

Daily Readings

Week 3- Journey into Smell

Beginning Sunday 15th March with

John 12. 1-8

Psalm 51

Theme of the week:

The spiritual understanding of how we connect to others and to God by what we smell

Monday 16 March

The gift of smell

Song of Solomon 1:1-3; 2:10-13

¹The Song of Songs, which is Solomon's.

²Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth!

For your love is better than wine,

³ your anointing oils are fragrant,

your name is perfume poured out;

therefore the maidens love you.

¹⁰My beloved speaks and says to me:

'Arise, my love, my fair one,

and come away;

¹¹for now the winter is past,

the rain is over and gone.

¹²The flowers appear on the earth;

the time of singing has come,

and the voice of the turtle-dove

is heard in our land.

¹³The fig tree puts forth its figs,

and the vines are in blossom;

they give forth fragrance.

Arise, my love, my fair one,

and come away.

How does this passage relate to the theme?

This biblical love song is filled with the imagery of beautiful scent. Fragrance is associated with loving and being loved and the joy of being in love is reflected in the scent of flowers and fruits. The pleasure of inhaling the scent of the beloved stays in the memory and is associated with intimacy, connection and relationship. So it is that a hint of a person's favourite perfume can instantly bring them to mind. So it is with what we smell in church or in worship, whether smell is of incense, flowers, or coffee from the kitchen. Those experiences can connect us powerfully to God

Question for reflection:

What scents connect you to those you love and to God?

Tuesday 17 March

Using smell

Genesis 27:21-29

²¹Then Isaac said to Jacob, 'Come near, that I may feel you, my son, to know whether you are really my son Esau or not.' ²²So Jacob went up to his father Isaac, who felt him and said, 'The voice is Jacob's voice, but the hands are the hands of Esau.' ²³He did not recognize him, because his hands were hairy like his brother Esau's hands; so he blessed him. ²⁴He said, 'Are you really my son Esau?' He answered, 'I am.' ²⁵Then he said, 'Bring it to me, that I may eat of my son's game and bless you.' So he brought it to him, and he ate; and he brought him wine, and he drank. ²⁶Then his father Isaac said to him, 'Come near and kiss me, my son.' ²⁷So he came near and kissed him; and he smelled the smell of his garments, and blessed him, and said,

'Ah, the smell of my son

is like the smell of a field that the LORD has blessed.

²⁸May God give you of the dew of heaven,

and of the fatness of the earth,

and plenty of grain and wine.

²⁹Let peoples serve you,

and nations bow down to you.

Be lord over your brothers,

and may your mother's sons bow down to you.

Cursed be everyone who curses you,

and blessed be everyone who blesses you!

How does this passage relate to the theme?

Isaac's blindness reveals how important smell is to us in our relationship with others. Smelling Jacob in Esau's clothes, brings Esau immediately into Isaac's mind and he is tricked into thinking that the smell-signature is really of his eldest son. So powerful is the smell-picture that he has no hesitation in blessing the person before him, even though he knows the voice is wrong. The power of smell in the love relationship between Isaac and his sons is too strong to resist.

Question for reflection:

How would you know your loved ones if you just had the sense of smell to go on?

Wednesday 18 March

The smell of death

John 11:38-44

38 Then Jesus, again greatly disturbed, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone was lying against it. ³⁹ Jesus said, 'Take away the stone.' Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to him, 'Lord, already there is a stench because he has been dead for four days.' ⁴⁰ Jesus said to her, 'Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?' ⁴¹ So they took away the stone. And Jesus looked upwards and said, 'Father, I thank you for having heard me. ⁴² I knew that you always hear me, but I have said this for the sake of the crowd standing here, so that they may believe that you sent me.' ⁴³ When he had said this, he cried with a loud voice, 'Lazarus, come out!' ⁴⁴ The dead man came out, his hands and feet bound with strips of cloth, and his face wrapped in a cloth. Jesus said to them, 'Unbind him, and let him go.'

How does this passage relate to the theme?

Smell plays an important part in this sign of God's power. No one can doubt that Lazarus is really dead because his body is decomposing and people outside his tomb can smell the unmistakable stench of putrefaction. Yet Jesus is able to call Lazarus from the dead, and it is not his rotting body which emerges, but himself made whole. Death and decomposition are facts of life, and we will all die, but God's intention is for us to yet become whole as Lazarus did, through Jesus.

Question for reflection:

What role do you think smell had in testing the faith of the people gathered at the tomb?

Thursday 19 March

The fragrance of Christ

2 Corinthians 2:14-17

14 But thanks be to God, who in Christ always leads us in triumphal procession, and through us spreads in every place the fragrance that comes from knowing him. ¹⁵ For we are the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing; ¹⁶ to the one a fragrance from death to death, to the other a fragrance from life to life. Who is sufficient for these things? ¹⁷ For we are not peddlers of God's word like so many; but in Christ we speak as persons of sincerity, as persons sent from God and standing in his presence.

How does this passage relate to the theme?

In this passage Christians are compared to a fragrance of Christ, a distinctive smell and the spread of the gospel is like that fragrance spreading on the air. The scent of Christianity means different things to different people, but it is also pervasive and distinctive as the Christian community grows and begins to flourish.

Question for reflection:

In what way might your Christian life be a distinctive fragrance in the lives of others?