

January 1, 2022

What to Do with Yesterday

One of the first things my wife and I had to learn when we moved to the country was how to deal with our garbage. We learned very quickly that if we just let it sit there, it would begin to stink up our lives. It would invite all sorts of pests. It would make our lives unpleasant in a variety of ways. So, as a matter of regular discipline, we had to pack it up, load it in the car, and take it to the dump. We had to get rid of it.

Of course, there is more than one kind of garbage. The kind of garbage we put into our trashcans is relatively easy to discard. It just takes some planning, some effort. When we work at it, it is gone.

But there is another kind of garbage that is more difficult to manage. It is the garbage of the past. A great many people have never learned how to deal with yesterday. Instead of looking to the future with hope, excitement, and positive expectation, they are bogged down in the past. They feel guilty about this. They are hurting over that. They are disappointed that they didn't do the other. They are bitter over the way they were treated.

For so many people, the past is like a heavy weight around our necks, holding us back from the good future that God intends.

For so many of us, the negative parts of our past are like that piece of cellophane, clinging to us by static electricity. No matter what we do, it hangs on, irritatingly, distractingly. How can we focus on the future? How can we take hold of the promises of God to make all things new for us if we are so maddeningly focused on the past? We can't get on to new business because we are so bogged down in old business!

What is it in your past that keeps giving you a hard time?

Is it something **you did**, and the guilt of it still hurts?

Is it something **you failed in** and the disappointment of that will not let you go?

Is it something **someone else did** to hurt you, and you keep rehearsing it, and the pain of it will not go away?

Is it grief? Someone or something you once had and now have lost, and your life seems empty as a result?

Surely we understand that God does not intend for us to live like that. Our God is not a God of the past, but of the future.

Our God is One who says again and again, "Behold, I am doing a new thing." "If any one is in Christ, there is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold everything is new!" Listen, I am sure of this: whatever is hurting you, whatever is holding you back, whatever is keeping you from the fullest possible experience of life, God wants to gather it up, and like some conscientious garbage collector, take it away so it will never bother you again. God will do that, if you will let Him.

**It all begins in the love of God, A God who chose love,
A God who chose to come and dwell among us.**

You are probably familiar with the story of the Wright Brothers, Orville and Wilbur. They were bicycle builders from Dayton Ohio who tinkered with various projects and ideas. They were working on a flying machine. They had gone to Kitty Hawk, North Carolina, an ideal place to test out their flyer because of regular breezes and a soft landing surface on the beach.

In December 1903, after many attempts, the Wright brothers were successful in getting their "flying machine" off the ground. Thrilled, they telegraphed this message to their sister Katherine, back in Dayton: "We have actually flown 120 feet. Will be home for Christmas." Katherine hurried to the editor of the local newspaper and showed him the message. He glanced at it and said, "How nice. The boys will be home for Christmas." He totally missed the point. He completely missed the real news.

We can miss the real news about Christmas. In Christmas we celebrate the unbelievable love, the fantastic generosity of God. That is the point. That is the real news. Christmas is about the marvel and mystery of God loving us so much that God chose to take on human flesh, to become one of us in order to show us the way.