

Sermon 12 August 2018
John 6:35, 41-51

It seems as if the author of today's snippet of scripture got very excited and decided to throw in a whole bunch of images associated with the divine

I am the bread of life ...

I have come down from heaven ...

I am the living bread ...

The other significant "I am" statements that are in John

I am the light of the world ...

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

Note that in the other Gospels Jesus didn't refer to himself in this way ... I am ...

Wow, unfortunately, people have approached the "I am" sayings with the intention to exclude, to claim privilege or status of divine stature and approval. Sure we're told this is a figure of speech but what destruction has been had over the years by those who've aligned themselves as Jesus followers! And take the 'I am' statements to mean exclusion ...

"no one can come to me unless ... so some people are drawn by God to Jesus, and others are not?

"I tell you whoever believes ... So those who do not believe are what?

This isn't to judge such thought as right or wrong, merely to indicate how we've been shaped to hear or think, of these 'I am' sayings in particular ways.

A metaphor is very different from a simile. While simile compares one thing with another and highlights its resemblance using the word 'like' (Your eyes are like stars), metaphor accomplishes the magical transformation of turning something into something else (your eyes are the stars). In a simile, the process of comparison involves our more rational brain, our thinking processes; whereas metaphor reaches deep into our psychic imagination and, simply stated, 'touches our heart'.

Children live in an imaginative world, in an imaginative world a stick becomes sword, snake, a bridge, a plane ... And sometimes all in the same story. When growing older, children start to say something is like something else, by contrast, they emerge from the heartfelt immediacy of the metaphorical unity to a more distant point of view.

Metaphor touches the heart, and it is only with the heart that one can see rightly. For this reason, the metaphor has long been the language of mystics, spiritual teachers, poets, storytellers and other expressive art forms.

And here we come to our reading for the day. Are they a simile or metaphor?

The reading seems to be endless in ideas, much of the metaphor and as one person says, and I hadn't heard this before but a limited negative, I look to Rosemary, our English professor. A limited negative, "Whoever comes to me will never be hungry ...", I don't like to tell you Jesus, but I get hungry regularly. And as for being thirsty well ... like the woman at the well, give me some of this water, and I won't have to enter into this daily drudgery of coming and getting water all the time.

John's letter like Mark's was written well after Jesus' death and resurrection maybe even 110 years later and written with specific argument happening in or about their faith community. One of those matters of contention was the Divinity of Jesus, Was Jesus God?

If a Gospel were to be written say reflecting the last 50 years of Christian presence here in St Andrews, maybe that is too contentious, let us say a Gospel written in NZ, what subject matters do you think would come up?

- Abortion
- Sexuality
- Corporal punishment
- Apartheid
- Terrorism
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So a late 20th C Gospel would reflect those arguments and maybe a few others ...

Back to John some of the argument was around the Divinity of Jesus, Was Jesus God? Short answer No! Not even the New Testament says that. It speaks of him as the Word of God, the Son of God, the Messiah, and so forth, but never identifies merely or equates him with God. As John's Gospel puts it, he is the Word become flesh – that is, he reveals what can be seen of God in finite human life. To say "I believe Jesus was God", as some Christians do, or think they are supposed to, goes beyond what the New Testament affirms. He is the word incarnate – he does not exist outside of his body. Did some of his followers experience Jesus as a divine reality after his death, and have some Christians had such experiences in the centuries since, including the present? Yes. These experiences led to the conviction that Jesus was 'one with God'. But it doesn't mean that Jesus of Nazareth, Jesus during his historical life, was "God".

Jesus of Nazareth was utterly human. He did not have a divine component that made him different in kind from the rest of us. That's what it means to say he was 'true man', 'fully human'. Jesus was no different from the rest of us.

Well, Jesus may have been little different I will concede. But then Mozart was a bit different; also, we wouldn't call him god would we?

Video – now not every five years old writes one of those.

(The first piece he ever wrote was when he was FIVE years old. Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's first-ever composition was a dainty and balanced little Minuet and Trio in G major)

- Jesus did not claim to be the divine/good shepherd; **he simply gave himself to others.**
- Jesus did not contrast himself to the hired hand; **he simply acted differently.**
- Jesus did not talk up his intimacy with God; **he simply lived as one intimate with God.**
- Jesus did not describe his death as bringing life to others; **he simply embraced death as God's will for him at that time.”**

Jesus would be horrified to think that we have placed him so far above ordinary and always seeing him as an unattainable perfection.

He was a remarkable human being ... **my point is that what we see in Jesus is a human possibility.** That is what makes him so remarkable.