

# Gleaning In The Fields Of Light

## *Receiving 'Communion' During COVID-19: We Can Do This For The Remembrance Of Him*

By Ken Woodley

The image of the human palm, evidencing an open hand, is a powerful symbol. A hand willing to give and to receive, to accept, to welcome, to open doors. Open hands most often reflect an open heart, as well.

An open-handed Savior was riding into Jerusalem 2,000 years ago with a heart opened wider than the world.

Appropriately, there were palms along his path, pulled from trees and laid before him, and also the palms of those reaching out toward him as he rode purposefully forward.

But there were plenty of fists awaiting him at the end of his journey, too. Hammering fists and nailing hearts.

What a stunning “crossroads” of human reaction to a message of love and redemption.

And now here all of us are, striding through our own sort of Jerusalem “crossroads” moment toward Easter. We’ve been experiencing Palm Mondays and Tuesdays. Palm Wednesdays and Thursdays. Palm Fridays and Saturdays, too. COVID-19 has created its own recreation of Palm Sunday every day.

In so many ways, the world around us seems to have closed its hand and made a fist. We reach out for a “savior.” Anyone or anything to rescue us from the hammering fear and nailing heart of this pandemic.

But we’ve endured pandemics before. COVID-19, in fact, is merely sharing the stage with others that have plagued humanity for centuries: pandemics of racism, intolerance, hate, greed, apathy...the list is quite nearly endless.

And we’ve never found a vaccine for any of them.

One day, we shall find a vaccination for COVID-19 but as this Easter approaches there seems no hope at all for halting the ravages of those other pandemics.

Or is there?

Jesus, in fact, gave his life delivering the “good news” that a cure for all of those pandemics of the human heart are right here, right now—that they are, in fact, right inside the human heart, itself.

Before the palm of any open hand becomes a closed fist, instead, a human heart has already closed tightly into a weapon of pandemic possibilities. Making a fist of the human heart has always been the worst pandemic of all. But, thankfully, we have the cure right here in the open palm of our hand.

That is why Jesus gave his heart to change ours.

To have communion with us in the turning of another cheek, the re-shaping of a single sword into just one more plowshare.

That is why Jesus rode through the back gates of Jerusalem while the might of Rome galloped through the front gate.

On the night when a human heart betrayed him, Jesus made one simple request of his disciples—and of us: He initiated a final “communion” with his disciples by sharing bread and wine, and he asked them—he asks us—to “do this for the remembrance of me.”

Cancelled church services should not stop us from sharing this communion with Jesus, especially during Eastertide. We can’t let COVID-19 have that much power over us.

All of us can—yes, we certainly can—celebrate “communion” with Jesus in our own homes. By ourselves, if we live alone, or as a family. With wine or grape juice (whatever feels right to you) and bread, along with simple prayers, we can do what Jesus asked us to do. And safely. Each of us with our own cup and our own piece of bread.

Some may have the Book of Common Prayer at home and the Bible, of course, is rich with words we can choose to celebrate this “communion.” Though never discount the power of the words you find in your own heart at that moment.

We, as lay people, won’t be making any claims about turning the wine into the blood of Christ or the bread into the body of Jesus. Instead, we will let the Holy Spirit translate this “communion” deep within our soul.

The experience will undoubtedly differ from faithful heart to faithful heart, but nobody could ever get me to believe that by accepting his invitation we’re not opening the door for Jesus to join us.

We may just discover, in fact, that COVID-19 deepens the intimacy of our relationship and journey with Jesus. With his death and resurrection, Jesus

tears the curtain of the temple which had been separating us from the “Holy of Holies.” Clearly, he wants us to step inside.

As Jesus tells us in the Gospel of John, “On that day you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you.”

In those words, Jesus describes the deepest possible “communion.”

Even were every church service cancelled forever, the only real barrier to our “communion” with a loving God is ourselves.

Let us receive the “communion” Jesus offers and do so for the remembrance of him.

That sacramental moment is a gift from Jesus to us all.