

March 31, 2020
Tuesday of the Fifth Week of Lent
JOHN 8:21-30

Activity for today:

- Read Today's Readings
- Fr. Brian's Gospel Reflection
- Prayer of the Day
- Challenge and Question for Today

Fr. Brian's Gospel Reflection

Suicide and Jesus? Knowing Jesus, we would never put those two words together. Yet, after hearing Jesus teach one day, some people in the crowd insinuate a rumor that Jesus is going to kill himself. If we were looking for proof that people could misunderstand Jesus, we have it positively in today's gospel reading. John 8:22 tells that some people said, "Is he going to kill himself, because he said, 'Where I am going you cannot come'?" Misunderstanding Jesus or not knowing His identity and mission are a really common experience in the gospels. Jesus speaks and teaches all the time about His work, His purpose and His identity, but people, even his disciples, often misunderstand Him. Even Peter has to be told by Jesus to 'get back in line and follow me' (Matt 16:23) after Peter tries to steer Jesus away from the cross and sacrificial leadership. So today Jesus tells everyone that things are about to change radically (disappearances and appearances). Choices need to be made 'not of this world'-NOTF- and people need to 'think above' (John 8:23-Colossians 3:1). This sounds like too much for some people. Jesus is revealing that this world needs saving from sin. God ('I Am') is intervening to save and bring true life, *if we realize it*. Jesus' disappearing and reappearing refers to what we call His death and resurrection, but not due to His own hands in suicide. His death will be at the hands of the Roman authorities and the colluding Temple Powers, and His resurrection will be through the Father's hands raising Him up ('Into your hands, I commend my spirit', Jesus says on cross-Luke 23:46). This is why Jesus brings up the condemnation and sin of the world. Jesus overcomes it, and we, with and under Him can too, if we accept, know and follow Him. Today's gospel pushes us to ask "Do we know Him?"

The people ask Jesus in 8:25 "Who are you?" If we were asked that about Jesus what would we answer? Who is Jesus to us? In verse 24 and 28 He refers to himself as 'I Am'. Shockingly honest, Jesus is stirring up the Name of God for Himself, because that answer echoes God's name given to Moses back the burning bush in Exodus 3:14 'Yahweh'-I Am who I Am. Jesus' admission to being divine is always humbly veiled through His knowledge and closest relation to the Father "I and the Father are one" (John 10:30). Jesus came to serve the Father, to do only the Father's will and to glorify the Father in all things. Jesus never praises himself. There is nothing selfish about Him. He never boasts in any way about His own work. Even when He is complimented, He defers to the Father, as when in Mark 10:17 Jesus is praised as a great teacher and He says "Why do you call me good?-God alone is...." But Jesus never denies his familiarity and intimate knowledge of the Father. Serving the Father's Will and Glory, and bringing others

to such living dependence upon the Father is his mission. So again, how do we answer the question this reading poses, “Who is Jesus and how is our knowledge of Him reflected in our living?”

John’s gospel helps us identify and relate to Jesus by giving us what bible scholars call the seven ‘I am statements’ They describe Jesus to us in different ways, like drawing different pictures of Him for us showing how He operates and works to reach and care for us. The challenge issued below is to search out and identify John’s seven statements for yourself. The seven statements begin with ‘I am’ and then offer a descriptive Noun for Jesus. I have to mention though, that none of the seven our found in today’s reading. So that means that Jesus’ two mentions of ‘I am going’ (verse 8:21) do not count! ‘See you’, He says to us!

Prayer for the Day:

We worship You God as the eternal I AM. In a world that is always changing and tossing like the waves of a stormy sea, You never change. You are always present and forever relevant because You are always current. You are not the ‘I Was’ or the ‘I Will Be’. You are forever ‘I Am’. We trust confidently in Your greatness and power, the ‘same yesterday today and tomorrow’. You are the rock and anchor of our lives amid all the uncertainty of this world and of these times. You call and require us to act justly, to love mercy and to walk humbly with You. You are the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and end of all. Your mercy endures forever as Your love endures forever as Your Word endures forever and as Your faithful presence endures for all generations. You announce to us that nothing can and nothing will ever separate us from Your love, if we accept, know and serve you. Help us always through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Challenge for Today:

Search your scripture (the gospel of John) and identify the seven ‘I Am’ statements
Here is a start with the first one “I am the bread of life” John 6:35
Identify the other six!