

## Column

It has been said – now a cliché – that one man’s trash is another man’s treasure. Anyone who has rummaged through a flea market, boot sale (British) or church yard sale can vouch for the truth of this saying. What one person would put in the dumpster another would put on his mantel.

I jokingly refer to items circulated at such sales as j-u-n-q-u-e, the definition of which is high-class junk with a price tag! However, you spell the word, junking can be great fun, especially if you hit on a ‘treasure’, as most of us have.

I am thinking about such things today because as I write this column the ladies of our church are preparing for their annual yard sale. Cars and trucks continue to pull up filled with items no longer needed or wanted. Artwork along with kitchen appliances and large and small pieces of furniture are part of the mix. Most of these items are in fine shape, much too good to throw away. Each piece has some future finder’s name on it.

Decluttering is a good thing. It is right to make items we no longer need or want available to others. In the case of church yard sales, the money generated is used for community projects. All win – those who give, those who find, along with those who benefit from the proceeds.

If you think about it, what is true of houses -- they need decluttering -- is true of our lives. They too need periodic review and cleaning out. I am thinking of old habits, grudges and attitudes. At this point my analogy breaks down. The things I have just mentioned don’t need to be passed on but cast away altogether.

Perhaps the Apostle Paul had something like this in mind when he wrote: “Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another” (Ephesians 4:25).

In the verses that follow, he adds to his list of cast-a-way items: Be ye angry, and sin not . . . let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands . . . let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying.”

Do you see what he is doing? He wants his readers who had already signed on as Christian believers to take inventory of their lives and to get rid of those things that are tawdry and unworthy of the profession. But there is a positive corollary as well. When you move out junk, you make room for better things.

For example, if you put away fretting over past hurts, real or perceived, and the bitterness that so often accompanies it, think about the space you create for love and service. Letting go – getting rid of the junk in our life -- is liberating and transformative.

I knew a man who stayed away from his Lutheran church for years because he did not approve of the property that the congregation chose for their new church building. His wife continued to attend and serve, but he stayed home and sulked. Happily before he died, he came to the realization that some of the items he had brought into his ‘house’ needed to be discarded.

In his case, this discarding of junk came about as a result of wise action from members of the congregation he had helped found. What they did seems almost simplistic, but it worked. Instead of sending the clergyman over to chastise him; they gave him and his wife a founders’ award. Into the dumpster went the resentment and negativity he had harbored, and he was set free to spend the rest of his days enjoying the fellowship of other church members and serving the Lord.

Why not have a look around your 'house' for items that need to go out and for some that need to come in? And I will do the same.

*A MORNING RESOLVE – I will try this day to live a simple, sincere and serene life, repelling promptly every thought of discontent, anxiety, discouragement, impurity, and self-seeking; cultivating cheerfulness, magnanimity, charity, and the habit of holy silence; exercising economy in expenditure, generosity in giving, carefulness in conversation, diligence in appointed service, fidelity to every trust, and a childlike faith in God. And as I cannot in my own strength do this . . . I look to thee, O Lord God my Father, in Jesus my Saviour, and ask for the gift of the Holy Spirit. Amen. (Forward Movement prayer).*

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