In 1984, a man named Kevin Duckett was
walking through a muddy field
in Northamptonshire, England, with a metal detector.
He picked up a faint signal, dug down a few inches,
and pulled out a small, dirt-caked metal figurine.
It looked like cheap junk.
He took it home, tossed it in a drawer,
and forgot about it.
Years later, he finally decided to clean the mud off.
As the grime washed away,
he noticed a faint gold glimmer.
He took it to the British Museum for analysis.
The experts were stunned.

It was a solid gold, 24-karat statue of King Henry VI,
an original component of King Henry VIII's coronation crown,
missing for nearly 400 years.
This tiny object, which sat in the mud and was
nearly discarded as trash, was actually an invaluable
royal treasure worth an estimated $2.7 million.
Duckett was walking around with a king's ransom in his pocket,
but he treated it like garbage
because he couldn't see past the dirt.

Kids sales?????

In Philippians 3, the Apostle Paul shows us that
we do the exact same thing, but in reverse.
We spend our lives polishing up our worldly accomplishments,
our status, our good deeds, and our reputations.
We treat them like pure gold.
But Paul pulls back the curtain and tells us that
compared to the overwhelming,
priceless value of knowing Jesus Christ,
all those glittering worldly treasures are actually nothing but trash.

But first he wants to put on his braggin dragon
and tell us about them anyway…
Paul, who usually writes with humility,
manages to sneak in some considerable information
that sounds like one-upmanship.
The familiar "I'm better than you, so you should listen to me."

If anyone else has reason to be confident in the flesh, I have more: 3:4b

Whatever you can do I can do better…

circumcised on the eighth day, a member of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew born of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; 3:5

Paul has all the human credentials:
An impressive religious background—
a circumcised Israelite, a Hebrew of Hebrews,
and a strict Pharisee, the highest respected position of authority.
I am not only a Jew but a Jew above all Jews. Look at me.

as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless. 3:6

Paul had religious pride:
He once trusted in his own moral record
and legal obedience for right standing with God.
I am blameless beyond reproach.
Flaws: I don't have any.
At this point, all I really want Paul to do is stop talking. Right?
This sort of thing has turned
people off of Paul for a long time.
And it is hard not to see their point.
But look a little deeper.
After his catalog of suffering and attributes,
he says it doesn't really matter.
And the shift happens for him

Yet whatever gains I had, these I have come to regard as loss because of Christ.
And…

More than that, I regard everything as loss because of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and I regard them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ

When Paul met the risen Christ,
he saw those glittering accomplishments as
skubala (garbage, rubbish, or dung)
It's a strong word, offensive in some circles.
That's how he feels about his own resume—
at least compared to knowing Jesus,
compared to the call to share the gospel and to widen the circle.

It became Paul's resume vs rubbish.

Maybe you have been there or are there?
Everything you once held dear now you count as loss.
Paul isn't ashamed to share what he has to tell
about his relationship with the Risen Christ.
The good, the bad, the ugly.
He is ready to lay his life down as a witness
to the power of Jesus' redeeming spirit—
not to use it to increase his own glory,
climb a social ladder, or enrich himself.
He chooses to let his story be an invitation
for others to hear, embrace, move closer,
and know the one who gives Paul his strength and purpose.

And sometimes telling our story and what
we have experienced or done can sound like
bragging, but that it leads to the brokenness
inside of us that led right to Jesus in our lives.
So, for Paul, this shifts from trash to treasure.

and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law but one that comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God based on faith.

Paul realized that personal righteousness
earned by human effort is worthless compared
to the gift of God's grace through faith in Christ.

I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the sharing of his sufferings by becoming like him in his death

The best thing about Paul's story,
he would no doubt point out, is not his history,
but his future; not who he has been,
but who he is becoming.
And that leads me to ask: is the same true for me? For you?
The invitation is to come along for the journey of discipleship.
The invitation is not "look at me,"
but "walk with me as we look to Christ."

Not that I have already obtained this or have already reached the goal; but I press on to lay hold of that for which Christ has laid hold of me.

Paul's ultimate prize:
His singular goal became gaining Christ,
experiencing the power of His resurrection,

and pressing heavenward toward God's eternal call.
Brothers and sisters, I do not consider that I have laid hold of it, but one thing I have laid hold of: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead,

When we get into our car,
some very important things start our drive.
And what are those?
We have a large windshield, a small rearview mirror,
and most of us have a backup camera these days. Right?
So, you get in your car,
put your seat belt on, and turn your car on.

Then you either look forward as you drive off,
or you put your car in reverse and do what?
Look in the rearview mirror or
at your backup camera screen, or both,
and make sure you have a clear path.
Then you keep staring in your rearview
as you continue going forward. Right?

Absolutely not. No one does that. I hope.
Sometimes my backup camera gets stuck
and stays on the rear view, and I have to
force myself to stop looking at it.
Which is really just like our life.

Our past mistakes, regrets, and even past successes
are like the rearview mirror or backup camera in our car.
It is smaller for a reason.
You need your backup camera to back up.
And you need a quick glance in your rearview mirror
now and then to see where you have been
or to check your progress, but staring into it
while driving forward will probably lead to a crash.
Instead, when we drive forward,
we look through our much larger windshield.
God's future and your calling in Christ
are like the massive front windshield.
It is designed to give you a clear, wide-open
view of the road ahead so you can press forward.

The Apostle Paul had an enormous past.
He approved the stoning of Stephen and hunted down Christians.

If anyone had a reason to be paralyzed by guilt, it was Paul.
Yet, he chose not to live parked in his past.
"Forgetting" in biblical terms doesn't
mean a literal loss of memory;
it means breaking the paralyzing power of yesterday
so it no longer controls your tomorrow
Then Paul brings it home…

<u>I press on toward the goal, toward the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus</u> 3:14

"We're pressing on," Paul argues.
But pressing on toward what?
What does Paul call us to do or be?
What does pressing on toward the goal of the heavenly prize mean, exactly?
Well, it is obvious, isn't it?
It's about getting to heaven, about lounging on a cloud
with our halo and harp, and basking in the
presence of the Lamb on the throne.
After all, Paul talks about leaving to be with Jesus in other places.
That escape into a place
where kingdom rules while this earth drools.

But Paul is not arguing here for
an escape from this world's troubles.
Rather, for Paul, the prize is righteousness,
and righteousness is not a strict adherence
to rules and laws like he was taught and lived,
but an embodiment of God's mercy and justice.
Embodiment is an important word here.
It is how we live.
It is the actions we take,
the positions we hold,
and the values we embrace.
In other words, we are called to become like Christ.
Go back to last week and we are
to have the same mind as Christ Jesus.

When Paul rails against "flesh," he doesn't mean bodies.
What we do with our bodies, though, matters a lot to him.
And we can express our faith through our bodies,
our words, and our inner being.
"Flesh" represents anything that gets in the
way of embodying faith in a Christlike way.

Flesh is self-centered as opposed to other-centered.

As we press on, we press on in many ways.
We press on through spiritual disciplines.
We press on through acts of mercy.
We press on through justice work and
world-transforming efforts that bring wholeness to all people.
We press on to build community,
not just to take care of ourselves.
Through his story, Paul issues an invitation to partner
with the Spirit in working toward
the vision Jesus the Christ gave us.
That heavenly prize is—as we regularly pray —
the kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven. Press on.

The tragedy of the human condition is that
we spend our lives digging through
the trash heaps of this world—
seeking validation, chasing success,
polishing our religious credentials,
and hoarding temporary comfort—
desperately searching for a treasure that will
satisfy our souls everywhere but where we should.
But miss that we have already found it.

But Paul stands before us today in Philippians 3 to tell us:
the greatest treasure in the universe
isn't waiting at the end of your
self-reliance or your worldly success.
The treasure is Jesus Christ,
and He is standing right in front of you and me.

The invitation today is simple:
What is your trash?
It is time to clear out the clutter.
We have to stop treating our dirt like gold,
and we have to stop treating God's grace like garbage.
If we want to experience the overwhelming
value of knowing Jesus Christ,
we must make a definitive choice today.

Will you trade your self-reliance for His righteousness?
If you have been working yourself to exhaustion

trying to earn your way to God—
polishing up your resume,
leaning on your good background,
or hoping your clean moral record is enough—let it go.
Stop trying to find peace in your own performance.

Will you forget what lies behind and press onward?
Some of us are held back by our past failures;
others are resting on our past spiritual victories.
Paul says: Forget it all.
You cannot run a race while looking backward.
No matter what yesterday looked like, tomorrow is a new lap.

And when we do that.
When you find Him, you realize you
no longer need to chase the world.
Everything else becomes rubbish.
I pray we will let go of the trash,
open our hands, and grab hold of the King
and the treasure of the kingdom.