

Saturday "Sermon"

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October Skies

During the Dust Bowl years of the 1930's, millions of acres of Midwest farmland became useless, and hundreds of thousands of people were forced to leave their homes. Many of these families (often known as "Okies," since so many came from Oklahoma) migrated to California and other states, where they found economic conditions little better than those they'd left. Owning no land, many became migrant workers who picked fruit and other crops at starvation wages.

John Steinbeck's Pulitzer Prize-winning novel, *The Grapes of Wrath*, tells the story of one of these Oklahoma families who made their way west during the Great Depression seeking a new life. I've found myself remembering Steinbeck's novel this week as families have come to our church for help while on similar migrations.

You and I are in the midst of hard times unlike any since the Great Depression, and things seem likely to get worse before they get better. And in such times as these, I keep asking myself what it might look like to get through such times as these, not "somehow," but *triumphantly*?

My Dad used to quote a little ditty that went like this: "Two men looked out from behind prison bars. One saw mud; the other saw stars." There's a lot of "mud" to look at these days, but I'm trying to keep my eyes on the "stars," both figuratively and literally.

One of the many benefits of living in the Mountain Empire is the stunning beauty that's around us all the time. October is one of the most gorgeous months of the year in these parts, and I've heard several people comment lately about how unusually blue the sky seems. As I've made my way through recent weeks, I've tried to be especially aware of the glory of the leaves and the hills, and on clear nights, I've stood outside to gaze at the heavens as well.

It must have been in moments like this that the psalmist wrote, "*The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands*" (Psalm 19:1). "*Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth! . . . When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is mankind that you are mindful of them, human beings that you care for them?*" (Psalm 8:1, 3-4).

I don't know what effect the Great Recession is having on you, but I know that it's good for me to keep my eyes on October skies, and to remember that you and I, too, "*are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do*" (Ephesians 2:10). May God's grace attend your way today.