

# Skies of Gold

Inspired by Mark 13:24-32

Annie and Josiah rose early and stepped out onto the front porch. The screen door creaked its usual song of work and welcome. Josiah had meant to fix that squeak, but so many other projects always pulled him away. He only remembered the squeak when he came home and opened the door after a long, hard day on the farm. By then, he was just too tired to fix one more thing.

Putting his arm around his beloved bride of 40 years, Josiah said, "Remember those early days of the pandemic when the earth felt so dark. We would sit on this ol' porch and watch the sun rise, then watch it fall again at night giving way to the bright, brilliant moon. That helped us remember God was with us and He would see us through." Annie sighed and leaned against Josiah's big, strong, capable shoulder. "I remember that one night when we were out here with all the children and they tried to count the stars. Billy decided there must be one star in Heaven for every person and every animal that had ever lived." They both chuckled at the sweet memory. There were so many fond moments that sprinkled their thoughts and covered their hearts from the life they had built here with their five children.

Annie said, "And do you remember when Sarah said she saw Jesus in the clouds? She and Joanie used to lay on the grass nearly every afternoon and look at 'God's cloud paintings,' as they called them. Sarah just couldn't understand why everyone didn't stop every afternoon to look up at the sky and appreciate the Lord's Heavenly Artwork. They mostly saw animals in the cloud formations, but that one day Sarah was sure it was the Son of Man coming in the clouds with great power and glory to deliver a message for the world." Annie and Josiah laughed and held each other tight. As long as they had each other everything would be all right.

Annie looked up into Josiah's eyes and scratched his scruffy beard. "We did a good job with our family, Jo," she reassured him. "We did the best we could. Our children grew up healthy and happy, and they know the Lord. They knew He was always guiding our decisions, and still does to this day. This next step isn't what you and I wanted, but God is with us. He loves us, and continues to bless us each and every day."

The pandemic had brought hardship upon the couple. Their farm suffered greatly, and they could no longer afford the rising costs to ship their goods. They just couldn't compete with the big farm operations who had a broader market and large work crews. But, it was a good run. They both knew it. Still, the decision to sell the homeplace and move to a small house near their oldest daughter was a difficult one to make.

After a few minutes, Josiah said, “Hun, look at those beautiful golden colors streaking across the horizon. They seem to go on forever. Let’s keep this picture memory. Let’s not ever forget this. We will move forward carrying our treasury of blessings with thankful hearts. We had many good times here. We can’t let regret take over that space. Look over there above the barn.” He pointed to a magnificent cloud cluster with at least seven different shades of yellow gold. “I see angels swaying with the gentle wind. Their wings are reaching toward the end of the earth to the end of the sky. They have us covered. How can we be sad when we have witnessed such beauty?” he said.

They stepped down off the porch. Josiah felt the slight give in that last step — another project he had planned to get around to long ago. “Look at the fig tree,” Annie blurted with child-like excitement. She didn’t even notice the wobbly last step. “See the little sprouts? Feel the tender branches? You know what that means — Summer is near!” they exclaimed together with genuine delight. The couple walked out to the gate that once held the smaller farm animals — their own petting zoo of sorts. “We’re gonna be fine,” Annie said. “This phase of our life has ended. The next generation is moving into place. It’s not yet the end of everything. Many more things are happening.”

Josiah finished the thought, as happened often in their decades together as husband and wife. “We stand firm on the Word of the Lord. Our little heaven on earth has passed away, but His words will not pass away. Our time will eventually end, but it is not ours to know the day or hour. No one knows. Not even the holy angels who surround us. Only God our Father knows. And I’m quite OK with that!” Josiah gave Annie a life-affirming hug, and she whispered, “Me too!”

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