

# Gleaning In The Fields Of Light

By Ken Woodley

The darkness was everywhere.

I closed my eyes as tightly as I could to keep from seeing it but it only got darker and I could hear the darkness taking deep breaths as if it were preparing to blow everything away.

I felt it touching me.

I heard the darkness speak my name.

My tongue and lips trembled in search of a prayer: an army, please, Lord, with swords raised, spears held high to push back against all of this darkness. But no thundering hoofbeats came.

No rescuing trumpets sounded.

There was no clatter of metal weapons.

I was utterly on my own, like the last leaf on an Autumn tree, all the rest fallen and winter digging in all around the empty forest.

I was as helpless as the day I'd been born and reached frantically for the only thing I saw—even with my eyes closed—in a brief flash of flickering light inside my soul:

A star was shining from the stump of Jesse.

A branch was shining out of its roots.

I opened one eye to take a peek.

Outside my window, a corner of the dark horizon was turning gray.

The spirit of the Lord began to call, like a single bird on a lonely limb of the last tree standing, wondering where all the leaves had gone.

That was all but that was enough.

Darkness knew that it was already too late.

A spirit of wisdom and understanding, of counsel and might had begun to brushstroke traces of pink and orange in the sky.

There was more to the world, I realized, than the darkness that had surrounded me.

Shapes began to emerge in the gathering scatterings of light.

And, even with one eye closed, I saw unmistakable miracles.

I saw a leaf on a tree, green somehow, even on winter's doorstep.

I saw my own wrinkles and veins.

I saw a wolf lying down with a lamb.

A lion was eating straw like the ox.  
And a little child was leading them.  
A little child coming from Bethlehem.  
No army to the thundering rescue.  
No swords and clattering of spears.  
Just this one, small child.  
And—what amazing grace—I knew his name.  
“Jesus,” I called out to him. “Jesus!”  
And the darkness understood then that it had met its match.  
Darkness knew the game was over.  
Darkness knew the final score was set in stone for all eternity.  
I opened both eyes as wide as I could and there was suddenly light all around.  
The little child had brought the light that never sets.  
A light that could not and would not be extinguished.  
A light that hope can trust.  
A light that also shines inside us toward others waiting in the darkness.  
I could hear the light breathing deeply.  
I felt its touch.  
Then the light spoke my name.  
My tongue and lips trembled with “Amen.”  
And then I cried out, “Hallelujah!”  
Its echo became a refrain and the darkness, itself, had turned to light.

