

Gleaning In The Fields Of Light

Leaving The Shadow Of COVID-19

By Ken Woodley

The tomb-like shadow of COVID-19 is all around us, getting closer and closer. Headlines wash over us like a tidal wave of bad news getting worse.

So much of our daily life seems to have died already. Basic stuff. Schools are closed. We can't shake a stranger's hand, or that of a friend. With Easter approaching, we can't even go to church anymore.

But there *is* something we can do:

We can wait with Lazarus in Bethany.

In faith.

With certainty.

COVID-19 isn't the only thing coming over the horizon and around the bend.

Jesus is coming, too.

Jesus is on the way.

Look into the distance and see the dust rising from the road, punctuating his approach on foot.

His footsteps are a drumbeat of purpose.

We didn't have to strain to hear Martha and Mary dictating their message to Jesus. "Lord, they whom you love are dead," they had told him.

They were talking about us.

You and me.

We've been in the shadowy "tomb" of COVID-19 for days and days and days.

Mary and Martha have, in fact, given up hope.

Martha runs to meet Jesus at his approach.

"Lord, if you had been here," we hear her tell him, "my brothers and sisters would not have died. But even now I know that God will give you whatever you ask of him."

We look at each other.

You and me together in this "tomb."

Our eyes meet.

Our hearts know the answer.

Martha is right.

Now, Mary joins her, kneeling at the feet of Jesus.

“Lord, if you had been here, my brothers and sisters would not have died,” she tells him, speaking of you and me, together in this tomb, knowing both Mary and Martha are correct.

But Jesus is here now. And with Jesus it is never too late.

“Where have you laid them?” Jesus asks, wondering where he will find us, you and me together in this “tomb.”

Jesus is deeply moved. He weeps. The tears roll down his cheeks.

Now he stands there, just outside our “tomb.”

Remove the stone, Jesus tells them. The stone that seals us in this “tomb.”

We don't just see the stone being removed—we feel it. The lifting of the shadow's weight that was so ponderous, the burden we found hard to bear, the mountain-high shadow that held us prisoner in this “tomb.”

Jesus now calls us. “Come out,” he cries.

And we do.

We move into the light of his presence, the light of his love.

“Unbind them,” Jesus says, speaking of you and me, “and let them go.”

We are, in that moment, resurrected from our places of fear. You and me. Freed from this “tomb” and able to rise back into the fulness of our spiritual journey, able to see through the shadow of COVID-19 to the other side.

That is the promise that Jesus offers everyone.

Hear him speaking these words:

“Leave now.

“It's time to go.”

And he's right.

It is.

I don't know what's around the next bend in this road, but I do know that I am not alone.

Neither are you.

Come on. Let's go. It's time to be leaving this shadowy tomb.

