

(Another Word) From the Pastor....

Sometimes it's hard to see! Isn't it so?
Many things can obstruct our view;
Many obstacles can obscure the vision.
Clouds that reach down to earth level
Fog our sight.
Sometimes physical things are in the way
(Not always bad things, by the way – on occasion
We say that *we can't see the forest for the trees*).
Darkness (of several varieties) diminishes our sight.
Light is **always** needed to clarify what's before
And behind us.
But maybe nothing distorts our view more than **tears**.
Grief and pain impair the function of perception
In ways far beyond explanation.
Such an obstruction was encountered on April 16
At a marvelous institution of higher education,
Virginia Tech at Blacksburg, Virginia.
But it was hardly a local thing.
That day the location didn't matter.
The sense of community on a college campus
Suddenly expanded to the world when 33 lives were lost.
There was no purpose but madness; no explanation
Beyond sickness of mind and spirit;
No real cause except for the presence of evil
(One of those forms of darkness suggested above).
And none of those things make any sense.

Impact on a *world-community* came quickly for several reasons.
Such a University has students and faculty that is international.
The names of those killed bear that out.
But not only distant countries are represented,
So also are cities, small towns and communities (like our own).
This makes it personal in virtually every place and time.
But direct or indirect connections aren't even needed
Because we're part of the **human** family.
And this is a moment that makes that vivid.
It reminds us that when one hurts, somehow all hurt.
And we do!
So the signs that appeared on the Virginia Tech campus
Are indeed accurate:
Today we are Hokies!

And that's one of the places where our **sight** begins to return!
Perhaps the first thing we **can see** through tears
Is the solidarity of those who wish us well,
The long line of those who not only *want* to share our pain,
But also *do* in reality because they are our brothers and sisters.
That **is** something that makes sense.
In the midst of such senselessness it **is** a place to start!
When the peace was shattered there,
It crumbled a little everywhere. And, in a way,
We **all** bear some of its weight.

Now that has its own grim reminder.
The *sharing* does not turn back the clock.
It does not make the moment disappear.
It doesn't mean that innocence and trust are not broken, to be sure.
But it does mean that reality shared
Is reality somehow more easily borne.
In this there's more than enough to go around!

But there's more than humanity in this for most.
There is a relationship and bonding of faith.
The Word of God brings comfort and consolation,
Especially in these after-days of Jesus' Resurrection.
The faith community at Blacksburg has been a marvelous support.
Our denomination's campus and local pastors, congregations and Synod
Have been at the heart
Of proclaiming the reconciling Word.
We can be grateful both to and for them
For having given voice to *our faith on our behalf*.
But we're not alone in that.
Realization of the *wholeness of the Church* and the Gospel
Is being portrayed by other denominations alike.
And that is the real power to be sought and experienced
In the *unity* of the people of God.

Finally,
It is God himself who is the **light**.
Just as Saint John (1:5) says of Jesus,
The light shines in the darkness
And the darkness did not overcome it.
For any or all of us to see clearly through *these* tears
We must trust in the vision that comes in God's light.
We will not find it in endless analysis of the perpetrator,
By viewing his video tapes,
By casting blame, by making judgments,
Or by assigning such control to Satan.
We **will** find our sight by recalling God's promises:
That his creation is good, even when flawed;
That his love is endless, even when challenged and hidden;
That his purposes are strong, even when unclear to us;
And that he will not give us more to bear than we can handle.
God is in charge! And when we understand that fully,
Then we'll begin to *see* much more clearly!

With prayers for the grieving and wounded,
And for the peace of all.

Pastor Fred