

Rally Day (Holy Cross Day observed)
John 6:35-40

Imagine a family of mice who lived all their lives in a large piano. To them in their piano-world came the music of the instrument, filling all the dark spaces with sound and harmony. At first the mice were impressed by it. They drew comfort and wonder from the thought that there was Someone who made the music—though invisible to them—above, yet close to them. They loved to think of the Great Player whom they could not see.

Then one day a daring mouse climbed up part of the piano and returned very thoughtful. He has found out how the music was made. Wires were the secret; tightly stretched wires of graduated lengths which trembled and vibrated. They must revise all their old beliefs: none but the most conservative could any longer believe in the Unseen Player.

Later, another explorer carried the explanation further. Hammers were now the secret, numbers of hammers dancing and leaping on the wires. This was a more complicated theory, but it all went to show that they lived in a purely mechanical and mathematical world. The Unseen Player came to be thought of as a myth.

But the pianist continues to play. - *Leadership*, Summer 1983, reprinted from *The London Observer*

What if the Unseen Player would have reached down and carefully lifted one of the mice out of the piano then returned him to his family? Better yet, what if the Player had taken the form of a mouse, and gone down to bear witness to the greater world outside the enclosed piano? In our Gospel lesson for this Rally Day, Jesus lets our doubting world know that this is basically what has happened.

[35] Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst. [36] But I said to you that you have seen me and yet do not believe. [37] All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out. [38] For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me. [39] And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day. [40] For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day."

John 6:35-40

This is the first of seven “I am” statements in John, statements which shape the Gospel. Each of these statements rivet the crowd who has come to hear Jesus, because they know what He is claiming. “I Am” is the way God identified Himself in the Old Testament. When Moses asked, “Who shall I say has sent me?” God answered, “I Am. Say that I Am has sent you.” Nearly every time Jesus uses the I Am formula, and today’s text is no exception, He immediately mentions that the Father has sent Him. You know most of these references by heart. “I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life. No one comes to Father but by Me.” “I am the Light of the World. It is not I alone who judge, but I and the Father who sent Me.” “I am the Good Shepherd. I know My own and My own know Me, just as the Father knows Me and I know the Father.” “I am the True Vine, and my Father is the Vine Dresser.” You get the idea. The one exception is at the raising of Lazarus, when Jesus says, “I am the Resurrection and the Life. Whoever believes in Me, though he die, yet shall he live.”

Jesus has come to do what the Father sent Him to do: arrive in accordance with the Scriptures, keep the Law as our substitute, satisfy the wrath of God over sin, rise from the dead. Six of the seven I Am statements in the Gospel according to John tell us Jesus is the One who does the Father’s work. In the work of salvation, the Father and the Son are completely at one, the Father giving the believing community to the Son by the power of the Holy Spirit, the Son receiving and guarding those who come to Him by that same Spirit, because the Son is utterly devoted to the Father’s will. The doing of the Father’s will is the purpose of His coming into the world.

Who He was and what He came to do was not evident to the crowds of Jesus’ day, and even when He told them, they didn’t always believe Him. It is not always evident who a person is, really.

Captain Bill Harper loved his career as an overseas route airline pilot, but he missed the days when he and his buddies used to spend most of their weekends rebuilding old cars and tinkering with them. So when a filling station not far from his home went up for sale, he bought it and gave it to his adult son. Between trips to Europe and the north of Africa, Captain Harper got a kick out of going down to the station and working with his son, changing oil or plugs or talking to people when they came in to pay for their gas.

One Saturday morning, dressed in his greasy overalls, Bill went down to the hardware store to pick up a wrench. “What’s new?” the store owner asked as he rang up the purchase.

“You know, I’m thinking of taking the Cairo run this month. I enjoy flying to London and Frankfurt, but I think the change of pace will do me good.” He paid for his wrench and left.

Another customer, curious, asked, “Who’s the world traveler?”

Rolling his eyes, the store owner said, “He’s just some nut who runs the gas station down the street. Thinks he’s an airline pilot.” Both men got a good laugh out of that one.

- Based on Bernie May, *Under His Wing*

It is not always evident who a person is, really.

Regardless of how the world might seek to dismiss him or explain Him away, God is still there. He is there, and He is not silent. Nor is He passive. He is sending, seeking, and saving the lost. And He is keeping those He has saved. It is what He has come from heaven to do.

This thought is of the greatest comfort for believers. Their assurance is based not on their feeble hold on Christ, but on His sure grip of them. And that is good news for everyone the Lord has given you to love.

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