

AMBER WAVES OF GOLDEN GRAIN

By John F. Hall

Last Sunday's sermon was about the Trinity. The Pastor told the congregation that he would be taking a much needed vacation and he would be back the following Monday. He added that he would have the Rev. Frank Ruff fill in for him. I was handing out church bulletins and talking to a young couple named Ciera and Kyler. Ciera's dad was in the 82nd Airborne Division. He broke his back on a mission and he had to medically retire after nine years on active duty. Her mother also served in the Army. Ciera is a singer. She had been on singing gigs in California, Maine, and Tennessee. It had been several weeks since I last saw her and Kyler at church. Her dad is her manager.



After church services, I spent the rest of the day pondering the words that I want to use in my next story. I usually start to research my stories by looking for hymns to enhance the theme of the story that I intend to write. I decided to use several hymns. The first hymn is in the public domain and is called "Be in Time." These are the lyrics: "Life as best is very brief, like the falling of a leaf, like the binding of a sheaf (a bundle of grain stalks laid lengthwise and tied together after reaping), be in time. Fleeting days are telling fast that the die will soon be cast, and the fatal line be passed, be in time. Be in time, be in time, while the voice of Christ calls you, be in time! If in sin you longer wait, you may find no open gate, and your cry be just too late, be in time! Fairest flowers soon decay, youth and beauty pass away, oh, you have not long to stay, be in time! While the Spirit bids you come, sinner do not longer roam, lest you seal your hopeless doom, be in time! Time is gliding swiftly by, death and judgment drawing nigh, to the arms of Jesus fly, be in time. Oh, I pray you, count the cost, ere the fatal line he crossed, and your soul in hell be lost, be in time! Sinner, heed the warning voice, make the Lord your final choice, then all heaven will rejoice, be in time! Come from the darkness into light, come, let Jesus do you right, come, and start for heaven tonight, be in time!"

The above hymn deals with time and the reality of life. In James, Chapter 1, verse 12 are these words: "Blessed is the man that remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love Him." I always felt that life is a series of tests. Janice Kapp Perry and Marvin Goldstein wrote the hymn "The Test." These are some of their lyrics: "Tell me friend, why are you blind? Why doesn't He who worked the miracles send light into your eyes? Tell me friend if you understand why doesn't He with the power to raise the dead just make you whole again? It would be so easy for Him... Did He not say that we could live with Him forever more, well and whole, if we but patiently endure? After the trial we will be blessed, but this life is a test..."

It seems like my life has been a repetition of trial after trial and test after test. Christ knows I've weathered the storms and seen my share of gore, grief and suffering of so many other souls. Richard W. Adams wrote the hymn, "When the Storms of Life

Surround me..” These are his lyrics: “When the storms of life surround me, and the world seems dark and cold, when the rain beats down upon me, and lightning stabs my soul, I cry out to my Savior, Lord, help me, lest I die! Do You care not that the billows push my boat to the shoal? When the raging winds and tempest, and the noxious clouds of sun, whirl around me like an army, and my faith is wearing thin, in a whispering distant thunder, comes a voice like the morning calm: 'Fear not, I am with you ever, till the world shall see its end.' I command the winds of heaven, and the lightning does My will, I who walked upon the waters, and who bid the storm be still. I seek not your destruction, but to strengthen and make pure; keep your faith in Me, believing I My promises fulfilled. He is greater than the thunder, He is mightier than the storm; He extends His Hands to lift me, and protect my soul from harm. He will see me safe to the harbor, to the haven of my rest, sheltered by the Rock of Ages, held in His almighty arm.”

Some things in life, to me anyway, are sheer splendor. I look at wheat fields and stand in awe of Christ's bounty. I was on my way to town and I stopped just below the crest of Dyers Hill Road, about 90 feet from my driveway. I put my Ford Escape in park and walked over to examine the wheat in the wheat field in front of my house. Laurence Rosania wrote the hymn: “As Grains of Wheat.” These are some of his lyrics: “As grains of wheat are gathered in we come together; from lives apart we bring our hearts to make one whole. For many we are, and broken we've come, but we shall become one. Each grain must fall and give itself; it first is broken; then joined with others, makes one body and one bread. From many fields the harvest comes to feed the hungry; the world cries out to taste the goodness of the Lord. Your harvest, Lord, is gathered in; we stand before You to be your bread, to be your body in the world. We shall be one...”.

When Russia invaded Ukraine, it wasn't just about territory and cities that it destroyed. It was also about the fields of wheat. Together, Russia and Ukraine produced 25% of the world's wheat. Russia wants to cut off international shipments of that wheat to cause global shortages and push the price of wheat even higher. Currently, the United States has 25 million acres in the “set-aside program.” This is farmland and ranch land where American farmers are paid not to produce crops. Kentucky farmers planted about 520,000 acres of winter wheat in 2021. That is 30,000 more acres of wheat than was planted in 2020. Wheat takes about four months to mature. If the weather has been dry and hot, the “finish” will be quicker.

Standing in the wheat field in front of my house, I noticed that the wheat had dried to a golden yellow color and there was no visible green in the stalks. I broke off the seed-head of one of the wheat plants. I rubbed it between my hands to have the grains of wheat released. I kept rubbing to have the chaff released from the grain. The grains were hard and I knew the fields were ready to be harvested. It required 80% of the farmers in 1920 to harvest wheat. Today, it just takes one percent of the farmers to harvest the wheat. I estimate that Craig Perry, the corporate farmer that rents the widow woman's farm, has 100 acres of wheat ready to be combined. His Mexican workers will harvest the 100 acres, using two large combines, in less than a day, thanks to GPS and other technology in the combines.

It was early Friday morning and my son called. He was working on the house in Marshall County. He was not expecting it to rain and he left his \$300 electric miter saw uncovered on a small trailer in my backyard. He also had expensive interior finished wood, uncovered on his long car hauler that he did not want to get wet. A severe and dangerous thunder storm with heavy rain was rocking his Chevrolet pickup as he was at the Shoparama store in Benton. He asked me and my wife, Paula if we would cover the saw and the wood as there was no way that he could get to my house ahead of the storm.

I told him we would go out now and cover the saw and the wood. I had Paula get three large construction plastic trash bags and cut them in half. I got two tarps, that I used at the 400 Mile Yard Sale, out of my garage, and we walked down to the two trailers. Our house is at the very front of our one acre lot. The trailers are at the very rear of our lot. I wrapped the miter saw in the plastic trash bags and tied small rope under and around the miter saw to keep the winds from blowing the plastic off the saw. I put the two tarps over the wood and used six adjustable straps to keep the wind from blowing the tarps off the wood. The straps were fastened to strap holders on the sides of the trailer. I used small ropes in front of the trailer and used the lopes in the tarp to fasten the front of the tarp to the trailer's floor.

The strong storm was just minutes away. I looked up at the dark dangerous clouds coming my way. I was moving as fast as my bad right foot would allow. The right side of my hip was causing me pain as I had to walk up the hill to my carport that is attached to the kitchen. My son was talking to Paula on her cell phone. He wanted to make sure that we made it back to the house. I never considered myself as being old, but the hot temperature and high humidity was taking my breath away. I'll be 77 on June 29th. I'm two years older than my dad when he died at the age of 75. I consider myself to be young at heart. But that day made me realize that I am not a kid anymore. The storm hit with a vengeance just as I reached my carport. The wind blew down trees and power lines, and 5,000 people lost power in the Pennyriple.

The next day, after the storm, the wind and the hot weather dried the wheat fields. I came back from Murray after getting new reading glasses. It was late in the afternoon and I could hear Craig Perry's combines in the east wheat field. The combines have bright lights and the harvest was completed late that night. It was now Sunday morning and I was on my way to church. Some of the cut wheat stalks and spent chaff spilled onto Dyers Hill Road when the John Deere combine made its loop on the field in front of my house. I knew that Craig will store the wheat in his grain bins. I drove on to the church and opened the side door. I opened the main door for the visiting Pastor, the Rev. Frank Ruff. I depend on Christ's grace and His inspiration for my stories. It is a Father's Day Sunday. The amber waves of golden grain are stored and all is well.

To end this story, I have selected a very brief hymn written by Bernadette Farrell called, "Unless a Grain of Wheat." These are her lyrics: "Unless a grain of wheat shall fall upon the ground and die, It remains but a single grain with no life. If we hold firm, we shall reign with Him. Wherever I am, my servants will be. Those who remain in Me bear much fruit. Then you will be My disciples. We shall be with them and dwell in them. Peace

which the world can-not give is My gift.” I carried some grains of wheat to my kitchen. Wheat is a cereal grain believed to have originated from a random cross pollination of three different species of grass around 10,000 BC. It was a major factor in mankind's transition from nomadic hunter-gatherer to communal dweller. Archaeologists have found wheat in storage pits of 8,000-year-old settlements where ancient man lived. Today, more flour is produced from wheat than from any other grain. Looking at the insignificant kernel of wheat, I marvel at how such a little seed is vital to the survival of many people on this earth.

John F. Hall

*Read other stories by John F. Hall at: <http://www.ajlambert.com>