

**Sermon Notes:** August 1, 2021 **Focus:** “I am”...enough [Lectionary Readings](#)

You hear one of the seven “I AM” statements made by Jesus at the end of today’s gospel (John 6:35). “I am the bread of life” he says. Jesus is offering himself to feed our hearts and minds. “I AM” is also connected to the burning bush when Moses asks God’s name. YHWH is basically means “I am what I am”.

We make “I am” statements about ourselves all the time. I am deserving. I am garbage. I am amazing. I am worthless. You’re probably more negative than positive with yourself. Most of us don’t live with an amazing self-estimation. If we do, we are either advanced spiritually or narcissistic megalomaniacs.

**I AM** The seven “I AM” statements in John are below.

The Greek for I am is ἐγώ εἰμι (Ego eimi). Jesus says, I am the:

Bread of Life	<i>John 6:35</i>
Light of the World	<i>John 8:12</i>
The Door	<i>John 10:9</i>
The Good Shepherd	<i>John 10:11 &amp; 14</i>
The Resurrection and the Life	<i>John 11:25</i>
The Way and the Truth and the Life	<i>John 14:6</i>
The Vine	<i>John 15:1 &amp; 5</i>

**Today’s sermon is for women and girls in particular** Women and girls get bombarded with all sorts of messages. They are not doing enough. “I am” is not enough. “I should be” is the diabolical treadmill they get forced onto.

Women and girls *should* be:

- Skinny, but not trying too hard to diet
- Smart, but not too arrogant
- Funny, but not too shrill.
- Beautiful, but not too much makeup
- Free spirited, just not too free

I have watched women and girls fold under the pressure they face today, and it is killing them from the inside.

**Clergy are far from immune to undercutting women** I know a clergy person in California who was joking about how parishioners treat his family. He tells stories about how they objectify his family. He says he has an attractive, tall, skinny, white, and blond daughter. He would joke about how one parishioner would come up to him and congratulate him on the good ‘job’ he was doing with his daughter because she was so attractive. I ruefully laughed at this unenlightened parishioner’s comments. But... the clergy kept telling this story to different people in different settings with sort of a satisfied smirk. Methinks he doth protesteth too much.

**I AM not** *“But it was in this moment, lying in bed late at night, that I first realized that the voice in my head — the running commentary that had dominated my field of consciousness since I could remember — was kind of an a\_\_hole.” — Dan Harris 10% Happier.*

I want you to imagine, almost like sorcery, God speaking more clearly than your internal critic. What if every time the narrator in your head comes after you, you just stop in your tracks? Take that moment to listen for a different voice: God's voice. God thinks you're awesome. God thinks the 37 trillion cell bag of bones that you inhabit is beautiful. God says you are beloved.

I *don't* want you to try and shout down the critic inside. But *do* get some distance from it. You're not required to run back to the critic asking for another beating. Eckhart Tolle says, "What a liberation to realize that the "voice in my head" is not who I am. Who am I then? The one who sees that." You might feel really stupid saying positive affirmations in the mirror, but at least all of us can work on distancing ourself from the bully in our skull.

**Jesus, I am** Jesus lived and lived out loud. He knew he was awesome. He calls himself light, life, and the way. To grow closer to him is to see ourselves as awesome too. That might require a miracle for some of you to believe this. But it is exactly this miracle that God provides.

You are enough now, in the future, and in the past. This I know to be true. It has taken an extremely long time to arrive at this conclusion and the bully still gets the better of me sometimes. You're not your thoughts – good or bad. You're not your accomplishments – great or small. You're not your body - strong or weak. You are enough. You are an I AM.

**Postscript** If you are still with me, I offer a transcript of one person's very tangible struggle to be enough. It comes from the podcast *This American Life*. Lindy West is a writer, comedian, and activist. She is the author of *Shrill: Notes from a Loud Woman* and a contributing opinion writer for The New York Times.

**Tell me I'm fat** I am including an excerpt from the audio show *This American Life*. I heard this first in 2016, but it still sticks with me. It's a conversation about being fat and finding ways to be at peace. "I am worthy" is not a phrase you often hear from people who are fat.

If you want to tell me that being OK with fatness is morally indefensible; or need to inform me of the financial drain on our health care system -- I will nod politely but think there are more relevant factors to consider. It may feel morally superior to put a sugar tax on soda, but to ignore the person struggling (and failing) to lose weight is less than superior. If you are already getting mad, you should probably stop reading here, or call me up and we can talk.

If you have succeeded in managing/losing weight that you did not want, that's amazing. It's a testament to your discipline and genetics. However, there are far more people who have yo-yoed through diets for decades. They have failed to keep up with the Joneses and their self-worth hollows out a little more each time.

Link to the audio: <https://www.thisamericanlife.org/589/tell-me-im-fat/act-one-6>  
Lindy is a self-proclaimed fat person. Ira is the main host of the show:

Ira here's something that I just heard about, though I guess it's been out there for a little while now. It's the idea that fat people would come out to their friends and family as fat. Like, they would decide, OK, today's the day, going to say it out loud to people, I'm fat. I heard about this from Lindy West. She's a writer who's been

on our program before. Maybe you remember her story about confronting an internet troll. Coming out as fat is a strange idea, because, of course, people can see if you're fat. It's no secret. It's not like when you come out as gay or transgender. Nobody says to you, dude, I can't believe you're fat. Lindy says it was obvious how big she was.

Lindy But I always felt like if I didn't mention it that maybe people wouldn't notice. Or it could just be this sort of polite secret, like, open secret that we didn't address, because it felt so shameful. It just felt impolite to talk about, like me not wanting to burden you with my failure.

Ira Like, I'm not going to bother you with this.

Lindy Yeah, and just give me a little more time. Let's not talk about it, and I promise I'll fix it.

Ira That's key, she says. As long as you're a fat person who's trying not to be fat, that's acceptable. That's a good fat person. You don't totally admit to yourself you're fat, because, well--

Lindy The way that we are taught to think about fatness is that fat is not a permanent state. You're just a thin person who's failing consistently for your whole life. So to actually say, OK, I am fat-- and I have been as long as I can remember, so I don't know why I live in this imaginary future where I, you know, someday I'm going to be thin.

Ira So before you declared to others, OK, I'm fat, how did you see yourself? Did you see yourself as fat? Did you conceive of yourself as fat?

Lindy Yeah, but I was determined to not be fat forever. And my worst fear was, what if I am? And then at some point, I just was like, you know, it's fairly likely that I'm going to be fat forever. So why am I putting off figuring out how to live with that? I should, rather than spending all my time counting almonds, why not try to figure out how to be happy now?

Ira Which means saying to everybody, let's just decide together that, like most fat people, I'll probably always be this way. This is who I am, which-- right now, anyway-- is so rare, it feels like a radical act.

Lindy I'm fat.

Ira It's so weird to actually hear you say I'm fat. I actually heard you say that. I don't think I've ever actually heard somebody just say those words except in a much smaller context, like somebody puts on a dress and it's like, oh, I'm fat. But they don't mean, this is who I am.

Lindy Yeah, and it's usually thin people who say that.

Ira Yeah.

Lindy You know?

Ira Yeah. When you come out as gay, most people accept it, because they know you can't do anything about that. That's who you are. You can't change it. But coming out as fat, doctors and your family and kind of the entire culture is organized to point out how wrong-headed you are. When you're over a certain size-- it's been explained to me by a few people now-- complete strangers walk up to you on the street and tell you to lose weight. They shoot you dirty looks when they see ice cream in your shopping cart. They talk down to you like you're stupid about nutrition and calories, as if pretty much every fat person has not been around the block 500 times on that one already. That's why deciding to stay fat and be OK with it is at a peculiar frontier right now, where things are shifting and people do not agree about what is acceptable to say and think. I was talking to Lindy. I used the word "overweight" a few times. And at some point, she stopped me and said, the word "overweight" is not preferred. She wasn't strident about this. It was

super friendly. She said the problem with "overweight" is that it implies that there is a correct weight for people. That's how radical this is. It's saying that no weight is better than any other weight, which, given the health risks associated with greater weight that Lindy acknowledges, it can be hard to get your head around. And we're doing this show today because I read the book that Lindy just published about this. And it made me see this whole thing differently.

**Todd** *I am going to skip over her talk about her boss and jump to her deeper acceptance phase.*

Ira One of the big things was, she saw these photos taken by the actor Leonard Nimoy, the guy who played Mr. Spock on Star Trek. Late in his life, he did a series of these gorgeous black-and-white photos called The Full Body Project, where he photographed fat women naked.

**Todd** *--I know this is objectification and male gaze stuff...but stay with her just a little bit longer*

Lindy And they're presented as objects of beauty. They're art photos. And I just had never seen that before ever in my life. It had never occurred to me that you would do anything with a fat body other than hide it. And the women in these photographs were so proud and just full of life. And it really had an impact on me. I mean, at first, I was really uncomfortable.

Ira Uncomfortable, like, oh, no, don't show that.

Lindy Yeah, like, you guys! [LAUGHTER]

Ira That's secret!

Lindy You guys, I've been working really hard on not showing this to people.

Ira From there, she started searching the internet with the intensity, she says, of a teenager looking for porn, only she was looking for sites where they posted images of fat people. There's a bunch of Tumblrs along these lines. Some are basically just fashion blogs for fat people. Finding decent clothes is an issue if you're really big. There's a Tumblr called, "hey, fat chick!"

Lindy I mean, this was just my favorite one of these fat acceptance blogs. It was just that. It was just bright, happy, funny, smiling people wearing cute outfits. It's just, you're so used to seeing fat people presented as sad and apologetic.

Ira And what did this do to you? What it do to see that?

Lindy I remember feeling like my brain was changing shape. It just had never occurred to me that you could just decide that you were allowed to be happy and live as a--

Ira As a fat person.

Lindy Yeah, exactly.

Ira And did this change the way that you saw fat people?

Lindy Yeah, I mean, I can't even explain how strange it was, because it was like-- it wasn't just conceptual, like, oh, I deserve to be happy. It was like I was looking at specific parts of their bodies and staring at them-- parts of their bodies that I had always just reviled on myself.

Ira Like, what do you mean?

Lindy You know, like fat rolls and arm fat and bellies and staring at them and saying, OK, what if I found that objectively beautiful? What if I decided that's beautiful?

Ira And then does that work?

Lindy Yes, it does. At least, it worked for me.

Ira And then it really looked beautiful.

Lindy Yeah, really. Really, genuinely. And it felt like some sort of sorcery.

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I pray you find a way to love yourself and love others on their own terms. You are enough, short, tall, skinny, fat, shy or loud. You are...right now...made in God's image.

**Todd**