

Sermon Transcript

Ego Eimi

I John 4:7-13 and John 15:1-8 | Fifth Sunday of Easter | April 28, 2024 | John Klawiter, preaching

Grace and peace to you my friends in Christ,

It's time to teach you a little bit of Greek today!

The New Testament was written in Greek and we are going to translate part of it today.

This commonly used expression *point at screen*, is pronounced “ego ei-me” which means “I am.”

Let's practice... ego. (echo). Ei-me (echo).

Not bad... but maybe this would help.

Alright, so now you know a little bit of Greek and you're probably craving waffles, but the fact that this is the way that John, the gospel writer, has Jesus address himself actually has a much deeper meaning.

In conversational Greek, you don't say “ego ei-me”, you just say “ei-me”—because the “I” is implied. It's redundant. It would be like saying I I AM. Eggo, like ego, the I.

No, adding the ego part would definitely have a ring of historical significance to it.

The Greek echoes the way that God addresses himself in the burning bush... all the way back to the time of Moses.

Moses is out watching the sheep when suddenly a bush catches fire, but is not consumed. Moses is too afraid to look at the presence of God.

Yet God speaks to him and calls him to bring the people, the Israelites, out of Egypt. He's to go to the pharaoh and God promises to be with him.

But it's at this point in which Moses asks a logistical question.

When I go to the Israelites and tell them this plan, they're gonna have some questions. They'll need to know who sent Moses to pharaoh to release the people.

Moses asks “what shall I tell them is the name of the God of their ancestors?”

And God says “I AM WHO I AM.”

This is where we get the LORD. In all capital letters. If you see that in the Bible, it's the abbreviation Y-H-W-H... Yahweh.

That's right, you couldn't even say God's name out loud, it was THAT holy.

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But notice that I AM WHO I AM and LORD, or Yahweh, are all derived from the verb “to be”. So, what are they gonna call God? It’s Hebrew... but if you were gonna translate that to Greek, what would God’s name sound a lot like?

I know you know this one:

Mazal Tov

With that little history lesson in mind, what do you think would be at stake if Jesus started talking like this?

The proper way to speak is “ei-me”... but Jesus keeps saying “ego ei-me”.

If there is any question that John wants you to know that Jesus is not just a regular guy, but that he’s also God, constantly having Jesus refer to himself as “Ego eime” will get the point across.

I bet you have even heard of a few of the times where Jesus does this.

These are commonly known as the “I AM statements”

Do you know any of them? Here’s a hint, we had one today and last week! *Ask for guesses before showing slide*

I AM... the bread of life, light of the world, gate, and good shepherd, resurrection and the life, the way, the truth and the life... and finally, today, the true vine..

What do these all have in common?

They’re reminders that Jesus is taking care of our basic needs.

Food, protection and security, guidance along the way.

Even water, which he doesn’t make a direct statement about, comes up in the story of the woman at the well and Jesus tells her about the living water and those who drink the water he gives will never be thirsty again.

When the woman declares that the Messiah is coming and he will proclaim all things to us... who does Jesus say is the Messiah?

You guessed it... (**Eggo Amy**)

But what about the last one. The one for today. How is **the true vine** fulfilling a basic need?

What is that all about and why is that the LAST of the I AM statements?

Because of what happens to a vine. It continues to grow.

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Jesus is addressing the disciples in what's known as the farewell discourse. They didn't know it at the time, but this was his last word. He's preparing them for life without him. Jesus wants them to understand that he hasn't been received by the Pharisees and the chief priests. He wants them to comprehend that not everyone will accept his message.

But he will always be the vine and they will continue to grow, as the branches. They will abide, dwell in the vine. That the vine will provide nourishment and strength—that they won't be left alone—that as they grow and move forward into the world, they will do so fitted with the word of God.

It's a message of hope.

It's a promise that they'll be fortified and encouraged.

Jesus tells them he loves them and to abide in his love. He sees a vision of a world where that love transforms.

He tells them **“This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. 13 No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends.”**

And that last phrase gets me.

Jesus knows. SLIDE of **to lay down one's life for one's friends.**

Jesus is about to do this, isn't he? He's about to demonstrate to them the very act of love that he speaks of. And it's greater than any love we can fathom.

That's why it's so shocking when Judas, one of the disciples, shows up with the chief priests and Pharisees and a detachment of soldiers—anywhere from 600 to 1,000 soldiers come to arrest Jesus.

Jesus is praying in the garden.

And just as Judas leads them over to arrest him, Jesus asks them “whom are you looking?” (SLIDE of scripture).

When they say, Jesus of Nazareth, Jesus identifies himself. Ego ei-me. I am.

And the reaction he gets is truly astounding.

What happens when Jesus says “ego ei-me”???

They stepped back and fell to the ground

They are aware that they are on holy ground. That this man is professing to use the same name as God—Yahweh—and they are startled. Taken aback. They are in the presence of God.

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But despite that recognition, it doesn't stop them from what they're about to do.

Jesus is arrested, and his words get him sentenced to death for blasphemy—literally claiming he's God.

Jesus is the vine. We are the branches.

We are a branch when we walk alongside Lark in her baptism this morning, or encourage the spiritual growth of others.

We are a collection of branches that make up a tree when we collectively respond to the needs of the hungry, unsheltered, oppressed, weak, grieving, sick, or lonely.

We make up an entire forest when we pray, serve, and directly advocate for our ministry partners in the community and around the world. . Some say it takes a village... for this metaphor, it takes a forest. It takes a whole world reaching out in love.

This is what it means to be the church in the world. We are the branches—that give out hope and love to a neighbor, no matter who that neighbor is. This is what Jesus had in mind when he prepared the disciples for what's next.

And when we ask, who does Jesus say is watching over us, teaching us to love, forgive, thank, heal, pray?

You know it... **ego eimi**. Amen