

Welcome to week three of our journey! This week's reading is a shorter assignment than the Sermon on the Mount which we read last week. So, I encourage you to read these sayings each day if possible. Let them sit in your mind and heart. Be open to the mystery of Jesus in the Gospel of John.

- What does it mean for Jesus to be the things he declares himself to be?
- Which of these images do you find most personal at this time in your life?
- Which do you find most inspiring? Most confusing?

Over the week of reflection we might be surprised at the answers that come to us.

First, a brief word about the Gospel of John.

In Matthew, the writer quotes Hebrew scripture and seeks to lead us to make the connection between the ancient expectations and the fulfillment of the Messianic hope in Jesus.

Mark lists miracle after miracle, urging us to claim Jesus as the Messiah, the one we should choose to follow as did those first disciples.

Luke tells us parable after parable as a way of connecting Jesus to our human experiences of joy and sorrow, abundance and scarcity, faith, and doubt.

Because these three Gospels tell basically the same story of Jesus' roughly 33 years on the planet, they are called the Synoptic Gospels. They tell the story of Jesus from more or less the same point of view. They share much of the same material and follow a similar timeline.

John, on the other hand, is quite different. John is considered to be the last Gospel written down. The theology is much more developed and the language more sophisticated. Rather than focusing on Jesus sharing our human experience, John focuses on the divinity of Jesus. I believe that John's goal is to show that Jesus IS God.

Read the following I AM statements from the Book of John:

- John 6:35
- John 8:12
- John 10:7-9
- John 10:11
- John 11:25
- John 14:16
- John 15:1

As you reflect on these sayings, consider these questions:

- What does it mean for Jesus to be the things he declares himself to be?
- Which of these images do you find most personal at this time in your life?
- Which do you find most inspiring? Most confusing?
- Where in the Bible do we first hear the phrase, “I Am”?
- If Jesus is the bread of life, what does this mean for those who have no bread?
- In your mind, what is the deepest darkness in our world? In your life?
- What does the talk of sheep and gates and shepherds mean to you in our modern, non-agrarian context?
- What strikes you most about the encounter between Jesus and Mary and Martha? What does resurrection mean to you in your life experience?
- How is Jesus “the way, the truth and the life”?
- When do you feel most connected to “the true vine”? When do you feel the most cut-off from “the true vine”?
- In what ways have you experienced Jesus as God in your life?