



Join Pastor Kroonblawd on Sunday mornings at 9:15 on Zoom as we study Harrison's book, *A Little Book on Joy*.

The Joy of Everyday Life by Rev. Matthew C. Harrison

The word for “church” in the New Testament is *ecclesia*. It means, literally, “called out.” Christians are “called out” by Christ—out of and away from sin, death, and the devil. But this does not mean that we are called away from living real lives, or as Luther put it, should “live in a corner.”

To be sure, Jesus from time to time retreated to “rest for a while” (Mark 6:31) with his apostles, but quickly returned to the fray, to his sacred vocation of accomplishing our salvation. Our souls find their “rest” in Christ (Matthew 11:29), but this very spiritual peace and joy in Christ drives us back into life with both feet. If peace is joy at rest, then happily meddling in the affairs of folks around us who need us is joy in action.

The secret to living a good news life in a bad news world is coming to the deep conviction that the high callings of God, the vocations that he regards as great and marvelous, are those in which we serve folks right under our nose.

“There is [according to Martin Luther] nothing more delightful and lovable on earth than ones neighbor. Love does not think about works, it finds joy in people” [Gustaf Wingren, *Luther on Vocation* (Muhlenberg, 1957), 43]. The gravitational pull of Christ draws us to himself for grace and mercy and peace and joy, and then hurls us into the world around us. For the great majority of us, that does not mean being called to serve as a missionary in Africa, or even as a pastor or deaconess or parochial school teacher.

It means that we are driven—freely compelled (“The love of Christ compels us”; 2 Corinthians 5:14)—to serve our spouse in love, to care for our children, to help our next door neighbor, to help the poor, hurting, and suffering in our church, to love our grandparents, and to serve our community.

And no matter what or where our calling, we are placed in a context to serve those right around us. “Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me” (Matthew 25:40). That goes as much for changing diapers as it does for slogging to make a buck to put food on the table and pay the bills.

“For whatever does not proceed from faith is sin” (Romans 14:23). But it is also true that whatever we do in faith is delightful and pleasing to God. We can do it with full confidence that, in Christ, all our sins are covered, and our vocations as father, mother, son, daughter, clerk, farmer, technician, teacher, fireman, or nurse are vocations in which the Lord delights with joy.

—Excerpted from *A Little Book on Joy: The Secret of Living a Good News Life in a Bad News World* (Lutheran Legacy, 2009), 153159.

