**The Joy of Ministry**

**LCMS East Missouri Pastors’ Conference**

St Paul Lutheran Church, Farmington, Missouri

30 September – 2 October, 2012

1. **Introduction**

* The case of C. S. Lewis: ***Surprised by Joy*:** byproduct of faith in Christ
* The futile pursuit of happiness
* The difference between happiness and joy
* Passing emotional state v lasting state of being
* Christian joy as supernatural and angelic
* Coexistence of joy with sorrow
* External source of joy that breaks in on us like the sun that shines even when it is cloudy and at night
* The promise of the new age as the age of joy in Is 35:10 and Zeph 3:17
* The gospel as a message of heavenly joy for people on earth: Luke 2:10
* Joy for the world that had lost its joy
* Inklings of joy in God’s creation
* Search for joy in the wrong places
* Confusion of happiness with joy
* Illusionary joy from sex and counterfeited joy from drugs
* Cynicism from disillusionment
* The joy of repentance in Luke 15:7, 10
* Joy as a supernatural fruit of the Spirit: Gal 5:22. See also Acts 13:52; Rom 14:17; 1 Thess 1:6
* The devil as the miserable spirit: the killjoy
* The Holy Spirit as the Spirit of joy
* Goal of Paul’s ministry in Phil 1:25: ***I will continue with all of you for your progress and joy of the faith.***
* Reversal of worldly view of ageing as diminishing enjoyment
* Enlarging our limited capacity for joy
* Faith in Christ as the organ for the reception of joy
* The role of suffering in opening up to greater joy
* The best that is yet to come
* Christ’s call to ministry to share his joy with us in John 15:11: ***I have told***

***you this so that my joy may be in you and your joy may be complete.***

* The words of Jesus as the source of joy for them: John 17:13-14
* Fulfilled joy from asking and receiving from the Father in the Son’s

name: John 16:24

* Joy from remaining in the Son’s love and in loving one another: 15:9-12
* Joy in doing the Father’s work together with the Son by keeping his

mandates: John 15:10-11

* Our problem: ministry as a burden rather than a joy
* Many reasons for disappointment and grief even in the best congregations
* Clouding of spiritual perception by feelings: see only what is bad
* Paradox of ministry in 2 Cor 6:10: ***sorrowful, yet always rejoicing***
* Purpose of presentation
* No comprehensive treatment of the topic or teaching on how to have a joyful ministry
* Joy as a gift to be received from God rather than a human product
* Encouragement in ministry by sharing what I have discovered for myself from 43 years of ministry
* Two convictions
* Relevance of Christian joy in a country that is dedicated to the pursuit of happiness
* Usefulness in evangelising young people who, like Lewis, are looking for joy in the wrong places
* Paul’s blessing in Rom 15:13: *The God of peace fill you with all joy and peace*

*as you trust in him (Jesus), so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.*

oly Holy

1. **Joy of ministry with a good conscience**

* Modern equation of self-esteem with a good conscience
* Feeling good about ourselves and what we do: goal of therapy and new goal of education
* Confusion of emotional mood with spiritual state
* Confusion of happiness with joy
* Call to rejoice in Phil 4:4 as command to feel happy
* Purpose of worship = delivery of feel-good happiness
* Gift of a good conscience
* Given in baptism (Heb 10:22; 1 Pet 3:19)
* Qualification for participation in the divine service (Heb 9:14)
* Paul in 1 Tim 3:9: *Deacons must hold fast to the mystery of the faith with a pure conscience.*
  + Deacon as assistant to pastor: modern seminary student on vicarage
  + See the use of the related phrase: *having a good conscience* in 1 Tim 1:19; Heb 13:18; 1 Pet 3:16
  + Mystery of the faith explained in 3:16: presence of risen Lord who unites the earthly and the heavenly realms
  + Conscience as umpire rather than law maker and judge: governed by God’s word rather than human judgments
  + Following the modern psychological understanding of the sovereign conscience with me as lawmaker and judge
* My goal to grow the congregation
* My imposition of my thoughts on my people rather than my address of God’s word to their conscience
  + Lutheran emphasis on care of conscience as basis for care of souls
  + Lost dimension of pastoral work
  + Purpose of ministry: delivery of pure, clear conscience ► good conscience that perceives and expects what is good from God rather than a bad conscience that perceives what is bad and fears the worst from God
  + Problem: how can I deliver a good conscience if I have a bad conscience?
* Paul’s instruction to Timothy as a pastor in 1 Tim 1:5: *The goal of this charge is love, which comes from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.*
* Good conscience as the product of the gospel and the sound/healing teaching of the law that conforms with the gospel (1:8-11)
* Link between good conscience and sincere faith
* Christian love as the fruit of a good conscience
* My problem: how can I deliver clear conscience if I have a bad conscience?
  + Wrong reasons for bad conscience
    - Expectation of members and leaders
    - Own pervasive sense of failure
    - Misplaced sense of guilt: human demands rather than God’s word
  + Self promotion ► burnout/compassion fatigue
  + Sabotage of ministry by bad conscience about my ministry: perception of failure
  + Confusion of person and work: failure in work as failure as a person
* Paul’s four avowals of a good conscience
  + Paul before Sanhedrin in Acts 23:1: *My brothers, I have fulfilled my duty to God in all good conscience to this day.*
    - Greek verb *politeuein*: discharging obligations as citizen
    - Sanhedrin as God’s court on earth
    - Ananias as God’s representative
    - Amazing claim of good conscience
    - Basic orientation: duty towards God
  + Paul to Felix in Acts 24:16: *So I strive always to keep my conscience blameless before God and man.*
* Felix as representative of humanity
* Double focus: God and man
* *Blameless* = inoffensive: Greek *aproskopos*
* *Always:* regularly in daily devotions and daily vocation
* Law and prophets as foundation for blameless conscience
* Conscience governed by God’s word rather than human judgments
  + Paul in 1 Cor 4:4: *I am conscious of nothing against myself, but that does not make me innocent. It is the Lord who judges me.*
* Problem: appraisal of ministry by others or by self
* Pastors as stewards of God’s mysteries: need for faithfulness
* Accountability to God as the only Judge
* Danger of ignorant and premature judgment
* Working in the light of the Last Day
* Difference between God’s judgment of people and His judgment of their works
* God’s judgement of my works as good news: see 1 Cor 3: 10-15
* Reception of praise from God
  + Paul to Timothy in 2 Tim 1:3: *I thank God, whom I serve, as my forefathers did, with a clear conscience, as night and day I constantly remember you in my prayers.*
* Thanksgiving: gift of clear conscience
* Link of clear conscience with daily prayer
* Daily reception of clear conscience
* Clear conscience as condition for service of God and enjoyment of God’s gifts
* Ministry with a good conscience
  + God as my judge: person and ministry
  + Standard for conscience: God’s word as law and gospel
  + The misapplication of law and gospel by the devil to condemn the sinner and excuse sin
  + Clear conscience from right distinction between law and gospel
  + Delivery of a good conscience about myself as a person through the gospel: justification by grace through faith in Christ and the gospel
* Result: assurance of salvation and God’s approval of me
* New questions for justified pastor
* How can I be sure that God is pleasing with my work as a pastor?
* Which works please him and so meet his approval?
* Which works will last for time and eternity? See Rev 14:13
* Delivery of a good conscience about my works through obedience to God’s commandments: see 1 John 3:21-22
* God-pleasing service
* Pleasing God by doing what he has given me to do as His agent and representative: His works in and through me
* Divinely instituted work that is done by me in my station and vocation: holy work in God’s three holy orders
* Positive role of the law: third use as cause of delight
* See Luther’s emphasis in his Large Catechism on using the Decalogue to discover what pleases God
* Importance of ordination and call for ministry with a good conscience
* Criterion for evaluation: faithfulness rather than apparent success
* Reasons for uncertainty about my work as a pastor
* Criticism from people: antagonists
* Self-criticism: nothing ever good enough
* Disobedience to God’s commandments and his agenda for my ministry
* Need to prove myself that results in sense of failure
* Spiritual attack by the devil: Luther’s insight that the devil attacks me because I am faithful in doing God’s work
* Result of bad conscience about ministry
  + Search for approval, popularity and praise
  + Discouragement and burnout
  + Hopelessness
* Two common reactions to criticism
* Political manipulation of people to get what we want
* Tailoring our preaching to what people want to hear
* Paul’s pastoral stance in 2 Cor 4:1-2: ***Therefore having this ministry by the mercy of God, we do not lose heart. But we have renounced disgraceful underhanded ways. We refuse to use cunning or to tamper with God’s word, but by an open statement of the truth*** ***we commend ourselves to everyone’s conscience in the sight of God.***
* Two dangers: using God’s word to manipulate people or saying only

what pleases them

* Ministry as a gift for delivery of gifts
* Performance in God’s presence
* Speaking the truth of God’s word from our conscience to their

conscience: argument with God rather than us as pastors

* Self-presentation as ministers of the gospel
* Paul’s boast in 2 Cor 1:12: ***For our boast is this, the testimony of our conscience, that we behaved in the world with the holiness and simplicity (purity) that are from God, not by earthly (carnal) wisdom but by the grace of God.***

1. **Joy in receptive meditation and prayer**

* Problem: running on empty
* Endless demands and few resources
* Lament as in Luke 11: 6: ***I have nothing to set before him.***
* Our impossible task
* Insufficient power and resources for human work
* Call to do God’s work as well
* Need for daily reception of supernatural help from God for daily ministry
* Divine power of the Holy Spirit for working with God in administering his grace
* Promise of Jesus in John 16:23b-24: ***Truly, truly, I say to you, whatever you***

***ask of the Father in my name, he will give it. Until now you have asked***

***nothing in my name. Ask, and you will receive, that you joy may be full.***

* New way: praying to the Father in the name of Jesus
* Purpose of prayer: reception from God the Father
* Result: full joy
* The intercession of Jesus for us as our priest in Heb 7:25: ***Consequently he is***

***able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through***

***him, since he always lives to make intercession for them.***

* High priest Jesus who represents us and intercedes for us
* Our approach of the Father through him and his praying for us
* The gift of prayer in Luke 11:1-13: ***Now Jesus was praying in a certain***

***place, and when he had finished, one of his disciples said to him, “Lord,***

***teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples.” And he said to them, “When you pray, say: ‘Father, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come. Give***

***us each day our daily bread, and forgive us our sins, for we ourselves***

***forgive everyone who is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation.’”***

***And he said to them, “Which of you who has a friend will go to him at***

***midnight and say to him, ‘Friend, lend me three loaves of bread; for a friend of mine has arrived on a journey, and I have nothing to set before him,’ and***

***he will answer from within, ‘Do not bother me; the door is now shut, and m***

***children are with me in bed. I cannot get up and give you anything?’ I tell***

***you, though he will not get up and give him anything because he is his***

***friend, yet because of his impudence he will rise and give him whatever he***

***needs. And I tell you, Ask, and it will be given you; seek, and you will find;***

***knock, and the door will be opened for you. For everyone who asks receives***

***and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks, it will be opened.***

***What father among you, if his son asks for a fish, will instead of a fish give***

***him a serpent, or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? If you then***

***who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!”***

* + - Request: lesson in prayer
    - Unexpected answer: four helps
    - Gift by Jesus of his prayer for the world
* Our identification with him as God’s royal Son
* His identification with us as needy, tempted sinners
  + - Unexpected visitors with their demands on us
* Our lack of resources: nothing to give
* Prayer as borrowing from God for others
  + - Christ’s words: commands and promises as aids for prayer
* Note divine passives
* Asking for God’s promised gifts
* Seeking for guidance: finding God’s hidden way
* Knocking for admission: divine hospitality
  + - Gift of the Holy Spirit to prompt and direct us: see Rom 8:26-27.
  + Luther on praying to the Father in the name of Jesus in John 14:14; 15:16;

16:23: ***Christ prayed for me, and for this reason my prayers are***

***acceptable through His. Accordingly, we must weave our praying into***

***His. He is forever the Mediator for all men. Through Him we come to***

***God. In Him we must incorporate and envelop all our prayers and all***

***that we do. As St. Paul declares (Rom 13:14), we must put on Christ;***

***and everything must be done in Him (1 Cor 10:31) if it is to be pleasing***

***to God. But all this is said to Christians for the purpose of giving them***

***the boldness and the confidence to rely on this Man and to pray with***

***complete assurance; for we hear that in this way He unites us with***

***Himself, really puts us on a par with Him, and merges our praying into***

***his and His into ours. Christians can glory in this great distinction. What***

***greater honor could be paid us than this, that our faith in Christ entitles***

***us to be called His brothers and coheirs, that our prayer is to be like***

***His, that there is really no difference except that our prayers must***

***originate in Him and be spoken in His name if they are to be acceptable***

***and if He is to bestow this inheritance and glory on us. Aside from this,***

***He makes us equal to Himself in all things; His and our prayer must be***

***one, just as His body is ours and His members are ours.***

* + - * + Praying in the name of Jesus as praying together with him: standing in

his shoes

* + - * + Father’s acceptance of our prayers as from Jesus

Praying with Christ's word in John 15:7: ***If you abide in me and my words***

***abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.***

Prayer as a the fruit of meditation on God’s word

Meditation as listening to the voice of Jesus as addressed to our heart and conscience

Indwelling of God’s word through meditation

See the remark of John the Baptist in John 3:29: ***The friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly at the bridegroom’s voice.***

Joy from meditation on God’s word in Jer 15:16: ***When your words came I ate them; they were my joy and my heart’s delight.***

Guidance by word for prayer according to God's will as in 1 John 5:14

Bible as our prayer book

Pattern for daily devotions: prayerful meditation on the word before prayer for ourselves and others

* + Two sides to ministry in Acts 6:4: word and prayer
  + Working with God in prayer in John 14:12-14: ***Truly, truly, I say to you,***

***whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father. Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask anything in my name, I will do it.***

* + - Our exercise of faith in prayer
    - Doing greater works than Jesus by praying in his name
    - Involvement in the work of Jesus by prayer
    - Glorification of Father in the Son by praying in his name
* Luther’s summary of John 14:12-14 in LW 24:87: ***With these and the following words Christ also demonstrates what constitute a Christian's true office and function, and how necessary the exercise of this is in Christendom. The prophet Zechariah refers to this when he says (12:10) that Christ will pour out and grant the Spirit which is called 'a Spirit of compassion and supplication'. For in all Christians He will effect and produce these two things: First, He will convince and assure their hearts that they have a compassionate God; secondly, He will enable them to help others by their supplication. The result of the first is that they are reconciled to God and have all they need for themselves. Then, when they have this, they will become gods and will be saviours of the world by their supplication. Through the Spirit of compassion they themselves will become children of God; and then, as children of God, they will mediate between God and their neighbour, and will serve others and help them attain this estate too.* *For once a Christian begins to know Christ as his Lord and Savior, through whom he is redeemed from death and brought into His dominion and inheritance, God completely permeates his heart*** *(German: so wird sein Herz gar durchgottet).*
* The connection between joy and prayer
* Phil 4:4: ***Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say rejoice...The Lord is at hand; do not be anxious about anything but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God.***
* Rejoice = invitation, encouragement rather than demand
* Reason for rejoicing: Lord’s presence
* Always = regularly each morning and evening in daily devotions
* Supplication = request for favors in daily briefing and debriefing
* Thanksgiving before petitions: focus on God’s goodness and our reception of His gifts
* Coincidence of rejoicing, thanksgiving and requesting: cycle
* Becoming more open and receptive to joy by thanksgiving
* Phil 1:3-4: ***I thank God in all my remembrance of you always in every supplication of mine for you all making my supplication with joy.***
* Daily remembrance of members ► daily thanksgiving for them
* Daily thanksgiving ► joyful praying (see also 1 Thess 3:9-10)
* Use of membership list
* Being a Gregory: Col 4:2: ***Devote yourselves to prayer, being awake and thankful.***
* Praying = being spiritually awake for the reception of God’s gifts
* Expectation of good things from God by thanksgiving
* Further reading: “The Mystery of Meditation” and “The Mystery of Prayer,”

*Grace upon Grace: Spirituality for Today*, Concordia: St Louis, 2008, 218-70

1. **Joy of ministry under Christ’s protection**
   * + Problem of conflict and criticism

* Increased public hostility to the church and pastors
* Dealing with antagonists
* Involvement in theological controversies
* Division: my friends and my enemies
  + - Paul in 1 Tim 1:18-19: ***Timothy, my son, I give you this charge…, so that by***

***following them you may fight the good fight, holding on to the faith and a good conscience. Some have rejected these and so have shipwrecked their faith.***

* Neglect of teaching on spiritual warfare by pastors
* Sense of embarrassment about Satan and the demons
* Prestige of psychology
* Misunderstanding of spiritual warfare as demon busting
* Christians and pastors as target for spiritual attack
* Ordination as call to battle: officer in Christ’s army
* Conscience as primary battle ground
* Connection with faith in Christ and a good conscience before God
* Satan’s tactics: bad conscience ► shipwreck of faith
  + - Satan’s targets for attack
  + Church as target of Satan
* Going for the top: pastors, leaders, presidents
* Priority: destroying a congregation
* Danger of politicising and psychologising this phenomenon
  + Pastor as main target
* Cause of attack
* Sense of idealism
* Endless demands
* Pressure for success
* Failure to meet expectations
* Doubts about vocation
* Attack on calling
* Concentration on feelings rather than ordination
* Disheartenment
  + Pastor’s wife as second target
* Living in a fish bowl
* Disillusionment with husband
* Irregular hours and neglect by husband
* Poor pay and lack of appreciation
* Lack of support
* Disappointment with the church as an institution
* Result: Satan in the bedroom with sex as the battle ground
  + Children as third target
* Trouble with children
* Pressure to be good: sense of hypocrisy
* Exaggerated guilt at misbehaviour
* PK syndrome: playing up
* Parental shame: need to manage household (1 Tim 3:4; Tit 1:6)
* Demoralisation of pastor and his wife
  + Need for spiritual protection of self, family and congregation
  + The call to sentry duty in Eph 6:10-18: ***Finally, be made strong in the Lord and in his mighty power.*** ***Put on the full armour of God so that you may have the strength to stand against the devil’s schemes. For our battle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore take the full armor of God, so that when the evil day comes, you may have the strength to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand.*** ***Stand then, having buckled the belt of truth around your waist, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having fitted your feet with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace, and, in addition to all this, having taken the shield of faith, with which you have the strength to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one; and receive the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, praying at all times in the Spirit with all kinds of prayers and requests, and staying awake for this with all persistence in requests for all the saints and on behalf of me…***
* Key word: ***stand***
* Involvement in sentry duty rather than offensive warfare
* Guarding holy ground: duty of spiritual care for your circle of people
* Working in the dark: use of ears rather than eyes
* Watching for the attack on ourselves and others
* Protection with God’s armour
* Key verses: ***Receive the helmet of salvation and sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, praying in the Spirit at all times with all kinds of prayers and requests, and staying awake for this with all persistence in requests for all the saints.***
* Offensive weapon: use of God’s word in prayer
* Sounding the alarm and calling on the champion to fight
* Wielding the sword of the Spirit with intercessory prayer as in Jer 18:20: ***Remember that I stood before you and spoke on their behalf to turn your wrath away from them.***
* Covering with Christ’s blood and righteousness
* Standing in the breach (Ps 106:23; Ezek 13:5; 20:30)
* Reliance on Christ: borrowing from him
* Sentry duty for family and congregation
* Task of pastor in Heb 13:17-18: *Obey your leaders and submit to them; for they are keeping watch on behalf of your souls, as men who have to give account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you. Pray for us, for we are sure that we have a good conscience, desiring to act honourably in all things.*
* Pastors as intercessors rather than spiritual watch dogs
* Accountability for souls by intercession for those under attack
* Joy from obedient members who pray for their pastor
  + - The prayer of Jesus in John 17:11b-15: ***Holy Father, keep them in your name, which you have given me, so that they may be one even as we are one. While I was with them, I kept them in your name, which you have given me...But now I am coming to you, and these things I speak in the world, that they may have my joy fulfilled in themselves. I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth***
* Full joy with the experience of the world’s hatred for us and Christ
* Christ’s prayer for our protection
* Joy from Christ’s protection of us with the Father’s holy name and word
* Protection by Christ’s holiness
* Further reading: “The Hidden Battle,” *Grace Upon Grace: Spirituality for Today*,

Concordia: St Louis, 2008, 218-70

1. **Joy of ministry with authority**

* Remarkable reaction of Jesus to the evangelists in Luke 10:17-24
* Their joy at their power over the demons
* Focus of Jesus away from their power and their joy at their success in ministry to their authority and the enrolment of their names in heaven
* Status and authority as sons of the heavenly King
* Participation in the sonship and inheritance of God’s Son
* Joy and thanksgiving of Jesus at the Father’s gracious delegation of all things to him and through him to his disciples
* The stress of Jesus on authority in his call of the apostles (Matt 10:1; Mark

3:15; 6:7; Luke 9:1)

* The authority of the Father over Jesus (Matt 28:18)
* His delegation of his own authority to the apostles and evangelists
* His authorisation to do the Father’s work together with him
* Their exercise of authorised power under him (Luke 9:1)
* Paul in Eph 5:21: ***Be subordinate each to another out of reverence for Christ.***
* Misinterpretation as each to all others rather than all to another
* Divinely instituted “order” in the world, the family and the church
* Order for delivery of God’s blessings rather than a chain of command
* Connection of “subordination” to headship
* “Headship” as divinely instituted position of responsibility in community
* Subordination as voluntary acceptance of one’s position under a given head in a divinely instituted order
* Difference between subordination and submission: attitude rather than act
* Practise of subordination as antidote to spiritual narcissism and individualism
* The subordination of each Christian to others as his heads
* Counter-cultural notion in ancient and modern world
* Confusion of spiritual authority with political influence and power in the congregation and synod
* Power as a limited resource
* Use at the expense of others: monopoly from disempowerment of others
* Abuse by those who lack authority
* Proper use only by those have it
* Authority as an unlimited resource
* Used by authorising others
* Grows with delegation to others
* Received from another who has also received it
* Need to be under spiritual authority to exercise it
* Headship as duty of spiritual care
  + Headship as limited responsibility
  + Pastoral office as the exercise of spiritual headship and authority in a congregation
  + Christ as the model for spiritual headship
  + Purpose: spiritual health and growth of the body in peace and unity and love
* Audit of my exercise of headship
* Over my wife
* Over my children and grandchildren
* Over my congregation (students)
* Over my employees (?)
* Note two criteria for ministry in Paul
* Husband of one wife (1 Tim 3:2; Tit 1:6)
* Management of own household (1 Tim 3:4-5; Tit 1:6)
* Importance of spiritual fathering as the exercise of pastoral authority with God’s word
* Assessing and approving
* Correcting and blessing
* Discerning and encouraging
* Audit of my practice of subordination
* To my father and mother
* To people in government
* To Christ and his word
* To my presidents: national and district
* To fellow pastors in the pastorate of the LCMS
* Problems of candidates for ministry who reject the authority of their fathers
* Resort to power by those who are not under authority
* Proper exercise of spiritual headship and authority as part of ministry
* The blessing of subordination
* Subordination for reception and transmission of blessings in a community
* Subordination as a safe context for growth in love
* Subordination as protection of a community from spiritual attack
* The congratulation of the centurion by Jesus in Luke 7:6-9 as a man who

could speak with authority because he was under authority

* Further reading: John W. Kleinig, “Ordered Community: Order and Subordination in the New Testament,” *Lutheran Theological Journal* 39:2/3, 196-209. Note that this and all my articles can be accessed [www.johnkleinig.com](http://www.johnkleinig.com)

1. **Joy of the ministry of blessing**

* The burden of visiting
* Burden of visiting members: unwelcome demands
* Members burdened by pastoral visits: guilty conscience
* The lack of pastoral blessing: rarity apart from confirmation and wedding
* Hunger for blessing in our society
* Emptiness of mere affirmation: flattery that achieves little or changes nothing
* Desire for a word that gives what it says: authoritative judgment
* My experience of the ELCM
* Visitation of households by pastor and elder/wife to bless them
* Simple pattern: conversation for praying ►word? ► praying ► blessing
* Blessing of family groups after each service
* St Paul in Rom 15:29: ***I know that when I come to you I will come in the full measure of the blessing of Christ***
* Variant reading: **full delivery**
* Addition in 15:32: ***Pray...that by God’s will I may come to you with joy.***
* Ministry of the gospel: delivery of gifts
* Delivery of heavenly blessing to people on earth
* The popularity of two things in the LCA
* Custom of the use of the greeting by our president Dr Semmler
* Blessing of children at Holy Communion
* Importance of blessing in the divine service and in pastoral care
* Blessing as the provision of God’s gifts rather than personal approval
* Ministry as authority to bless: use of Christ’s name to deliver the Father’s gifts to the saints
* Blessing as life-giving and life-sustaining power
* God as the only source of blessing
* God’s delegation of his power to transmit blessing to his creatures
  + Earthly blessing in the order of creation
  + Blessing of animals and our primal parents
  + Blessing as life-giving, life-sustaining power
  + Transmission of blessing by people to people
  + Our inclusion in the call of Abram to be a blessing in Gen 12:2
* See 1 Pet 3:9: ***bless, for to this you were called, that you may obtain a blessing***
  + Heavenly blessing in the divine service: order of redemption
    - Institution of the divine service for the delivery of blessing in Exod 20:24: ***Make an altar of earth for me and sacrifice on it your burnt offerings and fellowship offerings, your sheep and goats and your cattle. Wherever I cause my name to be remembered, I will come and bless you.***
    - Appointment of the priests to bless in God’s name in Deut 10:8: ***At that time the Lord set apart the tribe of Levi to carry the ark of the covenant of the Lord, to stand before the Lord to minister and to bless in his name, as they still do today.***
    - Provision of the Aaronic Benediction in Num 6:22-27
    - Zion as the place of blessing (Ps 132:13-16; 146:12-14)
  + Appointment of Jesus as high priest in the heavenly sanctuary
* Jesus as the mediator of the Father’s blessing to thechurch on earth in Luke 24:50-51:***Then Jesus led them as far as Bethany, and, lifting up his hands, he blessed them. While he was blessing them, he withdrew from them and was carried up into heaven.***
  + - The Messianic age as the promised age of blessing
    - Our redemption from the curse by Jesus for our reception of his blessing in Gal 3:6-14
    - The Holy Spirit as the promised blessing
    - The Trinitarian delivery of heavenly blessings in Eph 1:3: ***Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places.***
    - Spiritual = of the Spirit, given by the Spirit
    - The church as the chosen place of blessing
    - Empowerment and equipment for service by benediction
      * The performance of blessing by pastors
* Blessing as a performative utterance: does what it says like an absolution
* Use of subjunctive
* Use of “may”
* I bless...
* The use of God’s name in blessing
* The Father: ***The God of peace be with you*** (Rom 15:23)
* The Son: ***The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you*** (1

Cor 16:23)

* The Father and the Son: ***Grace and peace from God our***

***Father and the Lord Jesus Christ*** (2 Cor 1:2)

* Trinity: ***The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all*** (2 Cor 13:14)
* The use of hands in the bestowal of blessing: gesture of giving
* The use God’s word as for the content of blessing
* Enactment of God’s promises as gospel in blessing
* The pastor’s authority to bless or withhold blessing
* Ordination as authorisation to use God’s holy name to grant heavenly blessings
* My rule: bless for bestowal of whatever God has promised
* First example
* Col 3:12: **Put on then, as God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience.**
* Blessing: ***God the Father clothe you with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience through his Son our Lord Jesus Christ.***
* Second example: scriptural charge or promise before benediction
* 1 Thess 5:15-16: ***Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus. And the blessing of almighty God Father, Son and Holy Spirit, be with you always.***
* Matt 5:7: ***Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.*** ***The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make His face shine on you and be gracious to you. The Lord look upon you with favour and give you peace.***
* Recipients of blessing from pastors
* People and things in the order of creation
* Bestowal of earthly blessings such as the things mentioned in the explanation to the Fourth Petition in the Small Catechism
* Blessing of house, property and the livelihood of people?
* Believers for the reception of heavenly blessings
* Basic enactment
* Word
* Prayer
* Blessing
* The occasion and location of pastoral blessings
* Blessing in the divine service
* The invocation?
* Dominical greeting before collect, thanksgiving and post-communion prayer
* Apostolic greeting before the sermon
* Bestowal of God’s peace at the end of the sermon
* The peace of the Lord before distribution
* The dismissal after communion
* The final benediction: Aaronic or apostolic
* Blessing in all occasional services and pastoral occasions
* Blessing in pastoral care
* Basic pastoral act: default enactment
* Visiting homes to give a blessing
* Blessing of children and young people
* Availability for blessing
* See Luther’s Morning and Evening Blessing for lay blessing
* Blessing as a basic part of the administration of God’s grace
* Pastors as stewards of blessing: rich in blessing
* Giving what we do not possess
* See 2 Cor 6: 10: ***poor yet making many rich; having nothing, yet possessing everything.***
* Further reading and resources
* John W. Kleinig. “Pastoring by blessing,” *Lutheran Theological Journal* 43/1 (2009): 28-38. Note that this and all my articles can be accessed at [www.johnkleinig.com](http://www.johnkleinig.com)
* “The difference between rites of blessing and rites of consecration, *LCA Commission on Worship Statement 3*. www//lca.org.au/commission-on worship-statements.html
* “The blessing of people in the divine service,” *LCA Commission on Worship Statement 38*. www//lca.org.au/commission-on worship-statements.html
* “Rites of Blessing,” David Schubert (ed). *Rites and Resources for Pastoral Care*, Openbook Publishers: Adelaide, 1998, 186-203.

1. **Conclusion**

* Luther EA 30:24-25: ***while we are living on earth, our joy cannot be perfect like the angels. Through faith we are beginning to feel some of it. In heaven, however, it is so great that no human heart can grasp it. But when we get there, we, too, shall feel it.***
* Paul’s words of farewell in Acts 20:24 at the prospect of imprisonment: ***I do account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my race (with joy) and the ministry that I have received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.***
* The words of the master in the Parable of the Talents in Matthew 25:21 and 23: ***“Well done, good and faithful servant... Enter into the joy of your master.”***