

Delighting in whatever is lovely (Philippians 4:1-9)

Can we notice what is true and noble, even when it is also ordinary?

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I have been reading Ross Gay's wonderful essay collection *The Book of Delights*. It is a kind of shared gratitude journal that Gay developed from a single and simple goal: "Write a delight every day for a year." For Gay this project made noticing, naming, and sharing delight into a discipline and a practice. The result is a delight-filled book that gives time and space for writer and reader alike to sit with the holiness of sunshine, the wisdom of a cat meme, and the unexpected beauty of a father weeping at a corny movie.

I reread Philippians 4, including the well-known verse 8, with Gay's delights and his practice of delight-noticing and delight-writing in mind: "Whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy, think about such things."

I sit at my kitchen table at 5:30 am on a Monday morning while my children, ages 9 and 5, still sleep and my email inbox is unopened. I take a deep breath, slowly in through the mouth and out through the nose, again, and one more time. What is true? Do I notice what is noble? Can I write about what is right? Do I delight in what is pure and lovely and admirable? Things come to mind, of course, extraordinary signs of God's radical goodness in the world, but on this Monday morning I listen and

I look for more ordinary signs in my tiny world.

It is not quiet or still. Six fans whir throughout the house, trying to hold off the heat already creeping in through windows and walls. The 20-year-old refrigerator hums loudly, and after one strange pop I wonder if it is giving up at last. Birds sing and chirp. One sits at the feeder by the front window, pecking out a morning meal until another swoops in and scares it away. The sun creeps up through the hazy morning sky. It feels good, and then it feels hot. I start to sweat, so I put my hair up in a high bun. I move to the other side of the table where it can't reach me, first shifting the stacks of laundry from table to bench to make room for my laptop.

I finish my coffee and pour a glass of cool water. It is good. I notice the tiny roots on the monstera cutting I put in a vase and set by the window a few days ago. I read the mini banner made by my daughter and draped over a couch cushion: "I love everyone" printed in bright blue marker on a roll of receipt paper gifted to her by the grocery store clerk the day before. I hear my husband get out of bed, the creak of the headboard and then the floor as the house confesses the start of another day.

What is true? Do I notice what is noble? Can I write about what is right? Do I delight in what is pure and lovely and admirable? I do.