

Gleaning In The Fields Of Light

By Ken Woodley

Imagine a life without fear. Just none at all. Ever.

Personally, I am rather certain I'll never achieve that goal, much as I'd like to. Too much stuff goes on in the world, and all of it beyond my control. I don't think I will ever live a fear-less life.

But maybe, just maybe, I can live a life with *less* fear. Jesus would be so happy if I could. And I know he's there to help me.

"Do not be afraid, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom," Jesus tells us.

That doesn't mean a life free of things that can make us afraid. The world will never be free of such things. But we don't have to let them swallow us. Jesus knows how debilitating fear can be. That is why the Gospels are full of him telling us not to be afraid.

Fear is a primal emotion in human beings. Fear grabs us by the throat, by the heart, and, Jesus knows, it can grab us by the soul, too.

Fear is like that "dark matter" in space. Fear, in fact, is exactly like a "black hole" in space. Their dense gravity grabs anything within reach and inexorably pulls it into the black hole.

Even light cannot escape. Even light cannot free itself from a black hole, once it has been swallowed.

Life throws "dense gravity" at us. Hard times, difficult challenges that make us afraid for ourselves or our loved ones.

And we all know what fear can then do to us.

Fear robs our favorite song of its melody.

Fear steals laughter from our favorite comedies.

When we are afraid, we can read our favorite book by our favorite author without feeling anything like our usual joy.

Fear erases the colors from our favorite paintings.

Our favorite food or meal tastes dull when we are afraid.

Fear diminishes everything.

Jesus knows.

Jesus understands.

"Do not be afraid, little flock," Jesus tells us, hoping we will listen and feel our Good Shepherd's arms around us as he lifts us out of the thorny grasp of fear.

Fear is the valley of the shadow of death through which, at various times of our lives, we must travel.

But never alone.

Psalm 23 tells the truth and reading it is one of the quickest ways to fall into our Good Shepherd's arms when we are afraid because fear is a wolf that Jesus will stop in its tracks.

"I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and staff, they comfort me."

Or, let us say, "I will fear no *fear*, for you are with me... You prepare a table before me in the presence of my *fears*. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever."

A house in which there is no fear.

Nobody to be afraid of at all.