

# I AM THE BREAD

Week #6 of the Lenten/Easter Series, "I AM"

March 31, 2021

Rev. Richard Rogers

## INTRODUCTION/ANNOUNCEMENTS

**Rev. Richard Rogers:** Hi; I'm Richard Rogers, and I want to welcome you to this Holy Week service. You know, this is right in the middle of Holy Week. We've had Palm Sunday, and Easter's on its way! *[Laughs]* I feel like the Easter bunny; Easter's on its way.

Easter services: we're going to have three services. Sunrise service is going to be at 6 a.m. 6 a.m. – I know for you early birds ... that's early! 6 a.m., 7:30 and 9 o'clock. All of them are going to be outside. It's going to be spectacular. Come and celebrate Easter with your friends at Unity.

Also, Youth Ministry – this Saturday: Saturday afternoon from 3:30 to 5 – we're having our Drive-Through Easter Celebration for kids. *[Laughs]* So we're going to have a little Easter bunny; we'll have baskets and stuff and eggs and all the fun stuff. So ... But it's going to be drive-through, so come! Bring the family; load them up in the car. Drive-Through Easter Celebration for the kids! Youth and Family Ministry on Saturday, April 3.

And then I also want to make sure on your calendar is June 9th! June 9th we get to come back together; fabulous! Fabulous! Fabulous! With all – with everything working out. We're going to be back together as a ministry LIVE regularly. Wednesday Night Service: mark your calendar and I look forward to seeing you.

Alright! Now that all the announcements ... Let's set the tone by a moment of prayer, and then we're going to go into tonight's activities.

## OPENING PRAYER

Take a deep breath. And I want you to feel the presence of God that's within you during this Holy Week activity. That the Spirit of God is at work in each and every one of us to unveil, to experience more and more God than we've ever known before. That, during this Holy Week, the same Spirit that moved through Jesus Christ – the same presence of God – is moving through each and every one of us. And that we allow ourselves to slow down to truly have a spiritual experience.

God, I'm ready for more! I'm ready to be blessed in greater and greater ways! I'm ready to have the fullness of God revealed in and through me! So in the name and through the power of the Living Christ, we give thanks. Amen.

## SOLO

**Guest artist Kristen Drathman sings, "He Hears Me"**

Here I am again, down on my knees  
And with every pleading word, Thy comfort I seek  
Though the words are slow to come,  
My thoughts go racing by  
Peace fills the room; Thy spirit is night

He hears me  
When I'm crying in the night  
Oh, he hears me

When my soul longs to fight  
From the morning will come  
And the light of the dawn reassures...  
He hears me

Any hour, wherever I may be  
In the silence of an empty room, or on a crowded street  
Whether offering thanks, or in urgency I pray  
I never go unnoticed; I'm never led astray

He hears me  
When I'm crying in the night  
Oh, he hears me  
When my soul longs to fight  
'Til the morning will come  
And the light of the dawn reassures...

Any whisper of the soul  
No matter how old  
Father hears the call

Oh, he hears me  
When I'm crying in the night  
Oh, he hears me  
When my soul longs to fight  
'Til the morning will come  
And the light of the dawn reassures...

He hears me  
When I'm crying in the night  
Oh, he hears me  
When my soul longs to fight  
'Til the morning will come  
And the light of the dawn reassures...  
He hears me  
Oh, he hears me  
He hears me

## MESSAGE

**Rev. Richard Rogers:** Kirsten, that was fabulous! Thank you; thank you; thank you! We're so glad to have you back, and it was spectacular! Thank you!

Alright; here we go! When you look at the course of your life, what do you think was some of your greatest accomplishments? When you look at your life, what have you done that you're the most proud of? Right? That, as we move into this Holy Week, I want to start from this place of acknowledging everything that you've done that has been fabulous and wonderful. And really, kind of, I feel like that tonight I'm a sportscaster. And we're going to play your highlight reel, right? We're going to play the highlight reel of your life. And what have been the most powerful, greatest moments of your life?

You know, this week, I spent some time looking back at my own life. You know, and I don't spend a lot of time looking backward; I'm kind of a forward, keep moving, keep marching, keep going kind of guy. But this week I spent a lot of time just looking back. And, if I had to really pick what my accomplishments

have been in this lifetime, you know, I've got a few that I'm proud of! You know, I'm happily married! [Laughs] That was a big one! Right? Happily married! I have two kids that are successful, and they're happy. They're independent; they're well-adjusted. You know, they're good! I take pride in that; that was an accomplishment! There were some weeks where it didn't look like that was going to work! [Laughs] Right? But both kids are fabulous!

You know, I was the first member of my family to go to college. Graduate from college. You know, I've been successful in my chosen line of work. You know, if I look at all the thousands – maybe tens of thousands of people I've touched over my career – it's really ... it's substantial! I mean, I'm proud of that!

I've sat in the presence of the Dalai Lama. In fact, I helped facilitate a discussion in front of Italy, where I facilitated the spiritual leaders. And I got to sit knee-to-knee on the stage with the Dalai Lama. We sat literally right next to each other! In fact, one moment he reached over and he grabbed my hand, and just ... and just held my hand. [Laughs] And I remember when it happened, I ... My brain just shut down! Like, I was so ... Like, just being on the stage with the Dalai Lama was a lot, but then – at one point – when he just reaches over and takes my hand! And I just literally could not have another thought other than, *"I am holding the hand of the Dalai Lama!"* [Laughs] *"I am holding ..."* [Laughs] And, as the facilitator of this discussion, my job was to kind of facilitate: make sure everybody got to share. And, literally, for the 20 minutes or so he was holding my hand, I was useless. Useless! I mean, it just over ... The spiritual power just overwhelmed my system! [Laughs] Right? And, you know, that's one of the great accomplishments of my life!

I had the opportunity to speak at the U.N. I gave a speech at the U.N. for the Season of Non-Violence many years ago. And that's definitely ... I've been to multiple parliaments of world religions.

And so, when I look at my life, I'm proud of it! Like, I'm proud of some of the things I've accomplished, right? A lot of mistakes, but the accomplishments are definitely there.

And so, this week, I want you to really spend some time looking at what you've done with this life. You know, are you proud of what you've done? Can you see some of the highlights? Whether it's with family; or maybe it's some of the things you had to overcome in your life. Some of the situations that have been a blessing to you. I want you to really celebrate your accomplishments! Because, what I want us to see tonight, is that – as we acknowledge who we are – it allows Spirit to take us even higher. And I really believe that that's what Jesus launches into Holy Week with that celebration, right?

That when we look at Palm Sunday: Palm Sunday was truly the highlight of Jesus' earthly ministry. He comes into Jerusalem, and the crowd goes wild. Right? Jesus spent most of his time ministering in little backwater towns and villages around Judea. Right? He was in little places, and he touched people. And, you know, there was the ... where he spoke to the 5,000. And there were some big events, but most of the time Jesus was kind of ministering individually or in small groups or to his 12 disciples.

But on Palm Sunday, it goes big! And it goes big in a big way, right? And he rides in, and he gets acknowledged and celebrated for all that he did. There were ... Like, if there were paparazzi at the time of Jesus, there would have been paparazzi! He was surrounded by the crowds. He was surrounded: the energy was big! It was fantastic! And he steps into this experience ready to minister at a whole 'nother level.

I'll going to be reading from John 12:12:

*"The next day a great crowd who had come to the feast heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem."*

This is his rock star statement, right? The crowd heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, and they were going, *"Waaaaa! Waaaaa!"* Right? The crowd went wild, right? This is his rock star moment!

*“So they took branches of palm trees and they went out to greet him, crying, ‘Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Even as the king of Israel!’”*

So the story, as we read it: people took off their coats. They cut palm fronds. They’re waving their palm fronds. And they’re celebrating Jesus as a rock star coming into Jerusalem. They’re celebrating him as the epitome: he was the Messiah! He was the one chosen! And some of them believed that he was there to set them free; to be the Messiah king. To be that force that would overthrow the Romans, establish a spiritual kingdom in Jerusalem. And they were looking for him to set them free!

You know, they were a people that was being put down. They were a people that anywhere were second class citizens. The Romans were in charge; the Israelites – the Jewish people of the time – really didn’t have the power to really impact their life the way they wanted to.

So when Jesus came in, he was it. He was the Messiah! He was going to be the – not only the political leader – he was going to be the religious leader. He was going to be the king of the Jews, and they were fired up. Right? So:

*“‘Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Even as the king of Israel!’ And Jesus found a young ass and sat upon it, for it was written: ‘Fear not, Daughter of Zion; for behold, your king is coming sitting on an ass’ colt.’”*

Right? So this is Jesus’ big moment. And what I want you to look at in your life – as we come into this Easter week – some of us aren’t sure internally how to enter into this Easter week. Some of us aren’t really sure – I mean, *“I’m not really sure; am I supposed to be meek? Am I supposed to be small? Am I supposed to be humble?”* We come into this Easter week.

And what I want you to see is: I want you to go big! I want you to go so big! I want you to bring your full light, your full presence! I want you to bring the bigness of who you are, and I want us to bring that into this Easter week. And then I want you to take it up even higher. I want that to be spiritualized so that – as you bring in the bigness of who you are – even that is taken to the next highest level!

And then, sometimes, we forget that – as a spiritual being – we are created in the image ... in the infinite image and likeness of God! So I want you to go big this week! I want you to really let your light shine! I want you to feel the fullness of God that is within you, and allow that fullness to be truly amazing!

And then – because we’ve been doing the “I AM” statements of Jesus – I want ... There’s one that I’ve been saving for this week. And it’s when Jesus said:

*“I am the bread of life.”*

Right? And the bread of life; we think about the bread of life. [Laughs] And we think about it; you know, it’s kind of just the basic food group, you know. Now that we’re going paleo or keto or whatever; most of us aren’t doing a lot of bread right now. But it, from the beginning of time, bread was the most common substance. It was the most common thing to eat. You know, you’d have a little. And yeast was not placed in bread at that time, so all the bread ... You know, we’re thinking of all the big doo-ey, doughy .... Doo-ey. Doo-ey? No! Doughy! Doughy! [Laughs] Not doo-ey; doughy! The big doughy bread: that’s not what we’re talking about.

In Jesus’ time, it was a flat bread. There was no yeast in it. It was more like a cracker, right? But that was the bread. When he’s saying, *“I am the bread of life,”* he’s talking about being the basic aspect – or the basic element – of survival. *“I am the bread of life.”* Then he goes on and says this:

*“I am the bread of life. And he who comes to me shall not hunger. And he who believes in me shall never thirst.”*

And I want you to really hear that! Because I'm not sure we really believe that. Right? I'm not sure that we really believe that, as we awaken to God – as we awaken to our spiritual life; as we awaken to all that God is – that we're not going to hunger and thirst any more.

You know, from the time I was in high school, I felt called to the ministry. But it looked like an awful job, I've got to be honest with you! It looked like an awful job! You have to work every weekend. Right? And you have to work most holidays. And it looked like an awful job! And my plan ... And I couldn't see any minister making any kind of a living ... Not the living I wanted to be living! Right?

So my plan – my strategy – was really: I was going to go to business school. I did. I was going to go out and get a professional job making some real money. And my vision was: I was going to make a lot of money. I was going to put some money in the bank. And then I was going to retire into ministry when I was too old to do anything else. *[Laughs]* That was my strategy, right? In high school, that seemed absolutely the most appropriate thing: was that I was going to get to ministry. I was going to do what God was calling me to do. But I was going to do it Richard's way. And Richard's way was: you make enough money on the side that you don't really have to depend on God. You don't have to depend on the church. And then you're good to go, right?

But, because at that point, I didn't really understand what it meant to have God as my Source. And the more that I began to experience God as my Source – truly, truly, truly knowing that God is my Source and that God is infinite – my life began to transform so rapidly, so quickly, so powerfully. That, by the time I was 28 years old – 10 years after I felt that calling – I was able to leave the corporate world, go into seminary, spend two years there, and then go into ministry.

Because what I found over and over again is: I really believe that God is my Source. That I wouldn't have to hunger or thirst. That I would absolutely have everything I need to live a joyous, abundant, full life. So let me read it again, from John 6:35:

*"Jesus said to them, 'I am the bread of life. And he who comes to me shall not hunger. And he who believes in me shall not thirst.'"*

So we've been using these "I AM" statements of Jesus. And I've been trying to slow them down each week and really look at what the "I AM" – which is the activity of God in each one of us – the "I AM" in us. And this statement ... I wanted to save this statement for Holy Week, because the bread is so much a part of the Holy Week experience. Right?

So I want to slow this down, and I want to read it from a spiritual point of view.

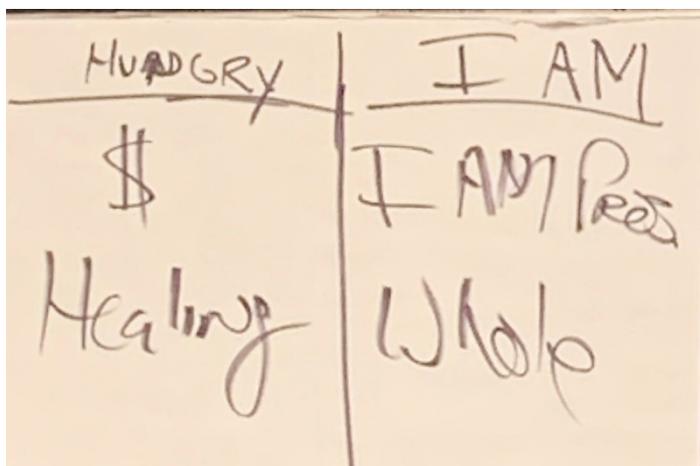
*"I am the bread of life."*

"I AM" is the bread of life! And he who comes to the "I AM" shall not go hungry. And he who believes in the "I AM" will not go thirsty.

So what is the "I AM"? The "I AM" is the activity of God in us. It is the creative power in us. And when we really truly begin to understand the power of God within – when we begin to say the words, "I AM" – we're really giving form and shape to the infinite.

So here's what I want you to do today. I want you to take a piece of paper, and I want you to just draw a line down it. *[Draws a vertical line down the middle of the easel pad]* And I want you to make a list over here of all the places in your life where you experience a level of hunger. *[Titles left column of the page "Hungry."]* Where you're hungry. Where your needs have not been fully satisfied. Where you've been thirsty or needy or broken or less than.

And over here I want you to write down the "I AM" statement that would transform this situation. *[Titles right column of the page "I AM."]*



So maybe you say, “Well, you know, I really haven’t lived in the level of abundance that I want to live in.” Right? [Writes dollar sign in left column] So then over here I want you to write down the “I AM” statement. “I am ...” And let’s just say you want to say, “I am prosperous.” [Writes “I AM Pros” in right column] I’m going to run out of room! But, “I am prosperous!” Right?

Say you want a healing! Right? [Writes “Healing” in the left column] Then over here you say, “I am whole.” [Writes “Whole” in the right column] Right?

And what I want you to begin to see is, again. Let me read it again.

*“Jesus said, ‘I am the bread of life. And he who comes to me will not hunger.’”*

*“I am the bread of life.”* He who comes to the “I AM” shall not go hungry! He who believes in the “I AM” will never thirst again.

See, what I want you to begin to see [laughs] here, right? Is: it’s not a problem that you’re hungry! It’s not a problem that you’re thirsty! It’s not a problem that you’re needy! It’s not a problem that you have a bigger goal or a higher desire! **The problem is when you don’t connect that to your “I AM”!** When you disconnect the need from the “I AM,” you can never create the life that you want!

Like, every time you have a desire – every time you have a need; every time you have a thirst; every time you have a disappointment – what is the “I AM” in your life that you would have to claim to transform that situation? *“I am powerful.” “I am wise.” “I am creative.” “I am prosperous.” “I am fully alive.” “I am fully loved.”* What is the “I AM” that is going to speak to the actual need in your life?

Because if you have a need, that’s not a problem! The problem is when you don’t connect it to the creative power of the universe by claiming an “I AM” statement that would actually satisfy that need!

You know, some of us come into this world, and we know we’ve come into this world to do some things. We’ve got an agenda; our soul has an agenda to do some great things in this life. And sometimes we get frustrated when it doesn’t work out the way we think it should.

What I want you to see tonight is: That is not a problem! Having a big agenda – having a big desire; having a big want; having a big need – is not a problem! The problem is when you don’t connect it to your “I AM,” which is the solution to everything you desire. It is the remedy! It is the healing power! It is the transformational essence of everything you desire! That, whatever you’re hungering for ... Whatever you’re thirsting for ... Whatever you’re needing for ... What I want you to see today is: Your “I AM” is your path! Your “I AM” is your process! As you link your “I AM” to the solution, your life is transformed!

But when you’re needy, and you just keep affirming, *“I am needy,”* all you’re doing is making the situation ten times worse! You’re actually linking your “I AM” to the problem, not to the solution!

So make a list! I really want you to do this! Make a list of everything that you would like to be transformed in your life: every need, every situation, every hope, every dream, every desire. And I want you to link it to your “I AM” today. Link it to the power of God within you, and watch everything in your life move to a greater level. Move to a higher possibility. There is no problem with having a big desire.

Now, if you have a big desire, and you think your ego or hard work or how cute you are, how smart you are, is your essence of transforming that situation ... You're going to be disappointed. And probably disappointed a lot!

But when you link it to your "I AM" – when you create the statement that would transform your life – and you put more and more of your energy in that statement, everything in your life then moves to higher ground. Today, your job is to go big. It's to go big! It's not to deny any aspect of God, but to allow the fullness of God to transform your life.

I want to go one step more. Because this Wednesday between Palm Sunday and Easter is when we usually do our communion service. Or one of the times in this ministry when we do our communion service. And one of the things that's important to me is: in many Unity churches, they don't use the elements. They go through a spiritual process of communion, and they don't do the elements. And I've always felt like the elements were part of the experience, right? That we can't just "spiritualize"; we actually have to have a human experience: the experience is the teaching.

And so, on this Wednesday of Holy Week, I want to take that one more step and go and talk about the experience of Jesus offering his disciples communion. Because it relates to this whole bread and wine concept. Reading from Matthew 26:26:

*"And now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and he blessed it and he broke it, and he gave it to the disciples, saying, 'Eat. This is my body.' And then he took a cup, and when he had given thanks for it, he gave it to them, saying, 'Drink of it, all of you. For this is the bread of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. For I tell you, I shall not drink again of the fruit of the vine until the day when I drink it anew in my Father's kingdom.'"*

So they passed the bread; they passed the wine. And this was done right after the Last Supper. And then Jesus' final act of ministry began: his final four days through the garden; through crucifixion; and the resurrection. But the last thing that Jesus did with his disciples was this act of giving them bread and wine: an acknowledgement of the spiritual food that he'd been serving them. And the spiritual life that he had been offering them.

See, one of the things that happens when you eat the little wafer and you drink the sweet wine is it leaves a taste in your mouth. It's a pleasant taste; it's a sweet taste in your mouth. But if you don't really have the elements, you kind of just make it a mental process. And so today, even though we don't have the physical elements, I want you to see if you can remember maybe a time in this room where we celebrated communion together. A time in your life when you celebrated communion. Or even just imagine eating of the wafer: eating of the small piece of bread and the sweet wine (or, in our ministry, grape juice). And I want you just to take that in.

Because what Jesus was trying to show them was the spiritual process that they had been undergoing for the last three years. For the last three years, every day as they walked with Jesus, they had been eating the spiritual food that he had been offering them. Every day they had been taking in the spiritual substance that he had been offering him. And every day, they were drinking of the spiritual life that he was offering them. And three years later, each and every one of those people were different men, because they had been partaking in the elements that Jesus had been offering them.

See, our spiritual life is like that. The more time and energy we spend eating good spiritual food: eating of good spiritual ideas, really partaking in higher and higher levels of consciousness ... Drinking in that spiritual life, that spiritual presence ... That as we eat and drink of the Spirit – as we eat and drink of the higher possibilities of God – over the course of time, we become new. Just like food and wine actually has an impact on our body, spiritual food has an impact on us, as well.

And so tonight, what I'm going to invite you to do – to imagine with me wherever you are – is that you've been eating over the course of this year, over the course of the history of this ministry ... You've been eating spiritual food. And because of that, you are actually different.

You know, it doesn't even seem like a lot! One spiritual idea or another spiritual idea. Or somebody comes and just touches you, prays for you or blesses you. Or you get one little zinger of one little "Aha!" or one great idea. Or one concept that you let go of a limited belief and held on to another belief. And before you know it, the spiritual good that's being offered you has changed you! That you're lighter; you're happier. You're freer; you're more loving, more forgiving. You're more abundant. You've actually been changed from the inside out.

That's what our spiritual life does for us. You know, we take little ideas each day – each week – and we just kind of integrate them. We kind of just take them in. And we don't notice the effect they're having on the cells of our life. We don't always notice the transformation – the slow, gradual transformation – that's happening in our spiritual life. But it's happening! And then we get to a point where Spirit says to us, *"Look at where you are today over where you've been before!"* Like, you're not as afraid as you used to be here. How much more courageous you are. Or happier you are. Or loving you are. Or prosperous you are. Because spiritual food has nourished you through all the difficult times in your life.

You know, I read a cartoon this week that said, *"Look at all the tough days you've had; you know, maybe the thousands of tough days you've had! Your batting average is 100% getting through those tough days."* And I just love that idea! That every tough thing that I've ever had to overcome, I've overcome it! I've made it! I'm here today! And the same is true for you! That, as we take part in that spiritual activity – as we learn to claim the power of the "I AM" – we can transform every situation in our life to a higher level of good.

And it doesn't always happen in big thunderbolts or big, huge transformations; it happens for most of us in little ways every day. That we get a little bit happier, a little bit healthier, a little bit more prosperous, a little bit more forgiving, a little bit more loving. It happens in little ways. And then we look back and we see, *"I'm different! I'm not who I was! I've been transformed from the inside out!"*

This Holy Week I'm going to invite you into a further transformative process. Your homework is: I want you to look at where there might still be need in your life. Where are you still hungry and thirsty for a greater life? For a greater spiritual experience? And I want you to create an "I AM" statement that really gets to the core of the matter: the essence of who you are. And really begin to affirm a greater truth in a big, bold, fabulous way.

Let's move into our time of meditation.

## **MEDITATION**

I want you to take a deep breath, and I want you to feel the presence of God that is right here. I'm going to invite you to imagine Jesus Christ right here: speaking directly to your soul. And I want you to feel the presence of Jesus Christ speaking to your soul and saying, *"This is my body; eat."* And he hands you a little piece of bread, and you eat it. For all the moments – for all the times – when you've been fed spiritually: those that you're aware of, and those that you've maybe been unconscious to. And then Jesus hands you a cup and says, *"This is my Spirit; this is my blood. This is the wine of the covenant; I want you to drink."*

As we eat and drink of the Spirit, we are no longer hungry and thirsty. We are no longer separate from our Source. The presence of Christ is with us always: guiding us and directing us. Healing us and blessing us. And transforming us at depth. No matter where you've been hungry – no matter where you've felt needy or broken or less than – today we eat of the food of the spirit and drink of the spiritual life that's being offered to each and every one of us.

*"I am the bread of life. And he who partakes in me will never be hungry again."* He who partakes of the "I AM" will never be hungry again! Today I allow myself to eat the spiritual food that's being offered me. And drink of the wisdom and guidance – the direction and life, the wholeness. I drink it in! For I am not separate from my Creator, but I am an expression of the Christ Spirit. Let me eat and drink of the infinite abundance of my God! Let me eat and drink all that God is!

Thank you, God, for the infinite that is mine and will always be mine. For the spiritual nourishment that you offer me, and the life that moves through every cell of my body. Thank you, God; thank you, God; thank you, God! And so it is. Amen.

## **CLOSING/COLLECTION**

This is the time of the giving of our gifts and tithes. And I invite you to hold them in your hand as we bless them together. And I just really want to thank you during this Holy Week for your abundant blessings of this ministry; for every little gift and every giver. For each and every gift makes a difference in the life of our ministry.

So our offering blessing is: *"Divine love, through me, blesses and multiplies all that I give, and all that I receive."* Together: *"Divine love, through me, blesses and multiplies all that I have, all that I give, and all that I receive."* And so it is. We bless every gift and every giver, and we dedicate it all to God. And so it is. Amen.

Alright! Let's affirm together our Prayer for Protection:

The light of God surrounds us;  
The love of God enfolds us;  
The power of God protects us;  
And the presence of God watches over us.  
Wherever we are, God is! And, truly, all is well!

God bless you all! Have a wonderful Holy Week! And I look forward to being with you next week!

### ***Unity of Phoenix Choir sings:***

Let there be peace on earth  
and let it begin with me.  
Let there be peace on earth;  
the peace that was meant to be.

With God as Creator,  
family all are we.  
Let us walk with each other  
in perfect harmony.

Let peace begin with me;  
let this be the moment now.  
With every step I take,  
Let this be my joyous vow:

To take each moment  
and live each moment  
in peace eternally!

Let there be peace on earth  
and let it begin with me!