

Foreword

This is a very lovely and heartening book, and it should remind us of several things. One is that we need to be open to learning—to mentors of all kinds. It did not surprise me in the least to learn that Kyle got some of his early inspiration from the wonderful writer and teacher Scott Russell Sanders, and by extension from his guru, Wendell Berry. Nor was I surprised to learn he had a mentor, a faux uncle, who helped him find the right land and make the right plans for it. We live in a world where the easy and obvious transmission of practical knowledge, father and mother to son and daughter, has largely broken down. We need to be radically open to hearing what others have to show us.

Two is that we need to be open to where the Lord is leading us. This book offers, among other things, an interesting journey across various parts of the country, the various sects of Christianity, and the various possibilities for romantic attachment or some other path. It seems to me in reading that the author has done a more-than-average job of listening for that still small voice, and paying attention even (especially) when the advice it offers is not precisely easy to follow.

Three is that the world we are now moving into will demand of us different skills than the ones we grew up assuming we'd need. On a planet radically damaged by climate change and a host of other environmental ills, we're not going to be able to count on the remote systems that have for some decades brought us food and energy as if by magic. Instead, we will need to count on ourselves, but even more (thank heaven) on our communities. The skills of hospitality that Kyle and his wife model for us are as important as any of their talent for husbandry of the land—they remind us how we will get through the time to come, and happily.

This book and the story it tells may seem in some sense quiet, mostly confined to a small parcel of land. But it strikes me as a fine and hopeful adventure, one that should give heart to all kinds of people as they try to figure out where they're called to be. It's written with a generous spirit, less instruction and exhortation than the slightly subversive insinuation that something fine and lovely is within our grasp as well.

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