

Lord, without Your Spirit, these words are just words. Give them life, that we may have life. Amen

Possibly my favorite movie of all time is *Field of Dreams* –

I saw it 12 times in a year, in theatres. It is a movie that makes grown men cry. It is so iconic, Thursday night Major League Baseball held a Field of Dreams game in the Iowa cornfield where the movie was shot... even Kevin Costner came. The movie is about faith, about trusting in guidance you can't see and no one else believes in.

A whispered voice urges this Iowa farmer to plow under his cornfield and build a baseball diamond, complete with lights. It's insane, but as the story unfolds, and he does it, great ballplayers of yore emerge out of the corn to play again. At Thursday night's game, the Yankees and White Sox came through the corn field just like in the movie – a nice touch.

Field of Dreams is about restoration – restoration for the dead ballplayers, some of them unfairly disgraced in the White Sox scandal; restoration of relationships across time and even across the boundary of life and death. It ends with a game of catch in the Iowa twilight between a father and a son, enmity reconciled, relationship restored – that's the Gospel.

The movie also tugs at our heart strings because it evokes the love of baseball – of this funny game of nine innings – why nine? But it's a trinity of trinities... Where instead of moving back and forth as in almost every other major team sport, we go around and around, just like life, ever moving toward home.

This is how we live life, not back-and-forth, struggling to compete, but moving in circles, repeating mistakes, gradually learning, repeatedly returning to home base and starting again.

We might see our week between Sundays in that way – we field what comes at us, we wait for our turn at bat, we run, we steal bases, and gradually we are moving toward the Home in which we will spend eternity.

And it's not just about being up at the plate and running the bases. Being in the field, fielding hits and fly balls, is also a way to think about how we resist evil, trying to stop sin before it can advance.

And let's not leave out the seventh inning stretch – who put it in the seventh? Someone thinking about Sabbath? Taking a break on the seventh day? Hmmm...

What strikes me most is how baseball invites us to think about sin and redemption – “Three strikes and you’re out” is the human way of dealing with sin.

There’s a little wiggle room, but then the judgment is final.

And you can extend that third out by just hitting foul balls again and again, but eventually you’re out. Three outs and the whole team is out for the inning.

But in God-Life, there is no penalty for striking out – other than not advancing.

There is no prescribed number of times we can strike or foul, no limit to the errors we can make.

God forgives us an infinite number of times,

just as we are invited to forgive others as many times as needed.

That was St. Paul’s big insight, after a lifetime of trying to live by “three strikes and you’re out: *“There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death.”* No condemnation. Freedom.

Can we live that way? Can we treat each other that way?

There is also something about the teamwork that speaks to us of the community of faith.

Oh, there are the spectacular catches that can cause an out,

but generally the team in the field has to work together to get runners out.

And a really good hit or even a homer can bring home those who were on base.

Our doctrine of salvation might say Jesus made the ultimate sacrifice play to get all us runners home.

As we heard in our gospel reading, on the night he was arrested,

Jesus reminded his followers that he was going Home, and was preparing a place for them, and would come again and bring them home.

That is the promise in which we live – that we have a home base to which we return again and again, until the bottom of 9th when we go home for good.

We might even say Jesus has walked us Home.

Amen.

Romans 8:1-5

There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death. For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do: by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and to deal with sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, so that the just requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit.

John 14:1-7

Jesus said, 'Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house there are many dwelling-places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also. And you know the way to the place where I am going.' Thomas said to him, 'Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?' Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you know me, you will know my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him.'