

MM Email Blue Sheet for Mother's Day 2013

MOTHER'S DAY DETOUR

I turned up the hill toward Mount Union Cemetery this morning on an impulse. We had just done our morning walk and coffee stop and were heading home. Jean wondered why I turned.

It's something I used to do when I was preaching I told her. I would go to my office at dawn on Sundays. On special days I would swing into one of the cemeteries along the way. I was remembering that this Mother's Day. Why? she still asked.

I did it on Mother's Day to remind myself of all the mothers I knew who would be in church that morning. Old grief embers would be stirred for some in spite of passing of time. I went to remind myself how it felt to stand at a graveside. I remembered that two days before I resigned as pastor I did a service at this very cemetery. A teen-age boy, as I remember. A motorcycle accident. I can feel his teen-age sister sobbing in my arms. Why, why, why? A question with no answer.

With all the joy of Mother's Day, part of my job was to also remember the tears. That's what I was doing today when I turned up the hill to drive through Mount Union Cemetery. Jean was wiping away a tear as we drove into our driveway. She remembers how I used to remember. I still remember.

READING FICTION FOR TRUTH

My book club does not usually read fiction. But this month we are reading a book by a new novelist, Amanda Coplin. It's her first novel; *"The Orchardist."*

I like novels set in places I know. I also like novels that are housed in some history. In *"The Orchardist"* I find myself taken to places I've been, to small towns in the apple country of eastern Washington. I remember Lake Chelan from my childhood, how cold it was even in summer, and riding *The Lady of the Lake* from Chelan all the way to the far end of the lake.

The story started off right away sounding like the author had stolen the plot off the front page of today's newspaper. You have heard of the capture and decade-long imprisonment of those three girls in Ohio. You can read that same story in this novel—capture, torture, sexual abuse, pregnancy, abortions and escape—only the name of the evil man is Michaelson. It's a dramatic and compelling story. And tragic and sad. In whatever form it comes to light. The nightmare does not end even when it's over.

A novel can get into the details of feelings and thoughts of everyone along the way. The newspapers give as much detail as they can dredge up, but a novel digs deeper.

Would I recommend the novel? I would. It is well-written. It is sensitive but not mushy. It is raw without rubbing it in. The main characters come to life. A story is brought into daylight that has a presence in every town, city, state, country and nation in the world—amazingly hidden most of the time.

Offense against the vulnerable, especially children, is disturbing. Jesus is credited with an angry moment toward those who mistreat little children when he says: *"it would be better for him to have a great millstone fastened around his neck and be drowned in the depth of the sea."* Whether he actually said that is subject to debate, but the feelings about abuse of children are universal among right-minded people.

Will Della, one of Michaelson's abused prisoners, get the revenge she schemes to get? Would you blame her if she did? And, by the way, what about the Orchardist? Read and find out?

Art Morgan, May 12, 2013