

Use the Bible to think about Jesus' life as a smell journey. What other stories have significant references to things we can smell?

What do we learn about Jesus from those references? Why do you think Judas does not react in the same way to the perfume? What does this tell us about him?



Jesus would have been aware of the smell of the desert around him with its dust, dirt and rock, and the smell of the desert dwelling animals. Such smells would have connected him powerfully with God's creatures and people.

But he must also have been aware of other smells in his imagination which formed part of the temptations as the smells brought back powerful memories of being warm, comfortable and well fed. The devil tempts him to swap the rough rocky smell of a stone for the warm, appetising smell of bread, and surely this must have been in Jesus' mind when he is recorded as saying that no father would give their child a stone when they asked for bread. He might have been assailed by the memory-smell of clothing and fabrics as the temptation to use his power for a life of ease came his way. Yet Jesus puts aside any smell-temptations and fixes his mind and heart on God's purposes.

PRAYER AND REFLECTION

2 Corinthians 2: 15-16

For we are the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing; to the one a fragrance from death to death, to the other a fragrance of life to life.

Lord God,
You walk in all our memories,
You know where we have been,
what we have said, known and felt.
Come to us in the scent we remember,
the time when we walked with you
and know that we walk with you still.
Amen

Dunbarney and Forgandenny Parish Church

www.dfpchurch.org.uk

LENT 2009: Sense Making Faith Week 3 - Journey into Smell

Smell is one of the most basic, primitive, and yet incredibly important senses. What we smell can arouse all kinds of emotions in us, fear, pleasure, curiosity, reverence. Smell evokes all kinds of powerful memories, sometimes unexpectedly. There are all kinds of smell related products, scents and perfumes with exotic names and endorsed by celebrities, scented toiletries, scented candles, perfumes for your home and scents to cover or get rid of less pleasant smells that might invade your environment. There are the 'clean' smells of laundry and polish and the comfortable, welcoming smells of cooking and coffee. Homesick students going away to university are sometimes told to bring something that 'smells like home' which can bring an even more immediate sense of connection than texts and emails.

Most people are well aware of the kind of smells they find appealing and unappealing, but the role of smell in the spiritual journey may be less obvious. So it makes sense to ask a rather

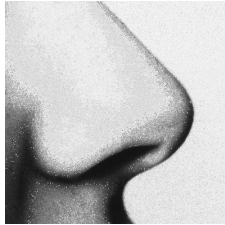
strange question: what does the Christian faith smell like?

In some churches, the use of incense gives the building a characteristic smell that tells visitors that worship has been taking place there. In other churches, the smell a visitor will encounter depends on what is going on, - the smell of fruit and vegetables at a harvest festival, the perfume of flowers at a flower festival, the sharp, warm smell of candles, the smell of coffee or food at an after service event. Every place of worship has its own smell signature and this can attract or repel people who are seeking to know more about the Christian faith, so it's worth thinking about how we, in the words of the Apostle Paul, are 'the aroma of Christ'.

During Sunday Worship, we pray for the church, for our society, for the world, for the sick and the dying and bereaved, and for ourselves. Do you ever find yourself drifting off and not really listening, not really concentrating on what you should be praying about?

ACTIVITY

Try this simple set of prayers and see if it makes a difference. You will need to gather up the 'smells' in advance.



Open your bible or a hymn book and breathe in until you can smell the pages, then say:

"Lord, we pray for your Church and for Christians everywhere. Help us always to do your will and share your love with others."

Make a cup of tea or coffee or another drink you would share with a friend, breath in the smell of the drink and then say:

"Lord, we pray for our neighbours and friends and all who live in our society. Help us to make it a place of welcome and friendship for all people."

Break open a roll of fresh bread, or other favourite food, or a newspaper, breathe in the smell of the food or the paper and then say:

"Lord, we pray for your world, for all who are poor, hungry, affected by war or violence. Help us never to take peace and comfort for granted."

Open a medicated lotion or rub with a characteristic smell. Breathe in the smell of the medication and say:

"Lord, we pray for all who are sick, lonely, or bereaved. May we bring your comfort into the lives of anyone we know who is suffering."

Find your favourite perfume, aftershave or other scented object that you particularly like. Breathe in a little of the scent and say:

"Lord, help me to follow you more faithfully every day."

Next time you use these objects and fragrances; see if they prompt a prayerful response.

ANOSMIA

Anosmia is the inability to smell. We are all conscious that the world is flatter and less interesting when we have a cold and cannot smell and that without the ability to smell, the ability to taste is compromised.

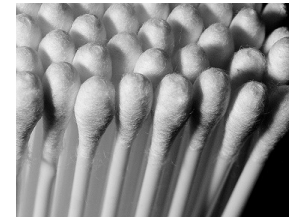
The ability to smell also differs between individuals. When John and Olive Drane visited the House of Bols in Amsterdam, they tried out the Hall of Taste and Smell. Bols is a Dutch liqueur that comes in many different flavours. Part of the experience is to guess the identity of as many as you can.

They all look pretty much alike, so the only way to tell them apart is by smell. John and Olive were soon tracking how long it took to guess what the smells were, and who was better at it. Olive was soon well ahead, and even when she told John what some of them were, it still took a while for him to 'get' them. By the time they got to the end, John had only a handful of correct guesses while Olive got almost all of them right straight away. They soon realised that they actually smell things differently and that in turn made them more aware of the fact that some people have no sense of smell at all.

And they then started to wonder if people are all having the same experience when they talk about smelling fear, or danger, or love.

ACTIVITY

Try the experiment for yourself. Find some cotton buds and ten or so different scents. You could use perfumes, scented soap, scented oils, coffee or vanilla essence. Dip a cotton bud into each. Mix the buds up and then try to identify which bud corresponds with which smell.



Was this task easy or difficult? What smells give you the most pleasure and why? Try to imagine what it would be like to have no sense of smell, how would your appreciation of the world around you be affected?

READ John 12: 1-8

This passage is dominated by smell impressions.