



Art in the Minor Areas of Life

WORDS BY

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What is that wonderful rooted quality we feel daily in our normal routines?

Whenever I think of homeliness, the last thing that comes to mind is brilliance, glory, and wonder. Yet this is the exact word that transformed C. S. Lewis's thinking of the simple things of home. His best friend, Arthur Greeves, drew him into a new realm of reading, one that left the Northern fantasies he was so keen on.

Arthur opened Lewis's eyes to authors such as Austin and Bronte, inviting Lewis to see the beauty in the commonplace, what he termed homeliness.

"Beauty is sometimes most found in what is absent."

In *Surprised by Joy*, Lewis writes:

"The very qualities which had previously deterred me from such books Arthur taught me to see as their charm. What I would have called their 'stodginess' or 'ordinariness' he called 'homeliness'—a key word in his imagination."

The qualities to which Lewis refers, the weather, the beauty of vegetables, and a cat squeezing underneath a barnyard door, are the same ordinary qualities I take for granted as a mother.

Things like running the bath water as my girls dip their feet in its soapy swirls, listening to laughter as we "patty cake" for the umpteenth time in the day, setting a trap for the mouse that wants to squeeze under the laundry room door.

"He did not mean merely Domesticity, though that came into it," continues Lewis. "He meant the rooted quality which attaches them to all our simple experiences, to weather, food, the family, the neighborhood."

There is a brilliance in these everyday occurrences.

A wonder unfolds as I listen to my daughter put her first words together and read *Little Bear*. Beauty unfurls as the persistent Oxford rain creates a pelting melody against the roof, and the glory rises, like the steam from my coffee mug, when I sit in the sparse, quiet moments to enjoy the goodness of a friendly cup.

We can find the homely everywhere; in the most ordinary of places, the extraordinary emerges.

The Hidden Art

I think Edith Schaeffer talks about this rooted quality, as Lewis puts it, in her brilliant book, *The Hidden Art of Homemaking*. Schaeffer eloquently describes what she calls hidden art: "the art which is found in the 'minor' areas of life. By 'minor' I mean what is involved in the 'everyday' of anyone's life."

The everyday can, in and of itself, be a work of art. It is a masterpiece unfolding before our eyes every moment. It beckons us to welcome it with all its charm and commonness.

"There is a brilliance in these everyday occurrences."

It is not always the awe-inspiring that is most captivating; sometimes, I discover beauty in the dirty dishes just as I watch the sunset on the horizon outside the window. These symbolize five mouths that I get to feed daily, people whom I love more than my life itself.

They represent the charming breakfast of French toast, with flowers in bloom on the table, as we discussed the morning routine. Sometimes taking my eyes off the wild and glamorous—like a flaming sunset—opens my heart to pictures of glory I might otherwise miss.

Beauty is sometimes most found in what is absent than in what is there.

"He had no form or majesty that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him."

I wonder if those around Christ would have referred to him as homely. If so, perhaps it was this homeliness that made multitudes flock to hear Him speak, that beckoned children to come unto Him, that made a broken woman break all she had at His feet.

Christ possessed a rooted quality that was attached to all their simple experiences.

This One Day

Today I received a text from my Norse man of one of my pixies drinking her orange juice at the breakfast table, commonplace.

It's a simple, daily occurrence: homely. Yet, indescribable joy, desire, and glory filled my heart when I saw that photo. This is our ordinary life. In all its simplicity and wonder.

In the movie *About Time*, the protagonist, Tim, discovers that he is given the ability to travel through time. He uses this gift to change circumstances that he wishes would have otherwise turned out differently.

But in the process, he learns an invaluable lesson: when he takes his eyes off of all the worries and tensions of the day, he uncovers how sweet a single day otherwise is. He stops traveling back in time to exchange it for the glory found in the one day he is currently living:

" To just try to live every day to enjoy it, as if it was the full final day of my extraordinary, ordinary life."

"And in the end I think I've learned the final lesson from my travels in time: The truth is I now don't travel back at all, not even for the day, I just try to live every day as if I've deliberately come back to this one day, to enjoy it, as if it was the full final day of my extraordinary, ordinary life."

The full and final day of my extraordinary, ordinary life.

This is what it's all about.

A wonder that frees me from the need to daydream into a future where I will one day "be fulfilled." I have all I need to live this wonderful life right now.

Call it domesticity, call it homeliness, call it whatever you like; it's about the gift of living this day in all its ordinariness.

Because it is His gift to you, it is your day. It is your life. What could be better than the masterpiece of the everyday?

Questions to Consider

1. What battles do you face every day that block out the extraordinariness of each day? When we name our battles, our prayers get more specific. We can ask God to strengthen our spirit, renew our vision each day, and live each moment to the full.
2. Take thirty minutes this week and write down the charms of life that give you joy. What can you do to cultivate an environment where these charms become commonplace?
3. How does viewing each day as a gift change your perspective on the hard parts of life?



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