

In the Interim...

September 12, 2018

My husband and I have begun the process of downsizing toward retirement. The experience is raising for us the question, “Why do we own this much stuff?”

Most of us spend the first half of our adult lives accumulating possessions and the second half distributing those possessions in an attempt to unclutter and unencumber our lives. As disciples of our Lord, we are called to unburden and get rid of unnecessary baggage in our lives. That baggage can be our possessions; it can be something that is addictive; or it can be anything that gets in the way of living in appreciation of God’s goodness and grace among us.

As I am sorting what to keep, what to give away, and what to trash, I have begun to realize that our lives are the same. We have things we need to share with others; we have things we need to keep and hold precious; and we have other things that are just clutter and need to be discarded.

My mother was not a big consumer. She practiced simple living and a respect for resources long before sustainability and environmentalism were popular. After my father died, she downsized from a homestead to an apartment to assisted living and then to skilled care. On the day of her death, her possessions consisted of seven outfits, six nightgowns, toiletries, a half dozen family pictures and her Bible. It took me five minutes to pack up her room.

Possessions are nice, my mother would say, but in the end, what really matters is not what we have attained but who we have become. By the time she died, my mother had become a model of generosity and service toward others; and she showed that when those are the possessions we carry, the move from this world to the next can be the most unencumbered and peaceful one we make.

Blessings,
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