



I am sending you to harvest crops in fields
where others have done all the hard work.

—John 4:38

WEEK 25

Jesus as Water, Light, and Life Itself

Guide: Who Jesus Is for Us

This week our journey with Jesus continues to grow in depth. As our desire to be with him grows, and as our choices about the way we will live our lives become clearer, it is easier to spend time in fascination with this one we love.

Three powerful scenes from John's Gospel will fill our week. They represent a profound reflection on the meaning of Jesus for the community that first read the Fourth Gospel but also for us today.

We should read the stories carefully. We need to enter into the interaction between Jesus and the characters. We want to become engrossed in each question, each misunderstanding, each turn of phrase, each rise in the level of tension, and each transformation of the people in the scene. Then we will see how carefully this proclamation of who Jesus is can come alive for our lives today.

Throughout this week, we can become more highly attuned to the dynamics of the stories, as they are part of our journey in this retreat. This week can help us pull together what has

been the grace of this retreat for us so far. The woman at the well, the man born blind, and Jesus' friend Lazarus represent us and how we have experienced Jesus in this retreat.

The grace will come when I see that I have been at the well a long time and have long been thirsty. When I can name the new thirst, the Water that now satisfies that thirst, I can overcome my remaining resistance to trust. When I see that Jesus reveals himself to me by revealing me to me, thereby showing me my need for him as Savior, I will rejoice and tell the whole world too.

The grace will come when I acknowledge that my eyes have been opened. Others may not want to believe I can see, but I know I can only keep repeating it, to myself and to them. I may experience rejection by some for claiming this new vision, but in the Light I can see clearly one who has healed me, and I give him thanks and praise.

The grace will come when I experience how my deaths will not end in death but in giving glory to God. When I experience how entombed I have been, tied and bound, no longer alive, dead for a long time, I will sense the power of the command of Jesus that I come forth.

Use the resources to let these contemplations be a part of the background of each day this week. Throughout the week, we can grow in gratitude as we acknowledge who Jesus has become for us. Our choices are being confirmed, to become one with him in living our lives, in growing harmony with his love for us.

Some Practical Help for Getting Started This Week

We can best get started this week by reading each of the three readings very carefully. They were written with such great care. These powerful portraits of Jesus reveal to us wonderful ways to discover the same presence of Jesus in our everyday lives.

The key to this week is how we let these stories enter the background of our week. The more familiar we become with the dynamics of the three encounters with Jesus, the better we will be at finding fruit in reflecting throughout the week on the dynamics of our own lives with Jesus.

If we take each story and break it open in our reflections, we will begin to see questions that we can chew all week.

Why did the Samaritan woman come to draw water at noon, the hottest time of the day? Did she want to avoid the times the other women in town came to the well? What are the places in my life where I am embarrassed, where I avoid interaction with others? What are the noonday wells of my life? Can I imagine Jesus approaching me there?

Jesus tries to reveal his thirst to her—perhaps his thirst for intimacy with her—but she puts him off. She's not worthy. It won't work. When he offers to satisfy her thirst, she puts him off. He can't satisfy what she needs, at least with this well, and without a bucket. How do I put Jesus off, with excuses, with problems, with barriers? I don't have time; I haven't done this before; my stuff's too complicated; I don't know how to find you in this mess.

When he shows her that he knows her, she knows she's in the presence of someone special—perhaps the one she has thirsted for all her life. Do I let Jesus show me that he knows and understands me? Can I find the words to say he is the one I have thirsted for all my life?

The man born blind washed the mud from his eyes in the pool called Siloam, "The one who is sent." How is Jesus a pool to wash the mud from my eyes that I might see?

As soon as he could see, his life became very difficult. People wondered whether he was the same man before they believed that he could now see. Has the restoration of my sight so changed me that others are surprised at the transformation? So much fear seems to surround the restoration of his

sight. What fears do I now have to seeing clearly who Jesus is and what choices I must make to be with him?

Martha speaks profound sorrow at the death of Lazarus, but it is tinged with a touch of blaming Jesus: "Lord, if you had been here my brother would not have died." Where do I resent the losses in my life and somehow blame God for them rather than see them as places where God's glory will be revealed? Even when Jesus tells Martha, "I am the one who raises the dead to life!" she finds it hard to believe that he means now, in the case of her dead brother. Where do I doubt that Jesus can bring life?

Jesus stands before the tomb weeping. He places no barriers to his feelings about death. Could he be staring at and facing the tomb of his own death? Can I be with him there? Can I stand before and face the tombs in my daily life?

Jesus shouts the liberating words of life, "Lazarus, come forth!" How is he shouting that to me today?

Every morning this week, as I put on my slippers or robe, I will prepare for the day. And each evening, I will take a moment to give thanks for this profound journey. It is all gift. It is all about union with Jesus. It is all for God's greater glory and the service of others.

For the Journey: Reading the Signs

One of life's great discoveries is the difference between the words *possible* and *probable*. This week we continue being attracted by Jesus' signs to the person and mission of the Sign Maker. He continues to make gestures that make him and his ways possible to some and improbable to others.

The Gospel according to John has the first twelve chapters highlighting signs of not only the power of Jesus but also of his desire to provoke responses. There is always the apparently impossible to these signs. "They have no wine." "You have no bucket." "We have only five loaves and two fish, but what are they among so many?" Jesus creates discussion and opposition

by moving from the impossible to the sign. There are always the surface tensions of not having with the inner tension of believing or not believing.

We are invited this week to pray with our own resolves and responses. We are hearing his call to be signs ourselves. We wonder with the woman at the well at this man who has told us everything about ourselves. He offers us more than insight: a living water that will always sustain us. "How can this be?" We know we are being given new sight to see Jesus when others do not. Is he real to us? "Show him to me and I will worship." Now we see him, now we don't. We have been raised from a deadness but is this real life? We have been in the tomb a long time. Things can seem probable, but are they at all possible in the realness of our simple lives?

The Book of Signs in John's Gospel prepares us disciples to more freely live our sign value by trusting in the possible with him who changed the alienated into a believer, blindness into faith sight, and death into life.

We pray from our skeptical side as well. Jesus' signs confounded many and they no longer followed him. He has given us hard sayings, and we wonder whether we can stay possible with him as he moves into even greater opposition and conflict. We pray with our fears as he moves from provoker to the suspected, resented, and condemned.

This week we pray with he who changes the meaning of water, light, and life for us. We pray with our attractions and our fears; we pray with our doubts and our desires to continue to follow him. "To whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life."

In These or Similar Words . . .

Dear Jesus,

I want to stay closer to you this week, more comfortable with the things you do and the way you challenge people. I love seeing you touch, heal, and comfort so many people. At

first I watched at a distance, seeing how gentle you were with other people. Then I saw how gentle you were with me. Your comforting words give me a sense of your love for me. When you want to say more challenging words, you take my hand and look right at me with a direct, calm look as you invite me into courage. I feel you draw me into a deeper friendship with you, you who have become such a close friend.

I read the Gospel about the woman at the well. I go there, in the heat of the day, when no one else is around. I just want to get the water and get out before I run into someone from town who will reject me or mock me. Instead I run into you, sitting at the side of the well as though you have been waiting for me.

You invite me to quench my thirst with a different kind of water, and suddenly I realize how much thirst and longing is inside of me. I want to make my life different, to undo the mistakes I have made. I have shut God out of my life for so many years, and it seemed as if there were no way back. And then you invite me into your water and into eternal life.

Your brown eyes are fixed firmly on mine as you acknowledge my sins. But none of my flaws matter. You have already wiped them away with your compassion. All of the reasons I have for keeping my distance from God don't matter any more. My sins, the fact that I'm not really a good person, that I've made so many mistakes, none of this matters because you have invited me into a new life.

I have a new sense of freedom, the same freedom I see in you as you break social barriers by speaking to a lowly Samaritan like me. I feel lighter somehow, and all I want to do is shout the news loudly. "Come and see!" I want to tell everyone about you, those who have rejected me and those I am afraid of. None of my fears matter anymore because I have your good news, your living water, and the freedom I see in you.

Thank you, Jesus, my loving friend. Thank you for the wonderful love and life you invite me into. Thank you for healing me, for loving me. Like the Lazarus story, you wept for me when I was separated from you, but you never stopped loving me. Let me feel what it is like to experience your freedom as you see me stumble out of the tomb and as you untie me and let me go free.

Scripture Readings

John 4:1-42

John 9:1-41

John 11:1-45