

Gleaning In The Fields Of Light

A Very 'Sheepish' Memory

By Ken Woodley

I don't know about you, but sometimes my memory—my ability to recall—needs to be recalled by the manufacturer.

On more than one occasion, for example, I've come around the corner of an aisle in a grocery store and heard someone call me by name.

I knew that person.

I knew I knew that person.

That person knew I knew them.

But I could not recall their name at that moment to save my life, or the life of anyone else.

The explanation is one I understand: I was totally pre-occupied with my own thoughts, that had nothing to do with shopping, while simultaneously trying to remember all of the things I needed to buy. Had I seen the person from a distance it would have given what sometimes passes for my brain time to remind me of their name.

Or, that's what I tell myself.

But I know it's not just me. I've also been on the receiving end of "name non-memory." I've said hello to someone and the look on their face tells me all I need to know. They can't remember my name to save their life. Or anyone else's life. I understand. Been there and forgot that.

So how utterly amazing is it that Jesus knows all of his sheep by name?

Totally astonishing.

Just think how many sheep Jesus has shepherded throughout the whole wide world over the past 2,000 years. Yet, Jesus knows us all by name.

But he also knows more than that. Jesus is aware of all that we have been, all that we are, and all that we can be—if we follow our Good Shepherd.

Jesus knows when we need to lie down in green pastures. And when we feel, in our soul, the holy spirit of Jesus guiding us to a restfulness that feels like a green pasture it is more than okay for us to do just that—to stop being so busy, physically and mentally, and chill out in the abundance of the green pasture he has led us to.

Likewise, when we feel Jesus lead us beside still waters there is a reason for it. Pause. Refresh. Rest. Drink in the feeling of peacefulness reflected toward our soul by those still waters.

No matter what else is going on in the world. And there's a lot going on in the world, which sometimes feels to us like one huge valley of shadow.

We mustn't feel like we have to keep pushing ourselves through what surrounds us and going and going and going. If we do, we run the risk of pushing ourselves beyond Jesus, too, like a sheep going beyond its shepherd.

Then we get lost and, let me tell you, life's "wolves" love it when that happens. Fear is one of those "wolves" and that wolf is roaming widely and wildly right now all around us, and all around everyone else.

Whenever Jesus seeks to revive our soul, there is a very good reason and we should let him do it.

Don't feel guilty about it. Let it happen. Jesus knows better than ourselves what we truly need. We can see up to the bend in the road. Only Jesus can see around the bend.

So don't worry about what's around the bend, either. I say that knowing full well there is an awful lot to worry about out there. But I also know that worry doesn't make anything go away, nor does it make anything even slightly better. Jesus counsels against worrying for that very reason and because he knows how worry can deteriorate us inside.

The rod and staff of Jesus will comfort us and when we need it most we will feel our head anointed with oil and our cup running over. That is: we shall feel the certain peace inside us that passes all understanding.

That sense of peace doesn't last forever. It comes and goes. But we very much can hold on to the fact of its existence.

Goodness, love and mercy will have followed us no matter where we went—even when we wandered off—and we will know deep down inside that we shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

We may forget someone's name in the grocery store next week—especially if they're wearing a mask—and someone might forget our name tomorrow. Especially if we're wearing a mask.

But Jesus never will.

Ever.

