

Cumulus Congestus

By Ken Fleeman

Driving home a few afternoons back I realized that the sky was blue and the clouds a brilliant white. It brought back childhood memories of lying in the grass and searching similar skies for familiar shapes in the clouds. This effortless activity was a welcome break from chores and certainly safer than the countless hours Rick and I spent trying to break our necks leaping from the top of the haystack or racing down the gravel lane on our bicycles. If we looked long enough at the drifting clouds we would eventually find all the machines and creatures of interest to youngsters growing up in the country. This pastime transcends generations, young and old alike can lose themselves in the beauty of cotton candy clouds moving on gentle breezes.

The best clouds for skygazing are cumulus congestus. Congestus is Latin for "piled up". This is the stage just prior to precipitation when the clouds reach their greatest vertical extent. Fluffy white on a backdrop of blue is certainly a rich canvas for creative minds. Limited only by imagination we can see everything from dinosaurs to daisies. How many times have we indulged in sky-gazing to walk away refreshed by the beauty of the heavens? How many of those times did we realize we had been observing the handiwork of God? How many times did we thank and praise Him for the blessing? Perhaps you were like me and just took it for granted. Psalm 19:1-6 reads, "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork. Day unto day utters speech, and night unto night reveals knowledge. There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard. Their line has gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world. In them He has set a tabernacle for the sun, which is like a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, and rejoices like a strong man to run its race. Its rising is from one end of heaven, and its circuit to the other end; and there is nothing hidden from its heat." Psalm 97:6 reminds us that "The heavens declare His righteousness, and all the peoples see His glory."

The next time you are blessed with a cloudy blue sky I hope that you see the hand of God. – KJF

Prayers and Paperclips

I recently attended a safety seminar at which John Vasquez from the National Safety Council reminded me of a childhood truth. John stated that "College students drive beater cars held together with prayers and paperclips." In my experience duct tape and wire clothes hangers were also widely employed. A farm boy would not leave home without a partial roll of binder twine in the bed of his truck just in case of emergency.

Most things on cars become loose or fragile over time despite our best efforts at maintenance. Katrina's exhaust pipe recently severed at the muffler. The culprit was rust. This tiny separation defeated the function of the muffler which was obvious by the obnoxious sound. Less obvious was that the separation changed the operating conditions in the engine which relies on the continuous backpressure of the entire exhaust system to remain balanced. While perhaps not harmful, the change makes the engine less efficient and the sound disrupts the normal activity of everyone within earshot.

People require maintenance too. Relationships, health, happiness, faith and often our very lives hang by a fragile thread. These threads too often break because they lack the support, love and attention required to maintain them. The family, government and the church were designed by God to provide our maintenance needs. These systems work best when we contribute our efforts to their function. Otherwise, we are less efficient than we should be and many times are just as obnoxious as that broken exhaust!

"And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the

edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ— from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.” (Ephesians 4:11-16) Don't forget to pray and keep your pockets full of paperclips, just in case! -KJF

Good Measure

Generosity, whether in product or in person is always a good investment. The Lord taught his disciples in Luke 6:38, “Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you.”

For example, my Dad took a hunting trip in the fall of every year to North Mountain located in the eastern panhandle of West Virginia. Marty Glasgow, George S. Foutty and his father, George A. Foutty, completed the foursome. Despite a truck and camper packed with provisions, each trip started with a stop at McDonalds. The tradition started when George Sr. begged the group to stop for ice cream the year the McDonalds restaurant was built in New Martinsville. George's cone was piled high to which he exclaimed, “They give good measure here!” The “good measure” meted out that day resulted in years of repeat business.

Likewise, “good measures” of love, kindness, patience and gentleness can result in years of extended returns. Strong family ties, lasting friendships, respectful neighbors and the blessings of our generous Father in heaven are the reward.

(Editor's note: Both George A. and George S. have gone on to their reward. Father and son believed and practiced “good measure” all their lives. The first books in my religious library were gifted to me by George Sr. while I was still a teen and he was serving as an elder. George Sr. was also a master woodworker. Each of his friends received some handmade gift from his workshop.

The house in which I grew up was improved by the skillful hands of the younger George. However, George Jr.'s greatest gifts were his marriage to my cousin after his first wife's passing and the raising of her daughters as his own. The godly influence of both men lives on.) - KJF

A Moments Wisdom

--“My concern is not whether God is on our side; my greatest concern is to be on God's side, for God is always right.” — Abraham Lincoln

--“I believe in Christianity as I believe that the sun has risen: not only because I see it, but because by it I see everything else.” — C.S. Lewis

--“Science without religion is lame, religion without science is blind.” — Albert Einstein

--“Prayer is not asking. It is a longing of the soul. It is daily admission of one's weakness. It is better in prayer to have a heart without words than words without a heart.” — Mahatma Gandhi

--“All I have seen teaches me to trust the Creator for all I have not seen” — Ralph Waldo Emerson