**Module 4: The Gravity of Joy**

*“*You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.*” (Psalm 16:11).*

**Devotion**

C F W Walther, the patriarch of the Missouri Synod, who also influenced the ELCA in numerous ways, wrote “When a place has been assigned to a Lutheran candidate of theology where he is to discharge the office of a Lutheran minister, that place ought to be to him the dearest, most beautiful, and most precious spot on earth. He should be unwilling to exchange it for a kingdom. Whether it is in a metropolis or in a small town, on a bleak prairie or in a clearing in the forest, in a flourishing settlement or in a desert, to him it should be a miniature paradise. Do not the blessed angels descend from heaven with great joy whenever the father in heaven sends them to minister to those who are to be heirs of salvation? Why, then, should we poor sinners be unwilling to hurry after them with great joy to any place where we can lead other men, our fellow-sinners, to salvation? (*Law and Gospel*, p. 207-8).

In no vocation is one deliriously happy 24/7. Every job brings its ups and downs. Few jobs are quite as intense as parish ministry. Pastors deal with people at all stages in life, with their joys and sorrows, experiences of empowerment and impotency, and often struggle to help people process these experiences in meaningful ways. It’s easy for pastors to become overwhelmed after a string of funerals or disagreements with congregational members. All that said, Jesus has promised abundant life. That means he promises abundant life for pastors and, more specifically, for you. Jesus promises that your life as a pastor has meaning, purpose, dignity, and joy, even when you don’t feel that it has. Jesus also provides outcroppings of joy in ministry even when you least expect it, compliments even when you doubt the value of your preaching, a paradise even when things feel so chaotic, almost like a kind of hell. All things work for good to those who love God. That is true for preachers as well. And, it is the promise that opens your call to be a joy and your charge to be a paradise.

**Prayer**

*Creator God, I thank you for the mundane and the extraordinary. May I find contentment in all people and situations to whom I minister and meet. May I also be a blessing to them. In Jesus’ name, Amen.*