

“All Will Yet Be Well”
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1st in the sermon series - The Gospel in Great Movies
Reconciliation as seen in “Places in the Heart”

It was during the Great Depression, and a young married couple named Edna and Royce were deeply in love and raising their two young children in rural Texas. He was sheriff of their town - and one night he went out to answer a call and never came back. A young African-American man had gotten drunk and was shooting off a gun, and accidentally shot and killed him. Enraged, a large group of white men in the town turned around and dragged that young man to his death.

Edna was plunged into despair and grief. She had no idea how she would go on and what she would do to take care of her family. Not two days after her husband’s funeral, the local banker came and told her in no uncertain terms that her husband had still owed a lot on their home, and that she was going to have to get out and maybe even farm her kids out to relatives.

But with sheer grit and determination, Edna refused to do that. Despite all the odds, with many people out to take advantage of her, and with the unlikely help of an African American vagrant who had come looking for a meal, but instead helped her farm, and the presence of a blind man forced upon her as a boarder - Edna grew acres and acres and acres of cotton. And she managed, by the grace of God, and sheer force of will, to harvest the first crop in town, and in so doing, made enough money to keep her home and take care of her family.

That is the basic story of the phenomenal movie called “Places in the Heart.” It was made in 1984, and starred Sally Field as Edna, Danny Glover as Moze, the African-American vagrant farmer, John Malkovich as the blind boarder, and Ed Harris and others as the supporting cast.

As I said, I think it was a phenomenal movie, but not just because it’s such a success story. It was full of other sub-plots too.

Edna’s sister’s husband has an affair with her best friend.

As I said, the banker tried to bully Edna, the seed merchant tried to cheat her, and the cotton merchant tried to offer her less than she deserved for her crop. And in the midst of it all, there is also a tornado that destroys much of the town,

and from which Edna and her family were lucky to escape in an underground cellar.

While it sounds like a like, I would venture to say it's a pretty accurate portrayal of much of life. I mean, a lot of people, even here today, know what it's like to one day have a spouse, and the next day not. And a lot of people, even here today, know what it's like to have a banker breathing down your neck, ready to take back your home. And a lot of people, know that sense of betrayal and hurt of having someone you love cheat on you. And a lot of people know what it's like to be taken advantage of, or to survive disasters.

A two-hour movie condenses all of these things and makes them more dramatic, but in the end, it's the stuff of life. Sometimes bad things happen and chaos reigns.

But the good news in the movie is that God's grace was sufficient. God's grace carried Edna through it all, and in the end all was well - her family and her home were safe, and she was going to be okay.

It's the same Good News for you and me. No matter what, God's grace is sufficient. God's grace will carry us through anything and everything, and in the end, all will yet be well.

At the very end of the movie, things take a turn. Edna has successfully sold her cotton and made a handsome profit, but because Moze has helped her out, many people are mad. They couldn't handle an African-American man being successful and helping a woman be successful. And so, under cover of night, the Ku Klux Klan came to the farm and beat Moze to a pulp. After an emotional conversation with Edna, Moze leaves for good.

But something interesting happens in the movie. The director doesn't end on that sad note. The director ends the movie with a beautiful portrayal of the Kingdom of God. Let me explain what you will see in a moment.

It's a church service. You'll see at the beginning of the scene that there are not a lot of people there - there are a lot of empty spaces in the pews.

Then they'll start to receive communion. The couple in the front row are the ones who have been dealing with the husband's unfaithfulness - you will see them start to come together again. Behind them you'll see Edna and her children.

But then, watch. As they pass the communion elements down the row, something amazing happens. The rows are suddenly full - and they are filled with all the people of the story - those who were there from beginning to end, those who

had left, the good ones, the bad ones, the saints, the sinners - all of them.

You see Edna, her children, Moze, the blind man, the banker, the seed seller, the cotton merchant - and the very last two people you'll see are Royce, the sheriff who was killed, and finally the young man who accidentally killed him, and who was brutally killed himself.

You see, the director is giving us a picture of heaven - the same heaven described in the passage from Isaiah that Rick read - where the lion shall lie down with the lamb, where saint and sinner feast together, where the past is no more, where all is well. He's giving us a picture of hope for the future - a picture of heaven's banquet table.

So friends, as you watch the movie clip, think of that heavenly banquet. But more importantly, as you come to this table this morning, think of it. Think of that table where all will gather - all you have known and loved, all who have have been redeemed and set free by the blood of the Lamb - Jesus the Christ. Think of that table where all will be well - no mattter what, all will be well. Thanks be to God.

Amen

Clip - the final four minutes of "Places in the Heart"