

“Take Out the Trash”

Colossians 3:5-11

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All Scripture quoted from NIV unless otherwise noted

Did you ever find something in your house and wonder, ‘where did that thing come from? How did it get here?’ I know I have; things I don’t remember every buying or bringing home; things I question the purpose of. There are other things whose purpose and origin I know, but which are no longer desired. For example, pizza boxes, egg shells, shirts that are too small, eyeglasses with old prescription lenses, and the like. When things start to pile up, it’s time to clean house. And when those things are no longer wanted or are worthless, it’s time to take out the trash.

The same things happen in my life at times. Junk starts to settle in the deep corners of my life, seemingly while I wasn’t even looking. Some examples would include pride, anger, envy, and a whole host of other garbage, and I catch myself saying, “Wow! Where did that come from?” If you are brave enough to look into the darkened corners of your lives, you will find some of the same things, or some other things that you know shouldn’t be there.

No matter how good you *think* you are at ignoring the sins and hiding the garbage that has accumulated in your life, eventually, it’s going to come to the surface and be exposed for what it is – trash. This trash looks different for everyone, but the apostle Paul wrote about some of the things that I’m calling trash when he wrote to the Colossian church (Col. 3:5,8) – “*...sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language.*”

Trash is often sin, but it doesn’t have to be – it is anything that causes you to stray from God’s side or anything that corrodes your relationship with God, with others, or with yourself. Some other things on the list would be lying... unforgiveness... pornography... substance abuse... selfishness... arrogance... just to name a few. Maybe there’s some embarrassment, maybe some shame to admitting those things are there, but keeping trash around makes the whole house stink.

God is whispering; God’s heart is beating – but the more trash that’s in your life, the more difficult it is to hear God’s heartbeat. Have you noticed how much slower your internet is in the evenings than it is in the afternoons? Or have you ever gotten caught in rush hour? That’s because the more traffic there is, the more difficult it is to get where you’re going. And if you are serious about listening for the heartbeat of God, you’ve got to get rid of the junk that makes it hard to hear it – it just makes it harder to hear God’s heartbeat – harder for you to hear God shuffling His feet, and respond accordingly.

Sometimes the junk in your life lays around so much you just get used to it. If you've ever walked by the fish counter at a grocery store, you noticed a pretty strong smell, didn't you? But the workers there don't even notice it anymore. Or maybe you've walked by a dumpster and noticed that it smells like the Cleveland Browns, but the sanitation workers never recoil at the smell, do they? Maybe it's like having a carton of old milk in your backpack. It might not seem like a problem at first, but eventually it will begin to stink so much that those around you can no longer ignore it. But God can unload that backpack for you (1 Peter 5:7.)

Maybe you've gotten used to the trash lying around your life, and it doesn't even bother you anymore. You go to that website and you used to feel dirty when you did... but no more, or you talk junk about your classmates or coworkers behind their back and you used to feel bad about it... but no more, or you feel so angry at your parents or your boss or God or yourself all the time, and you used to wish you weren't so angry... but no more - now you just stay angry all the time because you've gotten used to the trash.

That doesn't mean it doesn't stink - that doesn't mean everyone around you notices it. God doesn't want you to carry that junk. Romans 6 tells us the *wages* of sin is death, but we know that the **weight** of trash that you sometimes choose to carry around every day just leaves you feeling weary and worn out... all... the time. Trash is going to cause problems in your life sooner or later, so the sooner you deal with it, the less hurt it will cause for you and others.

A writer by the name of Maclaren relates it to a man who got his hand stuck between rollers or caught in the belting of a machine, saying, "Another minute and he will be flattened to a shapeless bloody mass. He catches up an axe lying by and with his own arm hacks off his own hand at the wrist...It is not easy nor pleasant, but it is the only alternative to a horrible death." Like a virus on a computer or mold on a tomato, problems always get bigger when you let them lying around, don't they?

Sometimes things that you've dealt with come creeping back, don't they? Like the recycle bin on your computer, the trash you've already taken out can be retrieved. Maybe you had second thoughts; "It wasn't so bad;" "I can handle it this time;" "It wasn't a big deal." You knew it was garbage so you got rid of it, but then you missed it, or you fell back into the same trap again. You go back to that website again; you withhold forgiveness again; you talk about that person behind their back again.

Taking out the trash is an ongoing, every day commitment to being renewed by the grace and mercy of Jesus Christ. You may struggle with the same sins and temptations and frustrations for your whole life, which speaks of the tenacious character of the enemy against whom we struggle, who brings your shame and sin back on a polished garbage can lid, offering it to you anew.

So, Paul says (Col.3:5) – “Put to death...whatever belongs to your earthly nature.” Not ‘pack it away’ or ‘try to ignore’ or ‘work really hard to overcome.’ Death is final – there’s no coming back from that. Sin is repulsive to God, and yet we let it linger... let it hang around, as if it were a toy; a plaything that. Sin is no more a toy than a live alligator is a toy, and sooner or later, it’s going to bite you.

But know this; there is nothing you can do to reduce your value to God. You are His work of art. He sees you and He knows you and He loves you and there’s not a thing you can ever do in this journey of life to change that. But you can pack a little lighter for the journey by taking out the trash. Choose to be holy, set apart for God, transformed by the renewing of your mind as you daily commit to allowing God to refine and purify your heart.

Take out the trash that’s piled up in your life – it doesn’t belong there. The truth is, it never did. It’s time to break those chains; it’s time to put the old way of life to death; it’s time to empty the recycle bin; it’s time to take out the trash. There is nowhere you can go that you are beyond God’s care. Listen to His heartbeat; listen for the shuffling of His feet; hear His voice whispering – ‘It’s time to come clean . . . and stay clean . . . for good.’

Takeaways from this message.

Trash is often sin, but it is also anything that CORRODES your relationship with God, with others, or with yourself.

- *The more trash that’s in your life, the more difficult it is to hear God’s HEARTBEAT.*

Taking out the trash can be PAINFUL.

- *Problems always get BIGGER when you let them lying around.*

Taking out the trash is an ongoing, every commitment to being RENEWED.

- *The ongoing struggle against trash speaks of the TENACIOUS character of the enemy of your soul.*

Sin is REPULSIVE to God.

- *There is nothing you can do to reduce your VALUE to God.*

DIG IN!

Here are some farm-fresh questions that will help you to personalize and apply this morning's message.

- 1. What was most surprising, unexpected, or helpful from today's passage/message? Why?*
- 2. List each thing that Paul tells us to 'take off.' What makes these things "earthly?"*
- 3. Which of the things from the above list is/are the most difficult for you to 'put off?' Why? What steps can you take right now to be victorious in this area?*
- 4. If you woke up and unexpectedly had a 6th toe, what non-medical professional would you tell first? Why?*
- 5. How would your life be different if you kept your mind focused on your spiritual growth and development? What does it mean to "Turn your eyes upon Jesus [and] look full in His wonderful face?"*
- 6. For further study, check out Psalm 51:10-12, Proverbs 26:11, Romans 12:2, 2 Corinthians 3:18, 5:17, Ephesians 4:22-32, Galatians 2:20, 5:19-26*
- 7. What have you learned through your personal time of Bible reading this week?*