

“We’ll Go West” (A Parable)

“We’ll go West (*serve Jesus Christ and seek the Kingdom of God*),” I said. Ryerson and his wife were going back. She was a complaining woman and he was a man who was always ailing when there was work to be done. Four of five wagons were turning back, folks with their tails betwixt their legs running for the shelter of towns from their own littleness wouldn’t stand out so plain.

When a body crossed the Mississippi (*baptism waters- Romans 6:1-4*) and left the settlements (*of the old things- 2 Corinthians 5:17*) behind, something happened to him. The world seemed to bust wide open, and suddenly the horizons spread out and a man wasn’t cramped any more. The pinched-up villages and narrowness of towns (*old/carnal/world- Romans 7:14-25; Colossians 3:5-7*), all that was gone. The horizons simply exploded and rolled back into the enormous distance, with nothing around but praise and sky.

Some folks could not stand it. They’d cringe into themselves and start hunting excuses to go back where they came from (*hand to plow, pick up cross, turn back- Matthew 16:24-25; Luke 9:57-62; 2 Peter 1:9*). This (*the Kingdom of God*) was a big country needing big men and women to live in it, and there was no place out here for the frightened (*not given a spirit of fear, perfect love- 2 Timothy 1:7; 1 John 4:18*) or the mean (*Matthew 24:48-50*).

The prairie and sky had a way of trimming folks down to size, or changing them into giants to whom nothing seemed impossible (*David- 1 Samuel 16:13-18; 17:40-54*). Men who had cut a wide swath back in the States (*world- 1 Corinthians 6:9-11*) found themselves nothing out here. They were folks who were used to doing a lot of talking who suddenly found out that no one was listening any more, and things seemed mighty important back home, like family and money (*Matthew 6:31-34*), they amounted to nothing alongside character and courage (*Psalms 15*).

There was John Sampson from our town. He was a man used to being told to do things, used to looking up to wealth and power, but when he crossed the Mississippi (*waters of baptism- 1 Peter 3:21*), he began to lift his shoulders, put more crack in his whip, and began to make his own tracks in the land.

Right then I knew that neither Indians (*enemy, devil- Ephesians 6:12; 1 Peter 5:8; Luke 4:18*) nor country (*opposition- John 16:33*) was going to get the better of Ma. Shooting that Kiowa was the first time Ma shot anything but some chicken-killing varmint- which she’d done time to time when Pa was away from home.

Only Ma wouldn’t let Jeanie and me call it home. “We came from Illinois,” she said, “but we’re going home now.”

“But Ma,” I protested, “I thought home was where we came from?”

“Home (*heaven- Philippians 3:20; 2 Corinthians 5:1-2; John 14:1-3*) is where we’re going now,” Ma said, “and we’ll know it when we find it.”

She had a way of saying *home* so it sounded like a rare and wonderful place and kept Jeanie and me looking always at the horizon, just knowing it was over there, waiting to see it. She had given us a dream, and even Jeanie, who was only six, she had it too.

Excerpts from: The collected stories entitled: “Grub Line Rider,” by Louis L’amour, a Leisure Book, copyright 2007 by Golden West Literary Agency. “War Party,” copyright 1959, 1987, by the Curtis Publishing Company.