

“Places in the Heart”

One of my favorite movies is titled “Places in the Heart.” It is not the story that intrigues me although it is a thought provoking one. The story of a woman widowed and left to raise her children alone. A woman who had to support herself and family in a man’s world and who befriended an African American man and a bitter lonely blind man. Her husband has been killed while trying to calm down a youth with a gun. The youth is then killed by others. The youth is a Black child. It is not the story that intrigues me but the theme of forgiveness that runs through the film. The final scene says so much to me. The woman and her children are in church. It is a familiar country church, and they are receiving communion in the final scene. A familiar hymn is playing, “In the Garden,” and they are passing the bread and grape juice in the pews. As they take the elements from the basket and communion holder you come to realize that the people in the pews are the people that have died in the film mixed in with the others that survived heartbreak and sorrows. This moves me because sometimes in church during a hymn or a prayer or looking at the eternal flame or at the choir I think of those no longer in our physical presence but in our hearts always or as people go up to the altar, I will pray for them during communion. Many of us have suffered loss and it is in the quiet moments that we are reminded of those within our church community who have touched our lives. People who have helped me and those who have given me examples of what it means to be a member of our community of believers. People who have taught me about dying and about living, about grief and loss. People who have shown me their darkest days and their brightest and who have been with me through my good and bad days.

1 Corinthians 13:1-8 If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but I do not have love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing. Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part, but when completeness comes, what is in part disappears. When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put the ways of childhood behind me. For now, we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known. And now these three remain, faith, hope, and love. But the greatest of these is love.

Lord, we come to you with our world in turmoil. Our hearts break for our brothers and sisters in Ukraine. Be with them Lord, guide and protect them. May they know you walk with them. Be with our church, may we truly become the hands and feet of Christ. We thank you Lord for those saints in our church who have led us and mentored us. We ask Lord that you be with our Pastor, guide and protect him and bless his ministry. Be with his family. Be with our staff and leaders, bless and guide them. Be with those who sit in the pews, bless them and guide them. Be with those who are at home, may there soon come a time when we can be united safely and with trust. Thank you, Lord, for the day and the blessings of shelter and food and the love we have for each other. In Jesus name we pray. Amen

Grace Epperson