

OUT WITH THE TRASH

Mondays are garbage pickup days in my neighbourhood. Some Monday mornings I feel a bit anxious when I place my items out front. I notice I tend to feel this anxiousness on those Mondays when I put leaf bags out for collection. Part of my anxiety comes from wondering if I will find a pile of leaves or dirt to be cleaned up afterward because some have fallen out as they threw the bags onto their truck. Usually, I find myself out front later that day cleaning up.

I also get a bit anxious whenever I have to place a large amount of cardboard out front for recycling. I do my best to cut up these boxes and tie them up in bundles but there have been times they have not been taken away because I did not cut the cardboard up small enough. So there is always a bit of anxiousness whenever I put bundles of cardboard out front.

Usually, I only have 2-3 bags of garbage to place out front each week for pickup. Sometimes I may have 5 or more bags and, on those occasions, naturally I have a little bit of anxiety hoping they will throw all the bags on and not leave any because I am past the limit. On those even rarer occasions when I have to use a few contractor-sized garbage bags to dispose of a few things I find myself anxious too, hoping they will take away these larger amounts.

The apprehension I feel on these particular Mondays usually begins at 6:00 a.m. when I tend to put my garbage out for that day and subsides by lunchtime when everything has typically been picked up. There was one Monday recently however when my anxiety lingered late into the afternoon. The garbage truck had picked up across the street from my house but by 3:00 p.m. had not come back down our side. I began to wonder if the truck driver had forgotten our side of the road, or whether they had experienced mechanical issues. On that particular Monday I had six bags out front. I did not want to be left holding those bags if you know what I mean. Finally, around 4:30 p.m. the garbage truck came and my apprehension was gone.

I know it may seem strange to some people to think I have anxious feelings at times around this weekly event, but this observation got me thinking about a different kind of garbage that we need to consider putting out at the curb. The items we typically put out in our trash each week are usually things that have spoiled or gone to waste; things that are broken; or things that may no longer

be of use. We are glad to be able to dispose of these items rather than having them clutter our house or cause an unpleasant smell.

Just as we have these kinds of items that we need to dispose of, we also have emotions that can clutter our hearts and rot away at our souls. The longer we allow these emotions to clutter our hearts and rot away inside of us, the more they begin to affect not only our sense of happiness and well-being but also our relationship with God and with others. Jesus spoke about this garbage that can reside in our hearts when He taught about the need for inner purity in **Mark 7**. One of the things Jesus taught in this lesson was:

It's not what goes into your body that defiles you; you are defiled by what comes from your heart. (Mark 7:15)

One of the meanings for the word "defile" is spoiled. Jesus is teaching us here that there are some emotions and things that can reside in our hearts that are basically spoiling or rotting with us. If we came upon food items in our fridge or pantries that were rotting and spoiling, we would remove them and place them in the trash or compost them. As we think about what items we are going to put out in the trash each week, do we do the same when it comes to emotions that may be spoiling within our hearts? This would be an interesting question for us to consider once a week.

Maybe our usual garbage day would be the perfect time to consider what trash we may need to dispose of from our heart. We might discover some anger that has been cluttering inside our hearts for the past few days that needs to be disposed of. We might spot some unforgiveness or bitterness that could be spoiling away within our hearts. We might also discover negative emotions like jealousy, envy, selfishness, greed, and judgment spoiling within our hearts. Just as we are intentional when it comes to deciding which items we need to dispose of each week, we should be just as intentional to do so with any emotions and feelings that may be rotting inside of our hearts. By making this a weekly effort on our part we will discover an inner purity beginning to flourish within our heart just like Jesus teaches about in **Mark 7**. This sure sounds a lot better than to have a heart rotting and decaying because we are refusing to dispose of any negative emotions.

Something to think about the next time we place our garbage out for pick up.

Keep safe and God bless,

Pastor Dean