



Summer Family Reunion

Part – 2 Bread of Life

David Nasser

It's so good to be here. I love Ted and Amy. I feel like you are so blessed to have them week in, week out. I don't know if you know this, but your pastor, Pastor Ted, has such a reputation around the country for just being such a prominent voice for so many different things. I've got a nickname for him. As a matter of fact, this morning I went to text him... I don't have his number memorized because that would be creepy. But I went to text him, and I saw his nickname on my phone. I call him The Gambler. Let me explain. The reason I call him The Gambler is because he is, to me, the Kenny Rogers of the moment. God has so used him. When I think about him, I think about that song, The Gambler. "You got to know when to hold 'em, know when to fold 'em. Know when to walk away, know when to run."

What I love about Pastor Ted is that he knows when to hold 'em and when to fold 'em. He has such a heart for being a peacemaker and helping people know when to refrain and not take the bait, and not get in a fight. More and more, we need that in the Kingdom of God. Especially as we walk into a new election cycle. We need people to have a posture of ushering in kindness and ushering in the superpower of compassion. And honestly, like never missing the great opportunity to shut up.

When I think about Pastor Ted, I just think of The Gambler. I thought about that, and I thought *what would I preach at The Gambler, at the great peacemaker's church?* I've titled this sermon, since it's his church, *fightin' words, Ya'll*. So if you're taking notes, this sermon is called *Fightin' Words, Ya'll*. I like to call it that and not just fighting with a g, take the g off because I'm from the south. I know that Katie said that I'm from Iran, a former Muslim, and I don't look like a guy from the south, but even when I was in Iran, I was from south Iran. So, I am prone to a mullet, baby. Just so you know. I'll grow one in a second, so I'm one of Ya'll.

The passage we want to look at... it's just going to be one passage this morning. It is *fightin' words, Ya'll* in the sense that Jesus said what we are about to read 2,000 years ago. And when he said it, the people who heard him literally decided that they were going to put him on a cross because of it. They are controversial today as much as they were 2,000 years ago.

I was at a festival two summers ago and I got a text from the young lady who was running the slides for this festival. She said, "Do you have anything for the bottom third? The bottom third is on the bottom third of the screen where they put up something." She said, "Do you have any notes or anything." I said, "Yeah, I've got one verse. I sent her this verse I'm about to read you. Like 90 minutes later, the guy that runs the entire festival texted me. I was literally at the airport, heading that way. He said, "Can we hop on a call really quick?" I get on the call, and he says, "You don't know me and I don't know you. This is

your first time to be with us at this festival. We're so glad you're coming and want you to come back all the time. But just to acclimate you to our culture, they just sent me a screenshot of the verse you're going to speak on and I'm a little nervous because we here on the West Coast in California, we're very inclusive and we really want to have a posture of love and unity. I'm just afraid that an Iranian guy coming up and preaching this passage.... And this passage feels very exclusive and not very inclusive. I said, "Well, I think to think that way about this passage is to think correctly about this passage, in that it is. But it's not like we are trying to pick a fight by bringing up this truth. It's actually not us *against* people, but we're so much for people that we would tell them this truth.

And I want you to know these are fightin' words. A guy named Charles Spurgeon called these *Bloody Words*. The reason that he called them "bloody words" is because he said, "When Jesus uttered what we are about to read, literally, the people who heard him gasped and said, "Who does this Jewish Rabbi think he is, and we have to nail him to a cross and silence him because it's just too much.

So, Jesus says what he's about to say. Now that I've got your attention, you're like, "What is it?" Let's read it together. Jesus says this, "I am..." Stop right there. That was enough. Before we read any further, let me just say that was enough. When Jesus said, "I am" 2,000 years ago, the people who heard him knew those were words reserved for God and God alone to say." So, they were like, "Did he just utter what only God is allowed to utter? And Jesus was like, "Exactly." "I am. I'm every prophecy of old, I'm everyone you've been longing for. I am the ultimate answer to every question in your life. I am the Great I Am. I am."

So this is one of the seven I am statements in scripture. Now let's keep reading if we could.

Jesus says "I am The..." Stop right there. That's the fightin' words side. Nobody cares if Jesus says, "I am a... The problem is when Jesus says, "I am *the* because that means not a. Let me give you a bread illustration. Let's say every religion is identified by bread. So, you have Islam and that's pumpernickel. You have Buddhism and that's sour bread.

What Jesus is saying is "I am the only bread that will satisfy you." He's saying, It's not like there is a buffet and all of these breads, all of these religions will work, they are all going to be good. What's your flavor? It could be pumpernickel, it could be sourdough, it could be donuts. I call donuts bread. It could be a bread. And whatever bread you are into is a good enough bread. Bread is bread. It's just calories, it's just carbs. Take what you want, whichever one works for you."

That's why the world is so offended by this because Jesus says, "no, no, everything else is either temporary bread or false bread. I am the only bread that will satisfy your soul. Everything else is going to leave you wanting." So, Jesus makes this statement. He says, "I am the bread of life and whoever comes to me will never go hungry and whoever believes in me will never thirst again.

I know that's not a big pushback in a room like this. I know that in Branson, at this incredible church, that doesn't contradict what Pastor Ted preaches all the time. It's very much a compliment to what he preaches every time. I know when I read it, like half the room didn't get up in protest and walk out and start yelling, "Who does he think he is?"

Let me just say this isn't like Jesus saying that against just other religions. This is Jesus saying that about everything. Since this is Woodland Hills Family Church, let me just push on that a minute. I love my wife. We've been married 30 years. We just celebrated our 30th anniversary. I married me a white girl from Alabama. She is my green card. She's more than that. When I came over the border... That's back when we had borders. When I came over the border, I knew I had to get me an American anchor... But she is so much more than that. She is that, but so much more. I love Jenifer. I love my wife. I adore her. We were at the same place that we went for our honeymoon, 30 years ago. I reached over and I grabbed her hand and I said, "I'm still smitten by you. This is amazing. Let's go for another 30," and we just celebrated. I'm just saying that to say I love my wife. She makes an incredible wife. She makes a pathetic bread of life. You know that Jerry Mcquire line – "You complete me"? It would be unfair for me to look at my wife and say, "You complete me." Because Jesus just said right there, "I'm the only one who can complete you."

Anybody here married? How long ya'll been married? Fifty-two years. That's amazing. Man, you look like you're sixty. Ya'll got married when you were six? Fifty-two years. I think you could echo this even more than me because I've only got 30. You almost double-digit me on this one. But the best thing you can do for your marriage is to not make an idol of the person you're married to. Don't set up your wife, don't set up your husband to play a role that they are going to surely fail at. I love my wife, but she's not the bread of my life.

I love my kids. Anybody love your kids? I love my kids. I know this is family church. I love people who love their kids. My son, Rudy, we adopted him from Guatemala when he was seven years old. He was an orphan. He came into our life. Do you know what he does now? He's now a grown man who wakes up every day and he helps foster children and children who are orphans find safe and secure homes. I'm so proud of him. The kid is a baller. He's charming, he's handsome, he's dependable, he's trustworthy. He can't spell worth a rip. He spells Jesus with a G. very dyslexic. But I love me some Rudy. I love my son. He makes an incredible son. He's an incredible father. I've watched him be a father to my two grandbabies. I've watched him be a husband. I'm so proud of him. I love my son.

I love my daughter. My daughter is the opposite of Rudy. She is biologically ours. she's very academic. She is about to go to Pepperdine Law School. This week, we're celebrating her one year anniversary with her husband. A year ago this week, I was in Cape Town, South Africa. I had her on my arm and we were about to walk the aisle. As everything was getting situated, I looked over at her in the beautiful wedding dress and I was in my tucks. I looked over at her and I said, "I just want to tell you I know you're not perfect, but I cannot remember one time, ever, where you lied." She said, "Well I did." I said, "Well, don't tell me now." I'm so proud of her. I know she doesn't bat a thousand, but I have to go searching hard to find a moment where she did something. Can you tell I'm a little into my kids? I like that word, Family Church, because I love me some family. But can I just say my kids make amazing kids? They make horrible Gods.

And some of you have made an idol of your gods. You made an idol of your family. They've become your great satisfaction. And then all of a sudden, Jesus confronts not just bad things or horrific things or good things that become God things become idol things. And Jesus says, "Everything else will leave you wanting. Everything else will leave you unsatisfied, but me."

As a matter of fact, if you're married, the greatest thing you can do for your marriage is not to worship your bride, but to help your bride to worship the one true God.

All of a sudden parenting makes sense. All of a sudden, your job makes sense. All of a sudden everything that doesn't make sense begins to make sense when you put God as your first and foremost, and everything else plays a distant second. That's the essence of the Gospel. The essence of the Gospel is I want to be your everything. And if I'm your everything, then everything else begins to finally make sense.

Now, what's interesting about this passage, what's interesting about this one verse, this one text, is the context by which it's served to us. I love how John 6:35 is on the back end, the day after the feeding of the 5,000. Does anybody know what I mean when I say the story of the feeding of the masses, the story of the feeding of the 5,000? I didn't know that story growing up. I grew up completely out of church culture. I was 18 and 2 months old when God saved me. I remember reading these stories that some of you had flannel grafted for you in VBS growing up. I remember the first time I ever read this. I called my youth pastor, and I was like, "Hey, man, I'm reading some of these Bible stories. I need to know. Are they allegorical or actual history?" He goes, "What do you mean?" I go, "I just read this one story about Jesus getting out of boat and walking on water. Did that really happen?" He goes, "That really happened." "I just read this one that said Jesus fed 5,000 people with a couple of pieces of fish and couple of pieces of bread and it was like an all-you-can-eat buffet. I go, "Did that really happen?" He goes, "Well, no, Jesus didn't feed 5,000 people." "I was like, "Good, I'm glad because that just seems really hard to grasp. It certainly doesn't make catering sense. What does that mean?" He goes, "No, Let me clarify. When it says the feeding of the 5,000 as a header, it was 5,000 men. And those men had with them women and those men and women had with them children. And this was before birth control, so basically think Catholic numbers. He was like, "Just so we're clear. This actually happened, but Jesus didn't feed 5,000 people. He fed at least 15,000 people. So, if you know this story, you know that 15,000 people are on the side of the Sea of Galilee, of a mountain. And Jesus comes into a moment when there are 15,000 people there and if you know the story you know that 14,999 of the people that are there had forgotten to pack a picnic. There are literally 14,999 people there looking at each other going, "Hey, did you bring a lunch?" And there's one kid... That's why I'm saying 14,999 didn't pack a picnic and one did. There's one kid, one teenager who brought a lunch. Let's just call it. It's probably a homeschooler. Because homeschoolers always pack a lunch. They are always prepared.

So, this one kid comes in and what does he have? He had plenty for himself and nowhere near enough for everyone else, but rather than hoarding, he shows hospitality. He brings the little bit of fish and the bit of bread that he has to Jesus. And Jesus doesn't need it from the little boy, but he lets him, he gifts him the ability to be a part of it. He takes the little bit of fish and the little bit of bread from the little boy and the next thing you know Jesus says to his disciples, "Go get these people in groups of 50 and bring them to me. and it is an all-you-can-eat buffet. And what's beautiful about that moment to me is that Jesus doesn't go, "Hey, I want you to go survey all these people and find out who's actually drank the Kool-Aid and thinks I'm the living water. Find out who thinks I'm the bread of life. If they believe in me, they get to eat. If not, they don't. Jesus doesn't go, "find out who is side hustling. Find out who is in here on the welfare side." Jesus, says, everybody who is hungry gets to eat. Most of them weren't there because they believed he was the bread of life. Most of them were there for the hookup. Most of them were there to see the healing, not for the healer.

But Jesus said, "There's a mountainside of people and they have an immediate need and we're not going to go looking and seeing who's working the system, who's not working the system, who really believes in me. This is incredible. Don't miss this. Jesus finds 15,000 hungry people and he decides to feed them. The greatest preacher of all time finds 15,000 people and he doesn't decide to preach. He doesn't go, "Somebody get up here with skinny jeans and lead about 3.2 songs and then I'm going to come up and quote me some me and then preach.

The greatest preacher of all time finds 15,000 people and he doesn't preach. He finds them and their immediate need is that they are hungry, and he says let's feed them. He honors them. Even if they don't honor him, he honors them. He is the Gambler. And then, after he meets their momentary need, we wake up the next day and the people that he fed the day before wake up and they are hungry again, So they come around the Sea of Galilee and that's when we run into John 6:35. They come to him the next day and that's when he says to them, "I am the bread of life. Hey, this little physical hunger that you have, is nothing but a physical illustration, a manifestation, a reminder of who I really am with your soul." You have a physical hunger that's always trying to be met. Bigger than that, you have a soul hunger that's always trying to be met. And all the different buffets of the world will leave you wanting. I am the only... "Drink of my blood, eat of my flesh," Jesus says. I am the only hope you have.

What does that mean by the way? John Piper says it best this way: *"How do you honor a fountain? You bend and you drink from it. That's how you honor a fountain."*

What he's saying is you honor me, you believe in me when you bend, you lower yourself and you say, "You're the only substance that can satisfy my soul."

I have a God-shaped hole and I try to fill it with everything else and it's left me unsatisfied until I found the one true God. I have a seat and I have to let everything else, everyone else come sit on that seat, that throne in my heart, including me and my little me monster. And God's going, "Get out of that seat." I'm the only one that will satisfy you when you let me sit appropriately on the seat that only belongs to me." What's interesting is that Jesus says what he says. He gives us John 6:35 after he met the need the day before. A friend of mine says, "He wrapped the gospel in a fish sandwich. And he earned the right to speak the truth."

A few years ago, I was in Gatlinburg. Gatlinburg is like a poor man's Branson. I was there at this Days Inn with about 500 senior high and college students who were there from a church out of Memphis. This Memphis group of students had come over to Gatlinburg and they had basically taken over this hotel. I was their speaker for this retreat they had, this post-Christmas retreat. On the last day of the event, my wife and I were leaving the retreat. The event was over, and we were on the very top floor of this hotel. We got our bags and rolled over to the elevator. We got in and we were the only two in the elevator. The elevator goes from the top floor down one level. The doors opened up and the cleaning lady got on. I knew she was the cleaning lady because she had the cleaning lady apron and a cart, so it was obvious. She comes on, the door closes, and it starts going back down again and we can't see her because she is facing the elevator doors. We're back in the back and the cart is between us. She's facing the door, but we can hear her and she's sobbing. My wife looks at me and mouths to me, "She's crying." I mouth back, "I know." And then she mouths to me, "Say something."

I'm looking at her like "why would I say something when you're here." because she's so much better than I am in those moments. I'm bad at counseling. If you come up to me in a little while and you're crying and you tell me you're going through a divorce, I'll offer you some gum. I'm just bad. My wife is so good. If you have an issue and you talk to her, she will get your phone number, she'll check in on you. She will bombard you with Beth Moore material. She is good. I'm not.

So, the elevator is literally going down. And she's looking at me like "Say something!" And this lady is just crying. So, I'm panicked because I realize we are about to lose this moment and we're on the second floor. Just so we won't lose the moment, I reach around the cart... and you know how every elevator has all these buttons that you push except that one red button that you pull? This is before September 11th when Iranians could do something like that and not go to jail. So, I reached around the cart and I pulled the one button. As soon as I pulled it she was startled. She turned around and I said, "Ma'am, I'm sorry to startle you." We are literally stuck between the second and the first floors. I said, "Ma'am, I'm so sorry. Listen, this is my wife, Jenifer. And we both noticed that you were crying and we wanted to say, "before we get out of here, we care about you. Are you okay?" As soon as I said, "Are you okay," it was like a dam just broke.

She goes, "Are you with these kids?" You know, the ones who have taken over this hotel. The 300 – 400 of them that have been here. They basically have taken over this hotel for the past few days. Are you with them?"

I thought, *one more lady in the service industry brought to tears by a youth group gone wild.* I just looked at her and I said, "No Ma'am, I'm not with them.

She goes, "Well, I don't even know how you got a room here because they've basically taken over, but have you been around these kids? I've never seen anything like it. I'm sorry to be emotional, but I came to work today and found out they're leaving.

I go, "What do you mean?"

She goes, "Well, every day, I've been coming to work... As a matter of fact, I wasn't even supposed to work yesterday, but I asked for a shift. All the cleaning ladies are asking for shifts because we've never seen anything like these kids. They've come over here, they've taken over, and they are just so nice. We haven't been able to make one bed for the last three days. We come into the rooms and the beds are already made, and the towels are hanging up in the bathroom. It's almost like we've had a week off after Christmas and it's just been amazing. She goes, "Look." And she reaches into her apron and pulls out this wad of cash. She goes, "This is like \$1,100 in tips from today and yesterday I had like \$600.00. And it's not just me. All of the cleaning ladies. And bigger than all of that, I forgot my name tag today and they knew my name. Nobody ever knows my name."

She goes, I'm just sorry to be emotional, but I just came to work today so excited to see them and they were packing up and they were leaving and I don't want them to leave.

I said, "Ma'am, before we go any further, I'm sorry to interrupt, but I want to clarify something. I actually am with them. I just need you to know. I'm kind of like their Yoda... God gets the glory, but...

She goes, "Are you with them?"

I said, "Yes ma'am, I am with them."

She goes, "Well, then, can you just tell me what's wrong with them?"

I go, "What do you mean?"

She goes, "All we get around here are youth groups. That's nothing new. All we get around here are single groups, all we get around here are church groups, but I've never seen anything like it." She doesn't have the lingo there, but she is literally initiating the gospel conversation with us.

She's saying, "We get a lot of youth groups, but we've never seen a youth ministry. We've never seen the people of grace be gracious, be graceful. We've never seen Christians be Christ-like."

And then my wife finally speaks up. She finally goes, "Since you want to know what's wrong with them, I just need to tell you Jesus is the matter with them. I know what you're thinking, you're thinking these kids aren't usual, they are unusual."

She goes, "Yeah, they're not natural. They are supernatural." "And they're not treating you out of pity or out of charity. They know your name because God knows their name. They think you're amazing because God thinks you are amazing. They think you are valuable because God thinks you're valuable. They care about you because God cares about you. Just so you understand, what you're seeing in them, the difference in them is Jesus."

And then, I just kind of took one step back and my wife started to share the gospel with this lady. She begins to explain the gospel to this lady. I'm telling you, the next thing you know, 3 ½ minutes later, this lady... She and my wife are holding hands over the cart and my wife leads this lady to the Lord. And then we go one level down and I finally let her loose. Not the first time Americans have been held hostage...

That's a new joke. Maybe it will work here, but maybe not out west.

I'll never forget, the elevator door opened up and as soon as it opened up, some of the students are standing there in the lobby waiting to get in the van. They saw her and they started shouting Rhonda! She came out and I go, "Rhonda just became a brand new sister in Christ. And they started singing Happy Birthday to her.

I think about that and I think about a group of Christians who led worship. Not with a guitar in their hand, but with kindness. These are fightin' words. Jesus fighting for us, not against us. This is how we fight the good fight, this is how we fight through a lack of clarity, and this is how we fight animosity, This is how we fight anger, this is how we fight all the stuff. This is how we fight a fight worth fighting, fighting for people. And our great weapon is people are going to hell and we get to fight for their destiny by sending them to the gospel. Do you see it? God is giving you that kind of opportunity.

I was here four years ago, and I shared my testimony. I'll just throw this in for you for sixty seconds. I was 18 and 2 months old the night that I asked my dad if I could go to church. I was stoned. I had just smoked weed. A buddy of mine invited me to church. I kind of remember the night. I'm standing there at midnight in my home, and I asked my dad if I could go to church. I knew my dad was going to say no. I knew my Muslim father was not going to let me go to church. I was just trying to get my buddy off my back.

So, on a Saturday night, I asked my dad if I could go to church and my dad, instead of saying no, looked at me and said, "What is the name of the church?" The reason my dad was open to the idea was because what I didn't know was that two weeks before, there were these people from this church who had shone up at my dad's restaurant. My dad had opened up a French restaurant. I know it's confusing but stay with me. My dad had opened up this restaurant and they had served my dad, who was shorthanded on waitstaff for two weeks. They kept showing up at my dad's restaurant and they were busboys and waiters for free. They called it missions. My dad called it stupid Americans, but God was at work.

I know some of you can't get over this moment. You are like He took advantage of them. Exactly. When the blind man comes to Jesus in the Bible, he's not like, "I want to be a billboard for your renown, he's like I'm blind and I would like to see. Everyone has a hustle. God was bigger than their hustle.

So, my dad was like, "These Americans want to come? Sure." God was up to something bigger. And the reason I get to be at your church on a Sunday morning with a microphone in my hand, preaching John 6:35 is because that church showed up at my Dad's restaurant. And for two weeks, they massaged my dad's heart. And then I asked to go to church and instead of saying no, he asked the name of the church. And out of 1100 churches in Birmingham, it was the exact same church as the people who had been serving. So, I got to go to church. And now I get to go to churches. So, I am literally a walking illustration of a bunch of people who showed up and met a momentary need so they could earn the right to give me eternal truth. And we get to do that, beloved.

What I love about this church is that when you guys do Care for Kids... A lot of people wake up and then when they think about summer, they think about what Lakehouse should be go to? Should we rent on VRBO? That's the reality for so many of us in this room, but there are other people that wake up and they go, "Summer means this. At least during the school year, my kids had a stable consistent meal and now I don't know how to feed my own children."

And Care for Kids walks in and what I love about this church is this church says, "Summer is not when we take off. Summer is when we put our foot on the pedal. With Care for Kids, we are going to volunteer, we're going to make sure no kid goes to bed hungry. Why? Because Jesus is the Bread of Life. And when that kid goes, "Why does somebody care about me? I'm 11 years old. I've never been here. I don't even have a tithe check to offer. Why does somebody care about me coming to the middle service." We care about you because God cares about you. We're not just trying to give you physical bread, we want to earn the right to give you spiritual bread.

When I think about your work and partnership with Convoy of Hope... Are you kidding me? No one does disaster relief better than them in a moment when there is a disaster and a need for relief.

Convoy of Hope steps right in. And when I think about... I brought up your church to my buddy, Rick, who works at Convoy of Hope, two days ago in a text, I said, "I get to preach at Woodland Hills, do you want to have lunch afterward?"

He goes, "Woodland hills? That church buys us vans, partners with us." When I think about in between Sundays. A church that shows up and says, "If someone in the middle of disaster needs consistency, we got you." When I think about this morning, at this church, there are meetings about a group of people who are going to give up their summertime and go to Kenya. A church that goes to the Equator, a church that goes to Haiti, a church that goes to Guatemala. when I think about a church that says, "When God planted this church, he didn't just have Branson in mind, he didn't just have Springfield in mind, he didn't just have Missouri in mind. When God planted this church, he had the nations in mind.

And the strategy is that you go and every time you go, ask about any of these mission trips. You go and you get dirty fingernails so that people can have clean hearts. I think about the one-two punch of we meet everyday needs so we can earn the right to speak redemptive truth. I like that name – Convoy of Hope. It literally becomes a convoy of hope. We fight the good fight. With what? With hope. Our weapon of mass destruction in a world of destruction is kindness. What a superpower. That's the bomb we drop somewhere.

So, for some of us, this is about a mission trip or that's why I tithe here or that's why I volunteer there, but for some of you, it's a little bit deeper. For some of you, it's the lady next to you... The cubical next to you at work, and the opportunity to show kindness. It's the family that just moved in down the street. It's the family member who doesn't take the gospel seriously and they would never come here on a Sunday morning, but you can go there. For some of you, it's literally going to look like this. In 2 ½ hours, while you're cutting your grass, you are going to keep on going beyond your yard and you're going to cut your next-door neighbors' grass. Why? Not because you're better than them, not because they don't have a lawn mower, not because they don't know how to take care of their lawn, but because when they ask why you give a rip, you don't go because you're dying and going to hell. You go because I needed the exercise. Thank you. And then you earn the right. And then they go to bed, and they go, "These people are crazy." That's a good kind of weapon.

Father, I thank you for the gospel, and what it gives us. Thank you that even when we were enemies, you saw us as the prize. When we were not children of the Kingdom of God, you saw us as someone worthy of saving. Thank you, Jesus, that we don't dangle this bread in front of some and say, "Who has earned it? Who wants it bad enough?" You offer to all of us that eternal hope that we found in you. For someone who doesn't have it today, I pray that they would see that the greatest thing that could happen in life is you as their only source of satisfaction, as their ultimate source of hope.

For those who know you, I pray they would want to make you known. In and through this opportunity, we don't have to, we get to. We get to love people. Help that be our greatest weapon. Let us be accused, God, of fighting for people, not against people in the way that we love. Lord, thank you that we have a great commission, which is to go, and then we have a great commandment, which is to love. Let us hold these truths together as we step out of this huddle.

We pray this in your name... Amen