

THE 'I AM'S' OF JESUS



A RESOURCE FOR PRAYER

BEFORE ABRAHAM WAS, I AM

“Your father Abraham rejoiced that he would see my day. He saw it and was glad.’ So the Jews said to him, ‘You are not yet fifty years old, and you have seen Abraham?’ Jesus said to them, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am.” (John 8:56–58)

Praise to you our Creator and our eternal God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Hearing Jesus respond to the Pharisees with that stunning phrase, “Before Abraham was, I AM,” delivers to our hearts certainty, assurance, and hope. We rejoice in the stunning truth that you, Jesus, are the self-existent, unchangeable, and eternal God. We remember that when Moses received instructions for his approach to Pharaoh, you commanded him to say, “I AM has sent me to you.” And now, Jesus sends us into the world with his great commission, saying, “I am sending you and will be with you always.” Anchor us in the truth of your deity that as Holy God and Eternal Creator you are not served by human hands as if you needed anything because you give breath to all humanity and all living things. You do not need us, but we need you because unlike you we are dependent and marked by finitude, fragility, and brokenness. Grant us worship full of awe and wonder that the eternal, unchanging, self-sustaining God has come to us in flesh in the person of Jesus Christ so that we might know, love, and draw near to the Holy One. We praise you and ask that you would enable us to live all our days in praise, submission, and service to you, the great I AM. In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.

BREAD OF LIFE

Then Jesus declared, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty...I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world." (John 6:35, 51)

Living bread of life, we praise you that you came down from heaven to feed hungry sinners like us. The people guided by Moses in the wilderness ate the manna from heaven, and yet they died. But not so with the people of God, guided by the better Moses who is the Living Bread. We feast on you and live and we are glad! We praise you for giving us life, nourishment, and growth in you alone. Sadly, we are far too often like the complainers in the desert crying out, "Give us something else to eat!" We chase ruinous fare in the hunger and desires of the flesh and the temptation of the devil. We recognize that when we feast from those sources, we are left hungry and empty. Forgive us, we pray, on the basis of the body and blood of Jesus given for us. Change our hearts so that we repeat the cry of the psalmist: "Satisfy us in the morning with your unfailing love, that we may sing for joy and be glad all our days." Transform our appetites so that we hunger and thirst for righteousness in the hope of full satisfaction in and through Christ. We cry out to you, "Guide me, O my great Jehovah, pilgrim through this barren land; I am weak, but you are mighty; hold me with your powerful hand. Bread of heaven, bread of heaven, feed me till I want no more." And as we journey now by faith, increase our hope that one day we will stand with robes washed white by your sacrifice in the glorious reality of Revelation 7: "Never again will they hunger, never again will they thirst." Until that day, Bread of Life, feed our faith day by day. In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, Amen.



LIGHT OF THE WORLD

When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." (John 8:12)

Creator God who powerfully spoke, "Let light shine out of darkness," we praise you that you have made your light shine in our hearts to give us the knowledge of God in the face of Christ. For we know that without the Light of the World, Jesus Christ, and the illuminating work of the Holy Spirit, we would still be blinded by the god of this age, unable to see the light of the Gospel. We praise you that your glory shines upon us and we see. We confess that we still battle living in the darkness rather than in the light. In the name of Jesus, forgive us for our foolish retreat, hiding and slumbering in the dark. When we are left in the dark trembling in fear, shine the light with David's words, "The LORD is my light and my salvation - whom shall I fear? The LORD is the stronghold of my life - of whom shall I be afraid?" When we are stumbling and falling in the darkness of self, bring forth your Word that is radiant and revealing so that deadly doing is exposed and your life-giving grace is exalted. When we are heading the wrong way because we have chosen to journey self-reliantly in the dark, send your light and your truth through your Word and let it guide us. Convince us of our need for your Word that is a lamp to our feet and a light to our path, and enable us to see that you have called your church the Light of the World. Thank you for using us to shine light into the darkness of this world with our good deeds to the praise of the Father in heaven. Empower us to shine into darkness on the mountain, in the city, and around the world. Until that day when the city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, as the glory of God gives it light and the Lamb is its lamp, we pray in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.

GATE FOR THE SHEEP

"Therefore Jesus said again, 'I tell you the truth, I am the gate for the sheep. I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. He will come in and go out, and find pasture.'" (John 10:7-9)

No longer alone, harassed, or helpless, we, as sheep of your pasture, praise you for being our safe and sure Gate. Your Word tells us that "the night is nearly over, the day is almost here." In the night and darkness of this world, we are like sheep who must be brought to the security of the fold. We thank you for your kindness and mercy to guard us and watch over us. You stand at the gate and ultimately subdue all our foes and enemies. Thank you for calling us into your fold that we might have refuge and provision in the dark. We are vulnerable without your shepherding care and we recognize that, but for your call in our lives, we would never have come through the only entrance to salvation, Jesus Christ. We praise you that "through Jesus we have access to the Father and the Spirit." As we live in this difficult and dangerous world, help us to grow in compassion when we see vulnerable sheep who have never entered through the gate. Forgive us as we look to other places for safety and security. Assure us by your Spirit that our hearts are restless and endangered until we find our rest in you alone. In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, Amen.

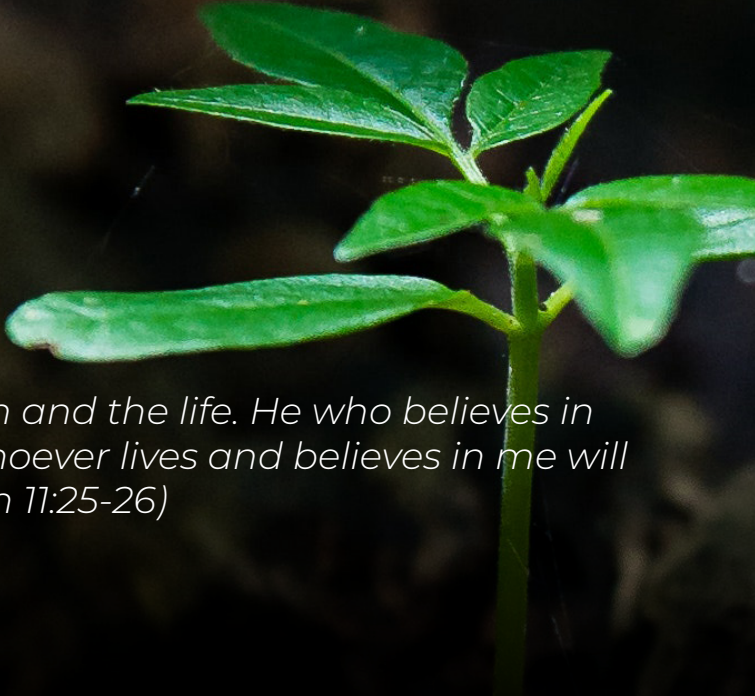


THE GOOD SHEPHERD

"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep..." I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me – just as the Father knows me and I know the Father – and I lay down my life for the sheep." (John 10:11, 14-15)

The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. Glory be to God for such an amazing reality of grace for sinners like us! As the hymn writer says, "thou hast bought us, thine we are." The price of our purchase is your Son's life, our Shepherd, who lays down his life for the sheep. The Good Shepherd, Jesus, became the sacrificial lamb so that we could become your beloved sheep. Your generous love paid such a high price for us in full knowledge that we are but helpless, smelly, needy sheep who require ceaseless attention and scrupulous care. We are full of fear and frailty, stubbornness and folly. Yet you still chose to purchase, provide for, and protect us. There is none like you. Thank you for the glorious paradox of your watchfulness over us as you are gentle yet firm, tender yet tough, and patient yet passionate. We hear your voice proclaim, "I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen," and that you must bring them also. We ask that you would allow us the great privilege of being the hands and feet of the shepherd to run to the rescue of the lost sheep. With delight and dependence on our Shepherd's voice and staff, we pray, "Savior, like a shepherd lead us, much we need thy tender care; in thy pleasant pastures feed us, for our use thy folds prepare. We are thine; do thou befriend us, be the guardian of our way; keep thy flock, from sin defend us, seek us when we go astray." In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, Amen.

THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE



Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die." (John 11:25-26)

Jesus, Risen Savior, we praise you that you are alive and that death has been swallowed up in victory. With the Apostle Paul, we exclaim with jubilation and wonder, "Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting? Thanks be to God who gives us victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." We humbly ask that you would increase our faith in you as the Second Adam, knowing that "just as death came through a human being, the resurrection of the dead has also come through a human being. For as all die in Adam, so all will be made alive in Christ." Living Lord, your resurrection is the first fruits and guarantee of the physical resurrection from the dead for all those who are in you. As we wait for that glad day of renewal, may we earnestly labor to bring resurrection realities of life and joy to all the relationships and places in our world where death and sorrow seem to reign. Everywhere that we encounter decay, rot, and ruin brought on by sin's dominion, may we, as your people, bring resurrection hope that our God is able to do more than we can ask or imagine. When we taste the death of our beloved friends and family who die in you, strengthen us to grieve with hope. And help us to embrace the pattern of your way - that crucifixion precedes resurrection. Empower us to die to ourselves for Jesus' sake so that life may be at work in others. Come, Lord Jesus, by your Spirit and use us to spread the life-giving power and work of your Son. We pray this in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.



THE WAY,
THE
TRUTH,
AND THE
LIFE

*Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life.
No one comes to the Father except through me."
(John 14:6)*

Jesus, our Lord and Only Way, we worship you and surrender our will and way to you. We celebrate that there is one God and one Mediator, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom. Give us daily faith that there is only one way to be redeemed from our slavery unto sin and death: your sacrificial payment. Jesus, our Lord and Only Truth, we surrender our hearts to your word, for there is no other truth but that which is found in and through you. Forgive us for treating your teaching as just one of many good opinions and searching elsewhere until we satisfy our selfish desires. Give us ears to hear and empower us to meditate on your law day and night, so that we may be careful to do everything in it. We ask you to deepen our delight in your revealed word so that we might become oaks of righteousness, trees firmly planted by streams of water that yield fruit in and out of season. Jesus, our Lord and Only Life, we adore you as giver, sustainer, and renewer of life that is truly life. We confess that our hearts regularly heed the empty promises of folly and idolatry that only deliver death. Forgive us and convince us that those who pay regard to vain idols forsake hope of steadfast love and do not taste life. For your love is life! Sober our hearts, arrest us with vigilance, and grant us your wisdom to discern that the persuasive, loud, seductive speech of folly is only a highway to death leading to a banquet in the grave. Shape us into people bound by your way, bolstered by your truth, and beckoned to your life. In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, Amen.



THE TRUE VINE

"I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener..." I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing." (John 15:1, 5)

Jesus, you are our life-sustaining and fruit-producing vine. Without your vigor and power, we are nothing. We affirm your statement as the vine that "apart from you, we can do nothing." We confess that we are discontent in being the branches. We prefer to be the source of our fruitfulness. Sadly, we too often believe in our sinful hearts and minds that we grow on our own. Forgive us for our foolish independence. We humbly recognize in repentance and faith that if we do not abide in you, we cannot bear fruit that would make our Father, the Gardener, glad. And so, we beg that you would see to it that we abide and abide and abide. Convict us that the only way to become bountiful branches is to remain connected to the vibrancy of the vine through Word and Spirit. Help us also to understand that you are purposeful and kind when you prune us. Though painful, we trust that it is to make us more fruitful to your glory. When we struggle to understand the way to abide, show us, as you did in the Upper Room with your disciples, that abiding means keeping your commandments. By your mercy and kindness, grant us faithfulness that we might enjoy fruitfulness for your honor. For we know that you speak true when you say, "By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples." Grant us an abiding faith that your joy may be in us and that our joy may be full. In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, Amen.