matthew records the incident with Peter, and Peter had been John's fishing partner, BUT JOHN doesn't seem to think it really matters all that much. It's like Jesus's disciples just need to know that he walks on the sea in the fourth watch of the night—that is about 3am. He walks on the sea, which, in Hebrew thought, is the realm of dead, the pit, the deep, the abyss, hades and hell. He walks on the raging sea at 3am.

Last time I told you that I often hear the voice of the evil one at 3am. But I didn't tell you that I've often witnessed the power of Jesus at 3am. I have stories that would curl your toes, and give you nightmares, but they're also stories that testify to Jesus, walking into utter nightmares and destroying the work of the devil. Praying for a few amazing friends that have been ritually abused, I've witnessed communion wine that burns the evil one like fire. And fragments of broken bread that have literally held people to the wall.

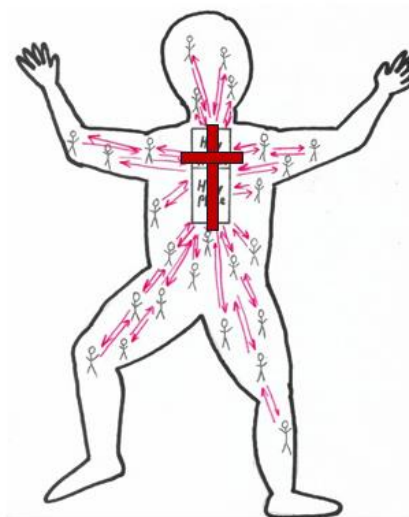
And so, it's become awfully hard for me to believe that God doesn't exist or that Jesus hasn't already conquered the Evil One. But I've often wondered, "Jesus why don't you do this for the crowd, it might help people believe..." AND . . . You know. . . It might help people believe that God exists, but it might not help people to believe in, or trust, God the way that little boy trusted Jesus when he freely gave him the five loaves and two fish. In John 6:22-46, the same crowd finds Jesus on the other side of the sea. He ignores their questions about how he got there AND just starts telling them about the bread. This is the other side of the sign sandwich.

- In John 6:35 and 48 Jesus says "Ego Eimi—I am . . . the bread of life"<sup>iv</sup>
- In John 6:41 "Ego Eimi—I am . . . the bread that came down from heaven"
- In John 6:51 "Ego Eimi—I am . . . the living bread."

At the end of chapter six most of the crowd leaves, and in a few more chapters they will nail him to a tree in a garden and break him into billions of pieces.



Billions of pieces that come back together and form the living temple.



The Last (*eschatos*) Thing  
The 7<sup>th</sup> Sign that is the Substance

***“Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up.”***

We can't read that far this morning, but we can read far enough to attempt an answer to the questions, “What's real?” And “How do we become real?”

**John 6:1-29:**

After this Jesus went away to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, which is the Sea of Tiberias. <sup>2</sup> And a large crowd was following him, because they saw the signs that he was doing on the sick. <sup>3</sup> Jesus went up on the mountain, and there he sat down with his disciples. <sup>4</sup> Now the Passover, the feast of the Jews, was at hand. <sup>5</sup> Lifting up his eyes, then, and seeing that a large crowd was coming toward him, Jesus [The Passover Lamb] said to Philip, “Where are we to buy bread, so that these people may eat?” <sup>6</sup> He said this to test him, for he himself knew what he would do. <sup>7</sup> Philip answered him, “Two hundred denarii worth of bread would not be enough for each of them to get a little.” [“Get Real, Jesus”]. <sup>8</sup> One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to him, <sup>9</sup> “There is a boy [*paidarion*: little boy] here who has five barley loaves and two fish [*opsarion*: little fish], but [“get real”] what are they for so many?” <sup>10</sup> Jesus said, “Have the people sit down.” Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, about five thousand in number. <sup>11</sup> Jesus then took the loaves, and when he had given thanks [*eucharisteo*: It's where we get our word, “eucharist.”] he distributed them to those who were seated. So also the fish, as much as they wanted. <sup>12</sup> And when they had eaten their fill, he told his disciples, “Gather up the leftover fragments [We're all fragmented, aren't we? ...from each other and within ourselves], that nothing [“not a fragment”] may be lost [*apollumi*].” <sup>13</sup> So they gathered them up and filled twelve baskets with fragments from the five barley loaves left by those who had eaten. <sup>14</sup> When the people saw the sign that he had done, they said, “This is indeed the Prophet who is to come into the world!”

**15 Perceiving then that they were about to come and take him by force to make him king, Jesus withdrew again to the mountain by himself. 16 When evening came, his disciples went down to the sea, 17 got into a boat, and started across the sea to Capernaum. It was now dark, and Jesus had not yet come to them. 18 The sea became rough because a strong wind was blowing. 19 When they had rowed about three or four miles, they saw Jesus walking on the sea and coming near the boat, and they were frightened... [Matthew and Mark tell us that this was the 4<sup>th</sup> watch of the night: 3 am.]... and they were frightened. 20 But he said to them, “It is I [*ego eimi*: “I Am”<sup>v</sup>]; do not be afraid.” 21 Then they were glad to take him into the boat, and immediately the boat was at the land to which they were going. [Jesus is the land to which they were going, and all are going.] 22 On the next day the crowd that remained on the other side of the sea saw that there had been only one boat there, and that Jesus had not entered the boat with his disciples, but that his disciples had gone away alone. 23 Other boats from Tiberias came near the place where they had eaten the bread after the Lord had given thanks [*eucharisteo*]. 24 So when the crowd saw that Jesus was not there, nor his disciples, they themselves got into the boats and went to Capernaum, seeking Jesus. 25 When they found him on the other side of the sea, they said to him, “Rabbi, when did you come here?” 26 Jesus answered them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, you are seeking me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves. [In other words, “You didn’t read the signs.”] 27 Do not work for the food that perishes [*apollumi*: “is perishing, is being lost.”] 27 Do not work for the food that [is perishing], but for the food that endures [*meno*: remains, abides] to [into] eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you. For on him God the Father has set his seal.” 28 Then they said to him, “What must we do, to be doing [*ergazomai*: “working”] the works [*ergon*] of God?” 29 Jesus answered them, “This is the work of God, that you believe [*pisteou*: to trust, to “faith”] in him whom he has sent.”**

Reading over this last week, it struck me that John makes such a big deal out of the fact that Jesus thanks God before he multiplies the fish and the loaves... in the first part of the Sign Sandwich. In the middle we discover that Jesus is the presence of I am that I am. And then in the second part of the Sign Sandwich, John refers to the first part of the Sign Sandwich as the place “where they had eaten the bread after Jesus had given thanks (eucharisto).”

John is making a really big deal out of the fact that Jesus, (the presence of I am that I am, reality himself) is thankful for something. So, what is he so thankful for? What is it that matters so much to God? What is it that matters so much in reality? I don’t think it’s bread because in reference to the bread that the crowd craves, Jesus just said, “Don’t work for the food that is perishing.” Which means that the fragments that the disciples were to gather into twelve baskets weren’t just fragments of bread but fragments of bread that were also something else... like maybe his body.

In Matthew 16, talking to the disciples about the multiplication of the loaves, Jesus appears to get really frustrated, and he says, “How is it that you fail to understand that I’m not talking about bread.”<sup>vi</sup> Then he warns his disciples of the leaven of the Pharisees which is self-

righteousness—that is the illusion that we create ourselves, save ourselves and sanctify ourselves.

Don't get me wrong; Jesus is thankful for everything. BUT I don't think it's bread that gets him so jazzed in John 6, and it's NOT the crowd. Jesus is not at all enamored with crowds. Crowds are just large numbers of people chanting the same things, dressing in the same clothes, and acting the same way. Jesus is interested in a body, which is a large number of different members, parts, or fragments all united in one Logos, one logic—like instruments in a symphony or dancers in a dance.

So it's NOT the bread (#1), the crowd (#2), and it's NOT #3, walking on water—WHICH, by the way, were all the temptations of the evil one, that Jesus had already resisted in the wilderness. It's NOT the bread, the crowd, or a spectacular miracle like throwing oneself off of the temple to be caught by angels or walking on water.

You know... some of you, like me, allow yourself to be tempted by the evil one because you haven't multiplied much bread for the hungry, or you haven't drawn a huge crowd by preaching the gospel, or you haven't done a great miracle like walking on water. And so, you wonder "What must I be doing to be doing the works of God?" I suspect that Jesus gave thanks to God the Father that day, NOT so much for the bread, the crowd, or the spectacle, BUT for the fact that that little boy shared his lunch, not because he had to but because he wanted to. There is a legend in which an angel says to a man, "In your land it is regarded as a miracle if God does someone's will. In our country it is regarded as a miracle if someone does the will of God." Jesus is the Will of God, and I think HE thanked God for God's will in that little boy; HE thanked Our Father in Heaven for Mercy, Kindness, and Steadfast, Relentless, and Sacrificial Love in that Little Boy.

My daughter, Elizabeth, is about to deliver my first grandbaby. And I so clearly remember the day that I was feeding goldfish crackers to her, my baby, Elizabeth, on our old couch in Danville California. She stopped, looked at me, then reached into her mouth and took out a glob of chewed up goldfish crackers, put it in my mouth, and then smiled. And all at once, I was just overcome with awe, wonder and gratitude, for in a moment I realized that my love was returning to me through this little bag of dust, that had become conscious of me, NOT as a thing but a person. In other words, She loved me. . . SHE can never do better than that.

Micah 6:8 "He has shown you, Oh Adam, what is good" (that must be the fruit hanging on the Tree of the knowledge of Good and evil) "He has shown you, Oh Adam, what is good and what Yahweh desires of you, but to do justice (that's the work of love) and to love Mercy (that is to Ahab, *hesed*). *Hesed* is God's Love; Relentless Love, Steadfast Love, Covenant Love, also translated, Mercy, Kindness, Faithfulness and Goodness. Ahab is more like all types of love.

So, what must we be doing to be doing the works of God? We must be loving Love—the Love that never stops—Relentless Mercy. And that's NOT something that the American Evangelical Church is always known for. It's also something incredibly hard for me to talk about. If I preach the Biblical and very clear injunction to care for the sojourner ("Sojourner" means "Immigrant." And in ancient times, all Sojourners were undocumented). If I preach the Biblical injunction to

be hospitable to sojourners, people assume that I'm telling them to elect a Democrat as King. And if I Preach the Biblical injunction to care for all human life (including the unborn) people assume that I'm telling them to elect a Republican as King. But Kings actually have no power over love.

King Herod the Great, (who ordered the murder of all the male infants in Bethlehem) also ordered that all the leading Jews in Jerusalem be executed upon his passing so that there would be tears in Jerusalem on the day he died—You see? He couldn't command even one tear, one drop of love. So, we all see the need for love and long for Mercy and so what do we do? We elect kings but Jesus refused to be that kind of a King, for that kind of King cannot make one little boy share his lunch because that little boy freely wants to do so.

Jesus said, "Where are we going to buy food to feed all these people?" Philip did the math and said, "It's impossible." Andrew said, "Well, there's this kid..." How did that play out? If Andrew had actually gone looking for resources, he surely could've found a donor with more resources than this kid. There were 5000 men present, many on their way to the Passover feast in Jerusalem, and even if they weren't going to the feast, very few would've hiked to the other side of the lake without bringing snacks. So maybe this little boy knew Andrew, and, obviously, he must've overheard the conversation as Jesus said, "How are we going to feed all these people?" and as Philip said, "It's impossible," he must've been pulling on Andrew's sleeve saying "Jesus can have my lunch. Take my lunch." He's a little kid; he didn't do the math. I doubt that his left hand knew what his right hand was doing. He didn't do this because he had to do it; He had just listened to Jesus, liked Jesus, and so wanted to be doing whatever Jesus was doing. So, he's pulling on Andrew's sleeve saying, "Jesus can have my lunch. Here's my lunch. Take my Lunch." Andrew says "Uh, Jesus there's this kid..." Jesus looks at this boy and thinks, "There it is: That for which I will sacrifice my life. There it is: My love returning to me, through this vessel of clay"

John, in 1<sup>st</sup> John writes "Whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. Anyone who does not love does not know God. God is Love." God is love which means that all real love is God, and ontologically speaking nothing is more real than God... I am that I am, The Ground of all Being. It was Ultimate Reality; it was love in flesh that walked on the raging sea at 3am in the morning AND the disciples were utterly terrified. And it was Ultimate Reality; it was love in the flesh of a little boy, that said to Andrew, "You can have my lunch..." You can't do better than that; you can't do better than love. God is Love. Ontologically speaking, nothing is more real than Love.

Some of you have listened to the voice of the accuser at 3am as he tells you "You've utterly failed at multiplying bread; You'll never draw a crowd; Jesus said, 'You'll do greater works than these,' and YOU can't even stop a sneeze..." And so, you cry out "What must I do to be doing the works of God?"<sup>vii</sup> And maybe you're already doing it... Actually, I bet you are.

Some of you are caring for grandkids in really tough situations NOT because you have to but because you want to—You're doing it. Some of you are in painful marriages and you stick it out, NOT because you have to but because you've given your marriage to Jesus—You're doing it.

Some of you are kind to your grumpy neighbor, NOT because you have to be but because you want to be—You’re doing it; you’re getting real.

If you believe in Love, you will Love, and you cannot be more real than Love. On the other hand, if you have prophetic powers, understand all mysteries, all knowledge, and have faith for moving mountains, but you don’t have love, then you’re nothing...you’re an illusion, not even real; you are your own worst nightmare. Give the Lord your five loaves and two fish, your everything and your nothing, NOT because you have to but because you want to. And he will make a banquet called “the Kingdom of God.” It might take a minute or a couple thousand years, but it will happen... because it has already happened. It is eternal. Give him your lunch. That’s called, “faith.” The little boy had faith. So, where do we get faith? Let’s read that last bit again.

Verse 27 says, “Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to [into] eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you.” If HE gives it to you, then you can’t work for it, as if you could earn it. But maybe you could work for it, as if it were your boss... or your Lord... or your baby. . . Mothers do labor for babies. “For on him God the Father has set his seal.” Verse 28 goes on, “Then they said to him, “What must we do, to be doing [*ergazomai*: “working”] the works [*ergon*] of God?”

Have you ever asked that question? Has it ever occurred to you just how strange that question is? “What must I do to be working the works of God?” Have I forgotten that I am the work of God? It, actually, is who it is that I am? I am the work of I Am That I Am. And anything else is a nightmare.

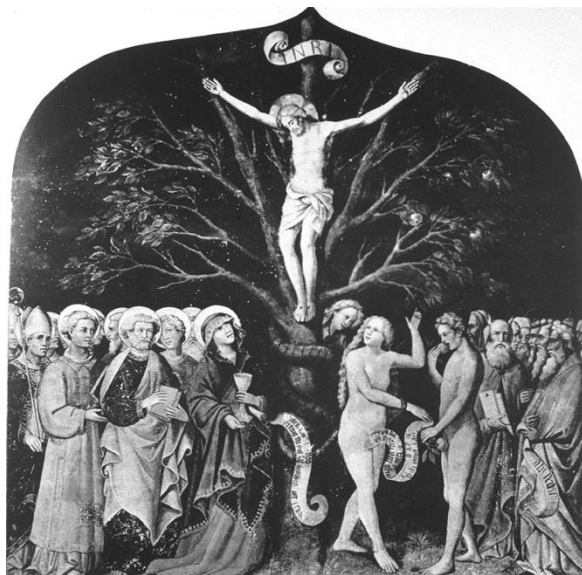
Verse 29 adds, “Jesus answered them, ‘This is the work of God, that you believe [*pisteou*: have faith, that you trust] in him whom he has sent.’”

It’s NOT my work; it’s the work of God. And Jesus is, literally, the Will and the Work of God. And so, faith in me, is Jesus willing and working in me. “Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling” writes Paul, “for it is God, (I am that I am) who works in you both to will and to work for his good pleasure.”<sup>viii</sup> Faith in you is the Spirit of Christ Jesus in you and in that little boy. So, HOW does he get into me and into you and into that little boy? Well, I imagine that the love that was breathed into that little boy recognized the love in the word that he heard, and so he received the word, and then began to love as he had been loved—HE SHARED HIS LUNCH.

Adults often don’t hear the word of love, for they have built up defenses against love, like a leathery skin around the heart.<sup>ix</sup> In other words, they trust themselves and struggle with trusting others; their true self is trapped in a false self—a fragment of I AM encased in a prison of I Am Not. In five more verses Jesus says “I Am [*ego eimi*] the bread of life” I think that little boy shared his bread with Jesus for he knew that Jesus had already shared himself with him—the little boy. And as you know, that’s how Jesus gets into us at the edge of time and eternity.

## Communion

He took bread, and when he had given thanks [*eucharisteo*], he broke it and said, “This is my body which is for you, take and eat and do it in remembrance of me.” And in the same way he took the cup saying “This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Drink of it all of you and do it in remembrance of me.”



And in this way, we suddenly find ourselves back at this tree in the middle of the garden in the Sanctuary of the soul. And what is the fruit that’s hanging on the tree? Well, that’s the Good and the Life; that’s the Word of God in flesh; that’s the ultimate ontology, that is reality. This bread and wine are reality.

So how do I get real? How do I know Him? Well, I could consume him, dissect him, learn all about him, and so, try to become him, but then, of course I’d kill him and reality itself would die. Or perhaps, I could surrender to him and know him by allowing him to know me and so live in me almost as if I were pregnant by him, My Helper. I could know him as a thing and the universe would die. Or I could allow him to know me, and everything would come to life.

When we come to this table, we confess that we have done the first; that’s sin. And we confess that he has always done the last: that’s GRACE, that’s MERCY, that’s *HESED*, that’s RELENTLESS LOVE. And we get pregnant with Love, Joy, Peace, Patience, Kindness, Good & Faith. And that’s reality; That’s how we get real.

“That’s reality... Gregg.” If you didn’t understand this sermon, that’s OK. Just rent the movie, ET. Jesus is like ET, and he wants you to be like Elliott. ET comes from another world, and a little boy named Elliott shares his Reese’s Pieces (5 loaves and 2 fish) with ET. And ET literally shares his life with Elliott. They experience the same things, feel the same things, even do the same things—ET has super-powers (not only to walk on water, but fly). I know ET because ET chooses to know Elliott; they Love each other. The adults are terrified of ET and especially his super-powers. The Government wants to capture ET, learn all about ET, and possibly dissect ET—And it seems to me, that’s just what we all do with Jesus. ET dies and comes back to life. And just before he ascends into heaven, he says this...

Video clip: *E.T. the Extra-Terrestrial*  
Universal Pictures (1982)

*Scene opens with ET and Elliott standing in a forest at night, as ET prepares to leave on his spaceship. ET's chest is glowing red and he moves his finger from his heart to his lips and extends it to Elliott.*

ET           Ouch.

*In the same fashion, Elliott (crying) moves his finger from his heart to his lips and extends it to ET.*

Elliott       Ouch.

*ET raises his finger in front of Elliott's face, and it starts to glow. He moves it to Elliott's forehead.*

ET           I'll be right here.

We all wonder where God is and what He's doing. Well, maybe he's right here. [Peter takes bread, dips in cup, and eats] And what is he doing? He's making you real.<sup>x</sup> Love is making you in his own image; He is making you real.<sup>xi</sup> Surrender to Love.

## Benediction

The adults used to ask the campers at the end of camp, "What difference will your faith make in the real world?" And it turns out that Love is using everything in this false world to create faith, for faith in Love, makes everything real.<sup>xiii</sup> You can't do better than that. You're saved by Grace through Faith which gives birth to Love. In Jesus Name, you will believe the Gospel. Amen

## Endnotes

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<sup>i</sup> All of my nightmares are boring—I dream about being late for an appointment or losing my keys...

<sup>ii</sup> Soon after her brother was born, little Sachi began to ask her parents to leave her alone with the new baby. They worried that like most four-year-olds, she might feel jealous and want to hit or shake him, so they said no. But she showed no signs of jealousy. She treated the baby with kindness and her pleas to be left alone with him became more urgent. They decided to allow it.

Elated, she went into the baby's room and shut the door, but it opened a crack-enough for her curious parents to peek in and listen. They saw little Sachi walk quietly up to her baby brother, put her face close to his and say quietly, "Baby, tell me what God feels like. I'm starting to forget."

-Dan Millman, "Sachi", *Chicken Soup for the Soul*, pg. 290

<sup>iii</sup> At one point Richard Wurmbrand contracted TB and was given two weeks to live. He was placed in Room 4. No one came out of Room 4. It was called the "Death Room." Prisoners would beg, "I only spit blood once today; don't put me in Room 4." In the Death Room all illusions of strength were stripped away as emaciated men lay on cots next to each other waiting to die. However, there was a blessing. The guards were scared to enter, and so the prisoners were free to share their lives, their fears, their doubts, and death. No one left the room alive except Wurmbrand. But for 2 1/2 years he shared Jesus in his weakness and poverty. . . . He writes, "Room 4 was like an altar on which men were transformed and transfigured."

At the start of his story in Room 4, a former Nazi, another dying man, gave him a gift smuggled into the prison. Carefully wrapped in brown paper were two glistening white sugar cubes. A friend had given it to him on Easter. He had said, "I will not eat it now; someone might be worse off than I today." And so he gave it to Wurmbrand and likewise Wurmbrand did not eat it though his body craved it. He gave it away, and two times the sugar returned to him. For two years the two sugar cubes were passed from dying man to dying man in Room 4, gifts given in the most profound poverty.

- Rev. Richard Wurmbrand, *In God's Under-ground* (Glendale, CA: Diane Books Publishing Co., 1976), p. 76-77

<sup>iv</sup> This is the first of the seven famous "I am" statements in the Gospel of John.

- 1) 6:35 "I am the bread of life."
- 2) 8:12 "I am the light."
- 3) 10:7 "I am the gate."
- 4) 10:11 "I am the good shepherd."
- 5) 11:25 "I am the resurrection and the life."
- 6) 14:6 "I am the way, the truth, and the life."
- 7) 15:1 "I am the true vine."

<sup>v</sup> This would have been a normal way to say, "It is I," but in the Gospel of John and because it is followed by the first of the seven "I am" statements [These are constructed with "I Am (Ego Eimi)" and a predicate] it's clear that John is implying that Jesus is the very presence of Yahweh.

<sup>vi</sup> When the disciples reached the other side, they had forgotten to bring any bread. Jesus said to them, "Watch and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees." And they began discussing it among themselves, saying, "We brought no bread." But Jesus, aware of this, said, "O you of little faith, why are you discussing among yourselves the fact that you have no bread? Do you not yet perceive? Do you not remember the five loaves for the five thousand, and how many baskets you gathered? Or the seven loaves for the four thousand, and how many baskets you gathered? How is it that you fail to understand that I did not speak about bread? Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees." Then they understood that he did not tell them to beware of the leaven of bread, but of the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees. – Matthew 16:5-12

<sup>vii</sup> And so, you're tempted to quit... and go campaign for a president.

<sup>viii</sup> Philippians 2:13

<sup>ix</sup> And the Lord your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your offspring, so that you will love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live. – Deuteronomy 30:6

<sup>x</sup> Love is not a burden that you bear; you are the burden that Love bears.

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*Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things and endures all things*—so unless love bears you, you are not a thing. Wake up! And become who you are.

<sup>xi</sup> "What is REAL?" asked the Rabbit one day, as they were lying side by side near the nursery fender, just before Nana came in to tidy up the room. "Does it mean having things that buzz inside you and a stick-out handle?"

"Real isn't how you are made," said the Skin Horse. "It's a thing that happens to you. When a child loves you for a long, long time, not just to play with, but REALLY loves you, then you become Real."

"Does it hurt?" asked the Rabbit.

"Sometimes," said the Skin Horse, for he was always truthful. "When you are Real, you don't mind being hurt."

"Does it happen all at once, like being wound up," he asked, "or bit by bit?"

"It doesn't happen all at once," said the Skin Horse. "You become. It takes a long time. That's why it doesn't often happen to people who break easily, or have sharp edges, or who have to be carefully kept. Generally, by the time you are Real, most of your hair has been loved off, and your eyes drop out and you get loose in the joints and very shabby. But these things don't matter at all, because once you are Real, you can't be ugly except to people who don't understand." – *The Velveteen Rabbit*

<sup>xiii</sup> Love is not a burden you bear, if Love is bearing the burden that is you; *Love bears all things and believes all things...* including you.

So, *try to Love*, because *you want to love*, AND when you see that *you haven't loved*, come see that *Love has always first loved you*.

*Give your five loaves and two fish*, AND *when you don't*, come see that He has already given everything to you.