Sometimes It Is Simply a Joy to Be

Receiving abundant life in the ordinary moments

BY JOHN HIMMELBERGER

My daughter had looked up the store hours. The website said it was open until 9 p.m., and it was only 8 p.m. She was excited. I said, “Let’s go.”

When we got there, she asked, “Aren’t you coming?” I replied, “No, you go ahead. This store doesn’t have mobility scooters.”

She quickly offered not to go, but I insisted. I was perfectly happy to stay in the car. Her willingness to give up something she wanted to do meant something to me. So did her excitement when she realized I was good with waiting. There was love in that exchange, and I had time to appreciate it.

For that moment, I had no expectation or agenda. I was content, at rest, and filled with joy.

Anywho, she was back within five minutes. The store had actually closed at 6 p.m. So much for the website.

She picked another store, this time one with mobility scooters. Our plans changed, and there was room for us to enjoy the next stop together.

Those few minutes in the car may sound simple. For someone who likes progress as much as I do, they are worth paying attention to.

I like traction. I like momentum. As long as something is moving forward, I generally feel good about it. It means I am not stuck. There are things to build, people to help, and ideas I want to see become something. I enjoy that part of my life. But the pressure to keep making progress can take a toll, especially when I begin to feel out of sorts simply because nothing is happening.

Recently, I was sick in bed for a few days. After about a day, I started calling the mothers of my grandchildren. Since I was lying there anyway, what better time to develop characters based on the grandkids for a fiction book?

I asked questions about their personalities, the things they say, their strengths and weaknesses. Before long, I was building character profiles.

You know, the stuff you do in your downtime.

I enjoy that kind of creativity, and I love my grandchildren. The project gave me something enjoyable to work on. It also makes me smile at how quickly I can find something to develop, even from bed. My mind is quite willing to keep moving when my body needs to stop.

Perhaps you know that feeling. You might have more to do than you can reasonably fit into a day. Even when you sit down, your thoughts keep working through what remains unfinished. Or perhaps you have more open time than you want, and the lack of activity leaves you restless. You would welcome a little traction.

Both experiences can make it difficult to enjoy the moment you are actually in. We can spend a great deal of life waiting for the amount of activity to become just right before allowing ourselves to be content.

I used to feel a need to make everything overtly spiritual, as though I needed to explain how an ordinary activity served some higher purpose. These days, I recognize that God is part of my whole life. Being with Him is a way of living. I can enjoy a creative idea, a conversation, or my daughter's happiness without having to turn it into a ministry assignment.

That understanding gives me room to receive the ordinary parts of life with gratitude. I am still learning to enjoy that room when there is nothing in particular to accomplish.

Hebrews 10 helps me understand the freedom Jesus has made possible. In verses 15-18, the Holy Spirit testifies to God's covenant promise, including His declaration that "their sins and their lawless acts I will remember no more." Forgiveness means there is no further offering required for sin. Then comes the *therefore*. Because of Jesus' blood, we have confidence to enter God's presence and draw near with assurance, our hearts cleansed from a guilty conscience (Hebrews 10:15-22, AMP).

That invitation gives me a place to rest. Jesus has already made the way for me to approach God. I can receive His welcome today, right in the middle of the life I am living.

In John 10:10, the Amplified Bible says Jesus came so we could "have and enjoy life." I believe that invitation includes today. There is a life with Him available to us in the present, including the ordinary hours we might otherwise dismiss as unimportant.

Sometimes we have not known that this kind of life was possible. Sometimes what we have been taught has made enjoyment feel suspect, or left us expecting abundance only somewhere beyond this life. It can take time to recognize the freedom we have been given and learn to live in it.

Of course, this is real life. Sometimes the bottom falls out. At other times, we find ourselves favorably positioned without having striven to get there. Circumstances change, and we feel those changes. Grief is real. Exhaustion is real. There is room to acknowledge what hurts while remaining open to whatever comfort or joy we can receive.

I would never want the invitation to enjoy life to become another pressure someone has to carry. Having a difficult day does not mean you have failed at faith. We can bring our whole selves to God, including the parts that are tired or unsure.

And there are still responsibilities. The word that helps me here is stewardship. We have people to love, work to do, and things entrusted to our care. Our bodies and relationships are part of that care, too. Sometimes faithful stewardship means getting on with a task. Sometimes it means allowing ourselves to rest or giving our attention to the person beside us.

Looking back at that evening, I was already experiencing joy before we discovered the store was closed or picked somewhere else to go. My daughter's care for me and her excitement about shopping were enough for me to enjoy right then. A few quiet minutes in a parked car had something to offer, too.

Perhaps there is a moment like that available to you today. You can allow yourself a little time without assigning it an outcome. Notice the love someone is offering. Let yourself enjoy something good without needing to make it useful. If the day is difficult, begin with whatever small measure of rest you can receive.

Jesus has paid for abundant life today. We can begin to receive it right where we are, with Him, simply being.

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What helps you enjoy the moment when you have too much to do, or not enough?

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