

**ALDERSGATE UMC OF BUTTE, MT**  
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Pastor Matthias Krier

February 13, 2022

**Scripture Lesson: I Corinthians 15:1-11 NRSV**

**15** Now I should remind you, brothers and sisters,\* of the good news\* that I proclaimed to you, which you in turn received, in which also you stand,<sup>2</sup> through which also you are being saved, if you hold firmly to the message that I proclaimed to you—unless you have come to believe in vain.

**3** For I handed on to you as of first importance what I in turn had received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures,<sup>4</sup> and that he was buried, and that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures,<sup>5</sup> and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve.<sup>6</sup> Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers and sisters\* at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have died.\*<sup>7</sup> Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles.<sup>8</sup> Last of all, as to someone untimely born, he appeared also to me.<sup>9</sup> For I am the least of the apostles, unfit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.<sup>10</sup> But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace towards me has not been in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them—though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me.<sup>11</sup> Whether then it was I or they, so we proclaim and so you have come to believe.

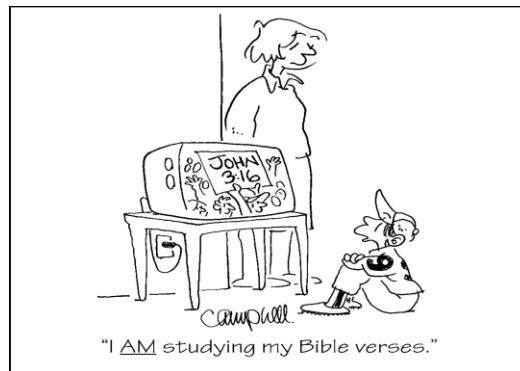
The Word of God for the people of God. **Thanks be to God!**

## Message

## I Am That I Am

## Matthias Krier

Who are we called to be and what are we called to do is a question I ask the church again and again? However, for today, I want to personalize this even more so: "Who Am I called to be?" Repeat that with me. "Who Am I Called to Be?" There was once a young boy who no doubt thought outside the box in studying scripture verses. Listen to what he told his mom while watching a baseball game on TV:



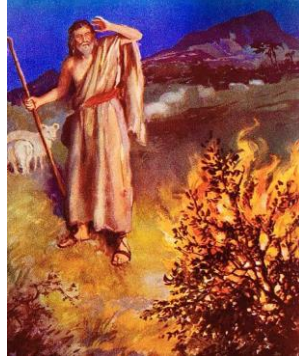
Now, one could simply say that the boy was being true to himself because he loved baseball. Besides, one could argue that millions would not know John 3:16 unless it flashed up on the television screen during a baseball game. There may have been consequences for this young boy's ingenuity, nevertheless, he was being true to himself at that moment. I wonder if the same could be said for us? Are we being true to ourselves at any given moment? Let's come back to this later.



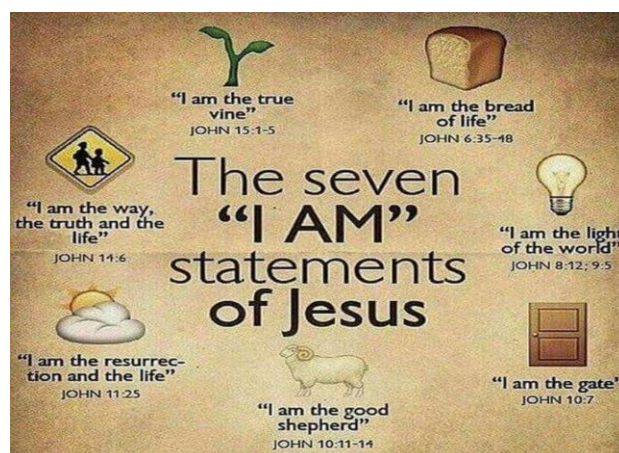
Paul used these words, *I Am What I Am* which has its roots in the book of Exodus. Many of you are familiar with this, but some may not be as familiar with this story about Moses who encountered God for the first time in Exodus 3. Brad Belke, our Lay Leader, spoke of this last week.

As an exile from Egypt, Moses was raised as a prince, but renounced his status and dwelled with the Hebrews, of whom he was one. Moses married

a shepherdess and looked after his father-in-law's sheep. When Moses took the sheep to the back of the desert he came to Mt. Horeb which was the mountain of God. It was here he saw an angel of the Lord who appeared to him in a flame of fire in the midst of a bush.



God called to Moses from the bush where God said, *“Do not come near; take your sandals off your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground.”* Moses was afraid to look at God, so he hid his face. During this exchange, Moses questions God on God's name on who is it that is sending him to bring the children of Israel out of Egypt and God answers, *“I AM WHO I AM.”* Most interesting, don't you think that Paul would have known this story, who knows these words and uses these words in our scripture passage for today, *“I Am What I Am?”* Furthermore in the book of Exodus, God added, *“Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, ‘I AM has sent me to you’”*. Some of the most powerful *“I Am”* statements in the New Testament are said by Yeshua:



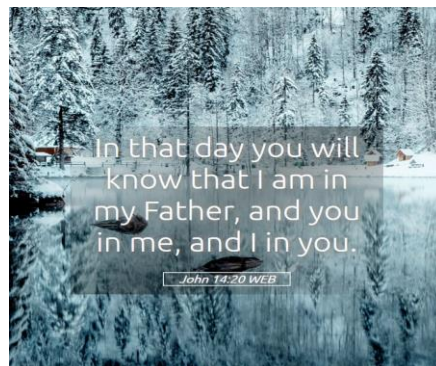
Then there is Jesus at the temple in Jerusalem where Yeshua is speaking on behalf of his Father. The religious Pharisees debated with Jesus about Abraham,

their father, and they argued God was their father. Jesus called them out on their hypocrisy and said, "... you do the deeds of your father ... the devil" (John 8:39-44). The Jews acceded to the fact that Abraham was dead and buried, but then challenged Jesus by asking him if he thought he was greater than Abraham and Jesus replied, "*Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM.*" (John 8:58)

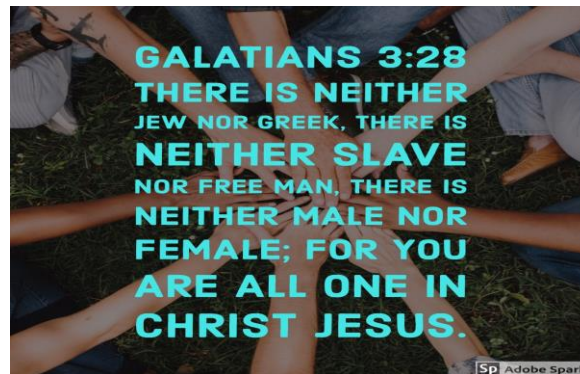
When the religious leaders heard this they took up stones to stone him because this was heresy. When Jesus stated, "*I AM*" he was conveying once again his Oneness with God. Here is one of them:



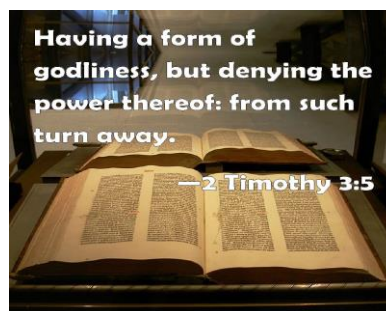
This was indeed heresy, but then Yeshua goes on to say something in the Gospel of John that I am not sure most Christians understand, much less experience:



If we truly felt this Oneness with the Great "I Am" who is the Creator and the ALL of Creation, would we not live more fully, more abundantly? If we truly knew this Oneness, wouldn't we live with less anxiety, less fear? Would we not live with a deeper sense of Trust that no matter what, "*all shall be well*" as Julian of Norwich proclaims? Would we not treat one another with a deep reverence and respect because when we look into the face of another, we are looking into the face of God ... we are looking into the eyes of the Divine ... we are looking into the eyes of Jesus. Paul says it this way in Galatians:



Unfortunately, we do not believe it or we are afraid of it or we do not understand it or we do not experience it. Instead, Paul may be onto something in this verse:



In other words, we have a form of religion, but deny the power thereof! We know that we are not called to be religious, we are called to wake up: "I Am That I Am! I Am!"

Maybe one of the reasons we deny the power thereof, is that we are actually afraid of standing on holy ground? Maybe we are afraid of claiming who we are thereby afraid of actually experiencing the Great "I AM" in our lives? Maybe we are afraid to wake up to the reality of what Paul spoke of in I Corinthians:



Our hymn of preparation can indeed open our eyes to being a temple of God which makes us whole.

Let us pray: Oh gracious God who is the Great I Am, may we have the courage to be who we are called to be: "I Am" and none other. Empower us this day and everyday to never waver in this adventure. Amen!