

ReDay

Renew...Refresh...Restore...Retreat

... Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place...
(Mark 6:31)



A fragrant aroma...

This year we have been exploring using our whole self in encountering God: our sight, our hearing, our touch, and how we walk with him. This month we reflect on the part our sense of smell plays in encountering God and showing God to the world around us.

In the Old Testament, the smell of offerings sacrificed on the altar was a pleasing aroma to God – it was the fragrance of obedience and devotion.
(Gen 8:20-22; Lev 6:15-17; Numbers 28:1-2)

Sacred incense, made from costly spices and only ever to be used in Temple worship, was to rise before the Lord morning and night – a fragrant aroma and symbolic of our continuous worship. (Ex 30)

The prayers of God's people are incense, rising up to Him in golden bowls. Rev 5:6-8

Jesus was anointed at Bethany and the fragrance filled the house. (John 12:1-3)
Jesus himself became a fragrant offering, poured out for us (Eph 5:2).

And we are called to be the fragrance of Christ, bringing life (or death) to those we encounter. 2 Cor 2:14-16

Let's consider what this means to us and how being the fragrance of Christ can impact the world around us.

(Feel free to look up the songs used here on YouTube to sing along or simply to listen to)
[Click to here to view the online clip https://youtu.be/dbg3ZeXT_9s](https://youtu.be/dbg3ZeXT_9s)

A fragrant aroma...

Call to worship

I call to you, Lord, come quickly to me;
hear me when I call to you.

May our prayers be set before you like incense;
may the lifting up of our hands be like the evening sacrifice.
Ps 141:1-2



Prayer

O God, as the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you.
My soul thirsts for you, God, for the living God.
I long to come and meet with you.

I will put my hope in you, Lord,
I will yet praise you, my Saviour and my God.

Even when my soul is downcast within me; I will remember you.
By day you direct your love, and at night, your song is with me –
this is my prayer to the God of my life.
Day and night my prayers rise before you like fragrant incense.

I will put my hope in you, Lord,
I will yet praise you, my Saviour and my God.

Based on Psalm 42



Scripture

Then Noah built an altar to the Lord and, taking some of all the clean animals and clean birds, he sacrificed burnt offerings on it. ²¹ The Lord smelled the pleasing aroma and said in his heart:

“Never again will I curse the ground because of humans, even though every inclination of the human heart is evil from childhood.

And never again will I destroy all living creatures, as I have done.

²² “As long as the earth endures, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night will never cease.”

Genesis 8:20-22

Song

Lord, I come before your throne of grace
I find rest in your presence,
And fullness of joy
In worship and wonder,
I behold your face
Singing what a faithful God have I

Lord of mercy, you have heard my cry
Through the storm you're the beacon
My song in the night
In the shelter of your wings
Hear my heart's reply,
Singing what a faithful God have I

What a faithful God have I
What a faithful God
What a faithful God have I
Faithful in every way

Lord, all sovereign
Granting peace from heaven
Let me comfort those who suffer
With the comfort you have given
I will tell of your great love
For as long as I live
Singing what a faithful God have I

Scripture

Make an altar of acacia wood for burning incense... Overlay the top and all the sides and the horns with pure gold, and make a gold moulding around it... Put the altar in front of the curtain that shields the ark of the covenant law—before the atonement cover that is over the tablets of the covenant law—where I will meet with you. “Aaron must burn fragrant incense on the altar every morning when he tends the lamps. He must burn incense again when he lights the lamps at twilight so incense will burn regularly before the Lord for the generations to come. Exodus 30:1-8

Then the Lord said to Moses, “Take fragrant spices—gum resin, onycha and galbanum—and pure frankincense, all in equal amounts, ³⁵ and make a fragrant blend of incense, the work of a perfumer. It is to be salted and pure and sacred. ³⁶ Grind some of it to powder and place it in front of the ark of the covenant law in the tent of meeting, where I will meet with you. It shall be most holy to you. ³⁷ Do not make any incense with this formula for yourselves; consider it holy to the Lord. ³⁸ Whoever makes incense like it to enjoy its fragrance must be cut off from their people.” Ex 30:34-38



Prayer

Let me be a fragrant offering to you, Lord.
A fragrant blend of all that is pure and sacred.
Take me and grind me, blend me and stir me,
so that all that remains is a pleasing aroma,
rising up to you morning and night,
moment by moment.
I place myself upon your altar,
offer to you all that I am,
holy through your holy presence within me,
sacred through your redemption and set apart for worshipping you alone.

**Let me be a fragrant offering to you, Lord.
A fragrant blend of all that is pure and sacred.**

Song

Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on me.
Melt me, mould me, fill me, use me.
Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on me.



Scripture

Six days before the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany, where Lazarus lived, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. ² Here a dinner was given in Jesus' honour. Martha served, while Lazarus was among those reclining at the table with him. ³ Then Mary took about a pint of pure nard, an expensive perfume; she poured it on Jesus' feet and wiped his feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. John 12:1-3

¹³ "Truly I tell you, wherever this gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her." Matthew 26:13

Reflection

God gave very clear instructions in the Old Testament about the sacrifices that were to be offered on the altar to him and which were to him a pleasing aroma. The sacrifices were offered out of obedient hearts, to bring repentance and restoration. Sacrifice was a sign of devotion and worship.

He gave very clear instructions about the fragrant incense that was to be burned morning and evening in the Temple, on the golden altar of incense, as an offering to him. The incense was made from costly spices and was the work of a perfumer. This mix of spices was not to be used anywhere else - it was sacred to the worship of the Lord in the Temple, and represented the continuous worship of his people, rising up before him. This fragrant offering was never allowed to burn out; it was to rise continually before God.

In the New Testament, the sacrifice of Jesus became the fragrant aroma that brought life – or death. The smell of death became the fragrance of life.

The anointing of Jesus' feet with precious perfume highlighted this:

An expensive perfume
Poured out
And the fragrance filled the house.

Reflect for a moment on what this means for you and how you are being the fragrance of Christ right now, right where you are.

Pause

Scripture

¹⁴ But thanks be to God, who always leads us as captives in Christ's triumphal procession and uses us to spread the aroma of the knowledge of him everywhere. ¹⁵ For we are to God the pleasing aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing. ¹⁶ To the one we are an aroma that brings death; to the other, an aroma that brings life. And who is equal to such a task? 2 Cor 2:14-16

Follow God's example, therefore, as dearly loved children ² and walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. Ephesians 5:2



Prayer

Thank you, Lord, for the power of smell:
for the aroma of dinner cooking,
the fragrance of freshly washed towels,
the sweetness of the flowers in the garden.

**Thank you for how the sense of smell impacts our lives
and awakens memories and refreshes our souls.**

As lavender is crushed to release its fragrance,
and olives pressed to release their precious oil,
work in me as you wish so that I too become a fragrant offering,
an aroma pleasing to you,
that brings life, hope and healing to those whose lives I touch.

**Not just the house, Lord, but let the fragrance of my offering, the fragrance of your offering,
fill every space I am and follow me wherever I go.**

Song

Light of the world, you stepped down into darkness
Opened my eyes, let me see
Beauty that made this heart adore you
Hope of a life spent with you

So here I am to worship
Here I am to bow down
Here I am to say that you're my God
You're altogether lovely
Altogether worthy
Altogether wonderful to me

King of all days, oh, so highly exalted
Glorious in heaven above
Humbly you came
To the earth you created
All for love's sake became poor

And I'll never know how much it cost
To see my sin upon that cross...

Repeat

Benediction

May the presence of Christ surround you and encompass you wherever you go.

May the fragrance of his sacrifice, his obedience and devotion
fill the temple of your heart
and flow out from you as the balm of life.

When you are crushed, may you know his fragrance is being released in you.

When you are pressed, may you know you are more strongly spreading
the aroma of the knowledge of Christ.

May your life today be lived as an aroma pleasing to God
and may the fragrance of his love, grace and mercy
be a healing balm to your soul.



GOING DEEPER – ...

Scripture refers to some different things as being a pleasing aroma to God: sacrifices upon the altar, incense burned within the Temple, the perfume used to anoint Jesus before his death, his sacrifice, gifts given to Paul (Phil 4:18-19), the prayers of God's people, and how we spread the knowledge of Christ. The idea of a fragrant aroma seems to be primarily about worship, sacrifice, obedience and devotion – and how that impacts the world around us.

It is good to take time to reflect on what it means to us to be a pleasing aroma, a fragrant offering to the Lord.

How do we experience the aroma of Christ, and how do we spread it?

Here are some suggestions that may help you in your time of reflection.

- **Reflect:** Read the following words of St Augustine. Notice what stands out for you and think about why this might be. These are powerful words and it may seem strange to us to express our devotion to God in this way. Notice the words: what moved you? What was jarring? What was hard to read? How do you feel when you read these words? Where in your life do these words resonate?

*“Belatedly I loved thee, O Beauty so ancient and so new, belatedly I loved thee.
For see, thou wast within and I was without, and I sought thee out there.
Unlovely, I rushed heedlessly among the lovely things thou hast made.
Thou wast with me, but I was not with thee.
These things kept me far from thee; even though they were not at all unless they were in thee.
Thou didst call and cry aloud, and didst force open my deafness.
Thou didst gleam and shine, and didst chase away my blindness.
Thou didst breathe fragrant odours and I drew in my breath; and now I pant for thee.
I tasted, and now I hunger and thirst. Thou didst touch me, and I burned for thy peace.”*
St Augustine of Hippo (354-430 AD)

- **The Bible** has many references to the pleasing aroma of the sacrifices that God called his people to offer. Reflect on one of these passages, thinking about the context and what God is saying. What can you learn from these passages? What is relevant for you today? What challenges you? Here are some examples: Lev 6:15-17; Num 28:1-2; 2 Chron 13:11; Phil 4:18-19; Rev 5:6-8. There are many more in the passages that refer to setting up the Temple and how worship within it should be conducted.
- Use one of the Bible passages or songs provided in the material to practise **Lectio Divina**.
- **Visualise Scripture!** Think of the story of the woman anointing the feet of Jesus. Slowly read the story through. After each verse, close your eyes and picture the scene being described. What do you see, smell, hear? What would it feel like if you were there? How is God speaking to you through this? You could either record this experience in your journal, express it through visual arts, or share it with someone
- **Be creative:** think about fragrance and how powerful the sense of smell is. What smells grab your attention, negatively or positively? What do you think of when you smell clean sheets, a hot meal cooking, a familiar fragrance? How does this connect with being the fragrance of Christ? Is there some way you would like to creatively express what being the fragrance of Christ means to you? You can draw, paint, write, create a collage, use clay, etc.
- Go for a **walk**. What smells do you notice? Intentionally focus on the aromas around you and listen to what God might be saying to you through the sense of smell. Where is he drawing you?

- If you are **sharing** this retreat day with someone else, spend some time sharing your thoughts about the fragrance of Christ. Share what God might be saying to you about this. Pray together.
- **Write** your own prayer/psalm about being the fragrance of Christ in a world that is desperately in need.
- If you like to **journal**, make a note of what you have experienced during this retreat time in your journal. A simple way to do this is to:

Thank God for Who He is and what He is doing in your life

Notice what is happening around you and in you

Respond to what God has shown you, by thanking Him, repenting, or recommitting yourself to Him

- **Simply sit in His presence.** We don't have to do anything to enjoy being in His presence! We are in His will when we are fully and completely in His presence, with our hearts focussed on Him.

EVEN DEEPER

LECTIO DIVINA

Lectio Divina is an ancient spiritual practice from the Christian monastic tradition. Its title derives from the Latin words meaning reading and divine/holy. In Lectio Divina, we seek to experience the presence of God through reading and listening, meditation, prayer, and contemplation. Lectio Divina can be practiced both by individuals and in groups.

Practicing Lectio Divina Individually

1. Text

Begin by choosing a section of Scripture that you would like to read and pray. You can choose the text randomly or use a liturgical book, such as The Book of Common Prayer. Try not to set a goal for how much content you will cover; the goal is to listen for God and to experience his presence.

2. Preparation

Do what you must to quiet and prepare yourself to hear from God. If you need to find a quiet room, sit in silence for several minutes, or sit in a comfortable chair, take whatever posture will help you prepare to receive and experience God's presence.

3. Reading/Listening

When you sense that your heart is prepared, begin by slowly reading the passage of Scripture that you have selected. Move slowly through sentences and phrases. As you read, pay attention to what word, phrase, or idea catches your attention.

4. Meditation

Begin to meditate on the word, phrase, or idea that has captured your attention. Repeat it again and again.

Consider:

What thoughts come to mind as you meditate on this word, phrase, or idea?

What are you reminded of in your life?

What does it make you hope for?

Meditation is no easy task—as you try to concentrate don't be disappointed if random thoughts enter your head. As they do, offer them to God.

5. Prayer

Now begin to speak to God. Tell God what word, phrase, or idea captured your attention and what came to mind as you meditated upon it. How is God using this word, phrase, or idea to bless and transform you? Tell God what you have been thinking and feeling as you've listened and meditated. Tell God how you hope this word, phrase, or idea will change your heart to be more like His.

6. Contemplation

Finish by focusing your attention on the fact that God's presence is with you. If as you try to focus on God's presence you sense a need to read the text again, to continue meditating, or to simply continue talking with God, allow yourself to do so. As you do, know that you are in the presence of God.

THE PRAYER OF EXAMEN - Finding the movement of the Spirit in our daily lives as we review our day.

This is something that can be done throughout the day or at the end of the day. It helps us to become more aware of and focused on the presence of God in the midst of everyday life.

1. Recognize the presence of God

Be still and know that you are with God.

2. Look at your day with gratitude

Acknowledge God in the big and small things of life.

3. Review your day

When or where in the past 24 hours did you feel you were cooperating most fully with God's action in your life? When were you resisting?

Ask yourself

- What habits and life patterns do I notice?
- When did I feel most alive? Most drained of life?
- When did I have the greatest sense of belonging? When did I feel most alone?
- When did I give love? Where did I receive love?
- When did I feel most fully myself? Least myself?
- When did I feel most whole? Most fragmented?

4. Reconcile and Resolve

- Seek forgiveness
- Ask for direction
- Share a concern
- Express gratitude
- Resolve to move forward

Mars Hill Bible Church
marshill.org/teaching/sp

SONGS

What a faithful God: Robert & Dawn Critchley, Copyright 1989 Thankyou Music.

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