

## Meditation on garbage collectors

By Marcie Ratliff

Take your average household. Take your average week. Add the two and you get a sizable amount of trash. And very diverse trash. In trash cans around my house, I find all manner of interesting things such as 1) burnt tortillas (kitchen trash), 2) soap wrappers and toilet paper tubes (bathroom trash), 3) dirty Kleenex—or I should say facial tissue (bedroom trash), and 4) ripped envelopes (office trash). Not bad, considering they all got emptied Sunday and today is Tuesday.

The garbage trucks come every Monday, those big ugly things with pincers like some sci-fi insect. The guys that drive them are usually the big burly type, with long greasy hair and stocking caps. They hop out of the cab and roll your trash can to the pincers, who grab it and dump it into the back of the truck. Then they plop your trash can right back down on the end of your driveway, and what do you know? It's empty.

When I get to thinking abstractly, I think of some pretty weird things. Such as how garbage collecting relates to Christianity.

You see, garbage builds up in our personal lives too. All those little white lies, bad thoughts, mistaken words—it all adds up to a lot of junk. And another thing about trash is that if you leave it for a while, it gets even grosser. It grows, I tell you. It grows green stuff and blue stuff and orange stuff and brown stuff that reeks. It isn't pleasant. And neither is sin. After it stays on your heart for a while, it starts to grow. The white lies become black ones, the bad thoughts become X-rated, and the mistaken words turn into full-blown gossip and slander and malice.

So what's the secret? How does one avoid growing lumps and clods of mouldering stuff? Empty the trash. It's the classic chore that everybody hates. You take the stuff, dump it into a bag, tie the bag shut, take it out to the garage, plug your nose, and drop it into the big can. Then the garbage people take it away and you never see it again. The same with our hearts. You have to take the stuff that you've done, confess that it's garbage, and drop it at the foot of the cross. Jesus takes it away and you never see it again. Sure it's hard for me to admit I'm wrong. (There. I said it.) But the first step to getting rid of garbage forever is to say that it's definitely trash. Only stuff that's definitely trash ever makes it to the curb.

Have you ever thought about garbage collectors? They must get up early. How would you like that? Getting up early to go collect trash? Not my idea of a fun job. But they do it so that we don't drown in our own trash. Well, they actually do it for money, but let's be hypothetical. Anyway, neither was it fun for Jesus to be crucified. But He did it in obedience to the Father so that we wouldn't drown in our own sin. So just like it would be sad for a trash collector to get up early and find a bunch of empty trash cans (implying people still have it in their houses), it is sad when we don't clean out our hearts and give the junk to Jesus. He didn't die so we could drown in garbage, He died that we might throw it all off and be free to live.

“Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.”

—Hebrews 12:1