**Separation**

**Do not think that I have come to bring peace on earth?**

**I say to you, no, but divisions.**

***(St. Luke 12:51)***

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**An estimated 238,500 American children have lost a parent or primary caregiver to Covid, according to calculations by the Imperial College London. Globally, there are more than 8 million such “Covid orphans.” *(CNN, as it appeared in The Week magazine, April 7, 2023)***

**More than 550 Americans are reported as missing in Mexico, according to Mexican government records – up from 324 in 2020, and almost certainly an undercount. All told, at least 112,150 people have gone missing in Mexico, amid an ongoing plague of drug-cartel killings and abductions. *(The Washington Post, as it appeared in The Week magazine, March 24, 2023)***

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**Bees socially distance, too: Humans aren't the only species to practice social distancing. Honeybees also appear to give one another a wide berth when a pathogen threatens the health of their community. A team of European scientists examined how bees behave in hives that were naturally infected with the Varroa destructor mite – a parasite that can cause colonies to collapse – compared with those in hives that were treated to kill the pest. In the infected hives, they noted that the foraging bees performed dances to indicate the direction of food sources further away from the center of the colony, where the queen and the younger bees are found. The foragers tend to be older and "are one of the main entrance routes for the mites," co-author Alessandro Cini, from University of College London, tells the The Guardian (U.K.). "So, the more they stay away from the brood and the young individuals, the better it is in terms of preventing the spread of the mites." The researchers also spotted changes in where bees groom one another, with the activity becoming more focused in the central part of the hive in infected colonies. "They're probably concentrating their efforts toward the more important part of the colony," says Cini, "leaving the grooming of foragers." *(The Week magazine, November 19, 2021)***

[**It’s not our differences that divide us. It is our inability to recognize, accept, and celebrate those differences. *(Audre Lorde***](http://www.bbc.co.uk/)***)***

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**An estimated 2.5 million Americans were displaced from their homes by weather-related disasters last year, according to new census data. More than a third of those were displaced for longer than a month. The U.S. experienced a record 28 disasters costing more than $1 billion in 2023, including hurricanes, floods, and wildfires. *(The New York Times, as it appeared in The Week magazine, March 8, 2024)***

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**Family separation was raised and rejected for two reasons,” Jeh Johnson, President Barack Obama’s secretary of Homeland Security, told me recently. First, “I already had in my mind the vivid visual image of a mother clinging to a child in a Border Patrol holding statio8n – and I8 was not going to ask somebody from the Border Patrol or ICE to take that child away.” Secondly, “it would have overrun” government shelters for children. “So it was heartless and impractical.” *(Caitlin Dickerson, in The Atlantic magazine)***

**Good week for: Having space, with a reported surge in the number of U.S. married couples who live apart so they don’t get on each other’s nerves. About 4 million married Americans currently live separately from their spouses, the U.S. Census Bureau said – a 25 percent increase from the year 2000. *(The Week magazine, December 30, 2022/January 6, 2023)***

**Lebowitz’s permanent tech holiday: Fran Lebowitz is famously set in her ways, so it might not come as a surprise that she’s also a devout Luddite, said Fiona Sturges in The Guardian (U.K.) The acerbic New Yorker, 72, doesn’t have a mobile phone or computer, and detachment from the digital world helps insulate her from criticism of her writing and speaking gigs. “It’s not that I don’t care what people think of me as a person,” says Lebowitz, 72. “But I don’t care how they feel about what I think. It really surprises me, in gehneral, how angry people get because they don’t agree with someone. What differerence does it make?” Cancel culture, she says, is irrelevant to her, “I might even be canceled,but I would never know it.” Instead of wasting time online, Lebowitz enjoys going for walks in her beloved Manhattan, browsing in bookstores, and reading incessantly and voluminously. She owns about 12,000 books. Lebowitz hates to travel, and does so only to get paid for her comedic speaking engagements. Even at home in Manhattan, Lebowitz can be hermetic, at least when the sun’s out. “If I had a choice, I wouldn’t go out in the day,” she sa8ys. “I like the night. But unfortunately, I have appointments and the dentist won’t see me at midnight.” *(The Week magazine, December 30, 2022/January 6, 2023)***

**Nothing will divide this nation more than ignorance, and nothing can bring us together better than an educated population. (John Sculley, in The Atlantic)**

[**The real division is not between conservatives and revolutionaries, but between authoritarians and libertarians. *(George Orwell)***](http://www.bbc.co.uk/)

**The first recorded quarantine occurred in 1377, when Dubrovnik, a port on the Adriatic, protected itself against a resurgence of the bubonic plague by admitting no visitors until they’d spent a month in a town or islet just outside the city. A half-century later, Venice built the first of Europe’s many hospitals dedicated to quarantining, a word derived from the Italian for “40 days.” The tactic has been among humanity’s most effective methods of combating the spread of disease, but it has been easier for people to impose quarantine on others than to submit to quarantine themselves. *(The Week magazine, August 13, 2021)***

[**When you reach for your phone first thing in the morning, it's like having 100 people in your bedroom screaming at you. *(Robin Roberts, news anchor, in People magazine)***](http://www.bbc.co.uk/)

[**Tax status: Happily separate: A growing number of married couples are finding savings through separate tax return filings, said Laura Saunders in The Wall Street Journal. One factor likely boosting the trend is the income-driven loan repayment program for student loans. Borrowers in this program pasy a percentage of their monthly income, and the remaining debt may be forghiven after a term of years. This incentivizes couples to “file separately to lower their income.” Not all states require filers to use the same status for the state return as the federal one. One couple “reaped substantial savings by having one spouse file separately for Illinois” while the other, who is retired, claimed residence in Florida. “They filed jointly on the federal return.” One downside: “Married couples filing separately can’t take certain tax breaks,” including child- and dependent-care credits. *(The Week magazine, March 17, 2023)***](http://www.bbc.co.uk/)

[**To understand how the American government took children away from their parents with no plan to return them, you have to go back to 9/11. Following the deadliest attack in U.S. history, the Bush Administration created a new federal department. Comprising 22 offices and agencies, the Department of Homeland Security became the largest federal law-enforcement agency in the country. Its hundreds of thousands of employees were charged with vetting foreigners as they entered the U.S., any of whom could be carrying out the next plot to take American lives. *(Caitlin Dickerson, in The Atlantic magazine)***](http://www.bbc.co.uk/)

**When vaccinated adults refuse to see friends indoors, they’re working through the trauma of the past year. When they keep their kids out of playgrounds and urge friends to stay distanced at small outdoor picnics, they are continuing the spirit of the past year, when civic duty has been expressed through lonely asceticism. That’s a hard idea to give up. But some progressives have not updated their behavior based on the new information. And so as the rest of vaccinated America begins its summer of bacchanalia, rescheduling long-awaited dinner parties and medium-size weddings, the most hard-core pandemic progressives are left, Cassandra-like, to preach their peers’ folly. *(Emma Green, in TheAtlantic.com)***

[**What One Hour Away from Your Phone Can Do: More than 3.5 billion people worldwide spend an average of three hours a day glued to their smartphones – on social media, texting, checking emails. According to a German study, there’s good reason to cut down. Researchers found that people who lowered their usage by one hour every day were happier, spent more time being physically active, were less depressed and reduced anxiety symptoms by more than 30%. Cutting back was more effective than total digital detox: People who had spent one hour less per day on smartphones during the one-week intervention were more likely to successfully change their habits over the long term than abstainers who put their smartphones away entirely for a week. *(Mark Witten, in Reader’s Digest, December/January, 2023, page 38)***](http://www.bbc.co.uk/)

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