

Gleaning In The Fields Of Light

Even In A World With A Mask On Its Face

By Ken Woodley

Imagine being one of the apostles near the Mount of Olivet during the scene described in verses six through 14 in the first chapter of the Book of Acts. There we are, with the risen Jesus, who is giving us our marching orders: to be his witnesses, empowered by the Holy Spirit, to the ends of the earth.

If being with the resurrected Jesus isn't mind-blowing enough, we then watch as he is lifted up and taken out of our sight in a cloud. As we're gazing up toward heaven, two men in white robes suddenly appear at our side and ask why we're looking up into the sky. Jesus, they tell us, has been taken away from us into heaven but will come back in the same way.

What a conversation we would have had during the day-long walk back to Jerusalem after this experience. Dumbfounded silence would have been interspersed with gushing voices falling over each other recounting what had just happened.

But, what *had* just happened?

In all likelihood, I suppose, the two men were angels. They match the description of the two who appeared to Mary Magdalene when she went to Jesus' tomb on Easter morning.

The one thing I know better than anything else—the one thing I know best of all—is that there is a ton of stuff that I don't know. This passage from the Book of Acts is among the many things I cannot explain.

And that makes me very happy.

You and I—all of us—need far more than what the human mind could possibly conceive. The transformation of humanity into a world of love and compassion requires far more than anything I could dissect and explain. This time of global pandemic underscores this truth with a million exclamation marks.

Knowing that God is in the process of lifting us all toward one another—if we allow it to happen by not misusing our free will—is incredibly reassuring.

We can feel ripples of God's movement, like a breeze against our skin or a river's current and the pulling of a tide along the shore as we wade out together.

But I cannot take the wind in my hands and hold it tightly, even for a second. Rivers and tides flow right through my fingers. I cannot begin to grasp the awesome fullness of what is happening and how it is happening.

There are clues all around but I won't pretend to solve the mystery before your very eyes.

God is on the case and I thank God for that.

All I know is what I have faith in: there is an awesome transformation underway and taking shape. It is, indeed, happening. Even in a world with a mask on its face.

The love and grace of God will eventually prevail in the world because it will some day prevail in our hearts. Prevailing in the human heart, one human being at a time, is how that love and grace shine like beams of light into the friendless corners of the world that surround us.

The alternative, so often clearly illustrated, is darkness spreading one human heart at a time.

So, here we are. Gathered with Peter and John, wherever we are in this world. Gathered with James and Andrew, with Phillip and Thomas. Here we are, gathered with the mother and brothers of Jesus.

Gathered with each other.

Something wondrous has happened on our journey to Jerusalem—and is unstoppably underway—that we cannot fully explain.

Or stop.

And we wouldn't have it any other way.