

## I AM

The cool term for this writing is “mash-up.” It's a combination of ideas from multiple sources. (Not that what I wrote is all that cool, there's just a cool label I can apply.)

Laurie shared with me the devotional she read this morning, and I also listened to a sermon from former pastor Lorie Hershey in Philadelphia. The unifying idea is the expression “I am.”

Usually when we try to explain who we are to someone who wants to get to know us, we respond with our role, duties, or job title. I am a retired engineer, husband, father, grandfather, mentor, and so on. There are some people who identify so strongly with a career or role, that if that is taken away for some reason (like, say, a pandemic), their sense of identity is challenged. I have also noticed that some people who went through a powerful experience at a formative period in their life link their identity to that experience for the rest of their life. The people I most often notice this in are war veterans, but I've also seen it elsewhere, such as in people who forever link their identity with an academic institution.

In Exodus 3, God asks Moses to bring the Israelites out of Egypt, and there ensues this exchange:

*13 Moses said to God, “Suppose I go to the Israelites and say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they ask me, ‘What is his name?’ Then what shall I tell them?”*

*14 God said to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: ‘I AM has sent me to you.’”*

God's identity was not defined and limited by a specific role, like the gods the polytheistic Egyptians or Canaanites worshiped. God was not a god of war, or a god of fertility, but the great I AM, fundamental to being itself.

Similarly, when Jesus comes walking on the water to the disciples (John 6:18-20), and they are afraid, thinking he is a ghost, he says “It is I, don't be afraid.” My third-hand (at least) understanding of this is that the Greek “It is I” can also be

translated to produce the equivalent of the “I AM” found in Exodus. In other words, “God is here, don't be afraid.”

Laurie's devotional (Inward/Outward Together from Church of the Savior in Washington, DC) talked about a series of “I am” statements by Jesus in the Gospel of John. I am the way, the bread of life, the light of the world, the resurrection, and several others. These are not descriptions of specific jobs that Jesus does, but rather how Jesus went about his salvatory work while on earth, and how the church and we ourselves can operate through the power of the Spirit.

So back to the question of “Who am I?” If I am created in God's image, how do I reflect God and Jesus in my being and identity? How am I the way, giving guidance; the bread, providing sustenance; the light, inspiring; the resurrection, bringing new life?