

Gleaning In The Fields Of Light

“He said to them, ‘Wherever you enter a house, stay there until you leave the place. If any place will not welcome you and they refuse to hear you, as you leave, shake off the dust that is on your feet as a testimony against them.’”

—The Gospel of Mark

By Ken Woodley

At some point in our lives, we’ve all wanted to shake someone’s dust off our feet. Perhaps we are trying to do so at this very moment.

Nobody goes through life without encountering somebody who, in one way or another, doesn’t welcome us and refuses to hear us. Such hurtful encounters can leave us covered in the metaphorical “dust” of that moment.

We come home from work and we bring that dust with us.

We bring the rudeness home.

We bring the refusal to listen.

And we tell our family all about it.

“You would not believe how rude this so-and-so was today!” we report, feeling our tension and anger rise all over again.

That so-and-so isn’t literally at the dinner table with us, but that so-and-so’s dust is all over our feet, so to speak.

In fact, we can sometimes feel like Pig-Pen from the *Peanuts* comicstrip. Pig-Pen was a mess. A walking cloud of dust and dirt. And we can be just like him.

That so-and-so’s dust isn’t just on the soles of our feet. That so-and-so’s dust covers us from head to foot. It gets on the furniture, embedded in rug fibers, covers the dog, collects on lampshades, dimming the light.

Sometimes, it can even feel like some of it is dusting our soul.

And that’s not good. It’s not what Jesus wanted for his disciples as he sent them out to preach about the kingdom of heaven. And it’s not what Jesus wants for us.

That’s why Jesus gave them—and us—really good advice.

What better way for the disciples to leave an unfriendly place completely behind than by ensuring they don’t carry any part of the unfriendliness with them as they journey forward.

Not even the dust.

But Jesus was talking about more than literal dust. He was talking about that metaphorical dust, too.

Jesus knew from personal experience that someone's "dust" on our feet can soon feel like "baggage" in our heart, our mind and our soul. A burden we carry around, weighing us down with a whole menagerie of negative emotions.

Who needs that?

It is important to share key moments of our lives with our loved ones. The happy moments of fulfillment and the "dusty" encounters of frustration and disappointment. Doing so can be part of the process of shaking that so-and-so's dust off our feet.

But it doesn't work if, in our minds, we turn right back around and walk through that so-and-so's dust all over again. Which, being human, is so easy to do. Been there. Done that.

But I'd rather be Linus than Pig-Pen.

So, let's you and I stop lugging that so-and-so's "baggage" around on a backwards journey.

Let's shake that dust right off of our feet and keep on moving forward.

Day by day.

Soon enough, our soles will feel the warm, soft touch of green pastures.