

## Being healed

By [Audrey West](#)

August 6, 2012

*For more commentary on this week's readings, see the [Reflections on the Lectionary](#) page, which includes West's current Living by the Word column as well as past magazine and blog content. For full-text access to all articles, [subscribe](#) to the Century.*

A few years ago I lost a friend to cancer, barely 12 months after the diagnosis. During her final months she wrapped up business at her job and then went about saying goodbye to those people closest to her. She planned "final" experiences with friends and family—including a magnificent, all-expenses paid vacation with a few closest friends— and prepared herself spiritually by seeking out the rites and rituals of the church that would prepare her to finish her earthly life: renewal of baptism, Holy Communion, anointing.

Although the cancer was killing her, she continually affirmed, "I am being healed." Far from a pie-in-the-sky denial of her situation or a rejection of life, this was an affirmation of the life that truly matters. She fought for her life with every ounce of her being, while at the same time looking forward to the day that she would be with Jesus in a more immediate way, trusting in his promise, "I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats of this bread will live forever."

In the Gospel of John, Jesus speaks in images that we can see, touch and even taste: light, living water, bread. This is the stuff of life: enabling our sight, quenching our thirst, sating our hunger. Too often, however, we fail to see the heavenly abundance because our eyes are focused on all that we lack. We miss out on eternal life in the present because we are too busy looking for something else. Helping people to see the signs of God—and, perhaps, noting how those signs are manifested in their own lives and in the life of the worshipping community—is one of the joys and challenges of preaching.