

Gleaning In The Fields Of Light

God Doesn't Do Social Distancing

By Ken Woodley

What a place God's house must be.

In the Gospel of John, Jesus tells us not to let our hearts be troubled because in his Father's house there are many dwelling places.

Some translations of the second verse of the 14th chapter describe God's house as a place "of many rooms." The King James version uses the phrase "of many mansions."

I like "dwelling places" best because it suggests, or allows one to imagine, a place beyond standard housing architecture.

A "dwelling place" might be anything anywhere. A mountaintop overlooking a beautiful valley or the sea. A deep forest filled with the song of the wood thrush. A dwelling place is not confined to a room in a building. Though, don't get me wrong, if God's house is filled with many rooms I'm totally cool with that. I don't need a mansion. A room will do nicely. Imagine the view through the window.

A house filled with many dwelling places or mansions seems rather fanciful and altogether beyond our imagination. And the thought of Jesus coming back to take us there is an incredible one. Some folks, in fact, might find it hard to believe.

But there are clues to this future reality all around us, in and out of the pathways of our lives. If we look and feel closely into our souls and think about the world around us—however troubled that world feels today—we'll sense that truth.

Consider how many "dwelling places" the Holy Spirit of God and Christ share with us now.

And all without putting any "social distance" between us and them.

The places where we can encounter their Holy presence is without limit: Our home. Our car. The hammock under the tree. The front porch. A meadow. A mountaintop. Or the final few yards of a dead-end street.

Wherever, in fact, we find ourselves in meditation or prayer is the place where the Holy Spirit can find us and abide with us for a sacred moment. Even at times when our thoughts might seem drifting away from God, in fact.

Indeed, spiritual cul-de-sacs and wilderness times sometimes find God blazing a trail straight to us in response.

And, thankfully, we don't have to maintain a distance of six feet from our prayerful meditations and the Holy Spirit's loving reply, which so often comes in the form of that feeling of "peace which passes all understanding."

This Love is the real thing. If five million people are deep in prayer at the same time the Holy Spirit of God and Christ have no difficulty being in five million different "dwelling" places at the same time.

Where each of us dwells in a moment in or out of prayer in this life is where the Holy Spirit will brush against our soul.

So, if that is not only possible but a daily fact of life in every corner of the world right this minute, what might be possible after our souls make that final spiritual journey to dwell in God's house?

The sky isn't the limit.

Nothing is.

But, however wondrous, heaven is for another day.

For just a moment, let's allow our very real coronavirus anxieties to slip through our fingers like water flowing downstream and hold on to this truth: all of us are sharing the same dwelling place with God's loving Holy Spirit right now.

No matter what language we speak. No matter the color of our skin. No matter where we live. No matter what.

Perhaps the current demands of social distancing will allow us to see that truth with greater clarity when we are once again find ourselves in a crowd, or right next to someone on a street corner.

Maybe when that blessed day arrives we'll do a better job of treating all people as a member of our family and a child of God.

Because the truth is that, long before the COVID-19 pandemic, too many of us all over this world were already keeping our "social distance" from people who needed our love, instead.

That's no place for us, or anyone, to dwell.

