

## Trash or Treasure?

(Participatory sermon at the 4:30 pm, “kid-friendly” Ash Wednesday service)

[I invite the kids to come up and sit in front of me at the head of the aisle, in front of the altar platform.] Anybody here like to play games? (Hands are raised.) Great! Today we’re going to play a game called “Trash or Treasure?” In this box, there are pieces of paper that describe things people sometimes do, some of which are good and some of which are bad. We’ll decide which ones are good behaviors and we will “treasure” them by putting them – where, do you think? [In the “treasure chest” next to me.] And the bad behaviors we’ll put where? [In the trash can on the other side of the box from the “treasure chest.”]

O.K. Now, the way we decide whether behaviors are good or bad is based on what Jesus told us are the **two greatest commandments**. Please do the hand motions with me [I look up] – grown-ups can do them too!

“We shall love the Lord our God with all our hearts [we point to our hearts], with all our souls [we stretch out our arms upwards], with all our minds [we point to our brains], and with all our strength [we “make a muscle” with our arms]. And, we love our neighbors [point our fingers at each other, all around the sanctuary and outside as well] as ourselves [each of us points to her- or himself].

[The kids open the box and find some behaviors to “trash”: lying, stealing, talking back to parents or teachers, refusing to help others, being mean to people, being greedy, and bullying. These are all written in red (stop). We find some behaviors to “treasure” (written in green, for “go” – would that all of life was color-coded): being kind, coming to church, praying, obeying parents and teachers, helping others, telling the truth, giving thanks, and sharing. We “discover” each behavior randomly, and we stomp together on the pieces of paper with bad behavior and put them in the trash, and we all hold onto the pieces of paper with the good behaviors and put them in the treasure chest.]

Now, I have some “homework” for all of you and for everyone in your families [I make eye contact with the adults in the pews] – including the grown-ups, right, grown-ups? We’re in church today on a Wednesday because today is the beginning of a special time of year called “Lent” when Jesus wants all of us to prepare for Easter by thinking about what behaviors we want to trash and not do, and what behaviors we want to treasure – and do again and again. So, when you go home, I would like every family to draw up a list of behaviors for everyone to “trash” and behaviors for everyone to “treasure.” Do that for 40 days and it becomes a habit – but if someone forgets, anyone in the family can say, “No, we **trashed** that behavior,” or, “Hey, we’re supposed to **treasure** *this* behavior – let’s do it some more.

We are all fragile, which is why we are reminded today that “we are all dust”: we’re made of dust and God’s breath. When we do behaviors which we should trash, we become more like trash ourselves, more like dust, but when we do behaviors we should treasure, we can feel God’s breath filling us more and strengthening us!

So – go play “Trash or Treasure” at home!

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