

The Fragrance of Breakthrough

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A. The Fragrance of Breakthrough

How do you smell?

I'm a big coffee fan. I love opening a brand-new packet of coffee, and I love that smell.

Talk about funny smells.

Smell is evocative. If I smell a coal fire on a damp day, it takes me back to my childhood.

Dawn Goldworm

During the talk, she explained that smell is the only fully developed sense a fetus has in the womb, and it's the one that is the most developed in a child through the age of around 10 when sight takes over. And because "smell and emotion are stored as one memory," said Goldworm, childhood tends to be the period in which you create "the basis for smells you will like and hate for the rest of your life."

The Proust Phenomenon

Odor-evoked memory, or the "Proust phenomenon," from the eponymous literary anecdote where Marcel Proust took a bite of madeleine biscuit that had been dipped in Linden tea and was suddenly transported to a long-forgotten moment in his childhood, occurs when an odor triggers the recollection of a meaningful past personal episode.

Numerous studies have now shown that **autobiographical memories triggered by odors feel much more emotional**, activate the neurobiological substrates of emotional processing and that people are more brought to the original time and place of their memories compared to when the same events are recalled through other modalities.

A cut hedge in Newcastle. N. Ireland

The smell of cut grass.

Then, of course, there is aftershave and perfume.

And now, today, you can find all kinds of beautiful scents!

Candles

Food

We like to smell good.

Here's a question today

1. Does **GOD** smell?

(Genesis 8:21; Deuteronomy 4:28; Psalm 115:3-6)

We read of God's sense of smell in

Genesis 8:20-21 (NIV)

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. 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."

In Deuteronomy 4:28 (NIV)

There you will worship man-made gods of wood and stone, which cannot see or hear or eat or smell.

When God tells them manmade gods (Idols) can't smell, He possibly reveals that He can.

Psalm 115:3-6 (NIV)

*Our God is in heaven;
He does whatever pleases Him.
But their idols are silver and gold,
made by human hands.
They have mouths, but cannot speak,
eyes, but cannot see.
They have ears, but cannot hear,
noses, but cannot smell.*

God can smell!

Or are we just involved in some weird form of anthropomorphism which gives human qualities to a deity?

But then that leaves the question: Why?

2. Why does God SMELL?

(Exodus 30:1, 25-29; Leviticus 2:2; 2 Kings 23:5; Psalm 141:1-2; Revelation 5:8)

Worship and prayer

Psalm 141:1-2 (NIV)

*I call to you, LORD, come quickly to me;
hear me when I call to You.
May my prayer be set before You like incense;
may the lifting up of my hands be like the evening sacrifice.*

When is a psalm a prayer, and when is it a song? When we sing here on a Sunday, when is it a song, and when is it a prayer?

Revelation 5:8 (NIV)

And when He had taken it, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb. Each one had a harp and they were holding golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of God's people.

And they sang a new song: You are worthy.....

Night and day, day and night, let incense arise.

Prayer and worship

God loves the scent of our prayer and worship.

It is pleasing to Him.

Leviticus 2:2b (NIV)

... The priest shall take a handful of the flour and oil, together with all the incense, and burn this as a memorial portion on the altar, a food offering, an aroma pleasing to the LORD.

He doesn't need it!

Exodus 30:1 (NIV)

"Make an altar of acacia wood for burning incense."

Over 20 mentions of incense in Exodus alone

Exodus 30:25-29 (ESV)

"And you shall make of these a sacred anointing oil blended as by the perfumer; it shall be a holy anointing oil. With it you shall anoint the tent of meeting and the ark of the testimony, and the table and all its utensils, and the lampstand and its utensils, and the altar of incense, and the altar of burnt offering with all its utensils and the basin and its stand. You shall consecrate them, that they may be most holy. Whatever touches them will become holy."

Incense was linked with worship and very much our atonement, our salvation.

When they burnt incense with the sacrifice of atonement, or when they sacrificed grain, or when they sacrificed a pigeon, every time there was a sacrifice, incense was involved!

When we look throughout the Bible, incense was burned on the altar day and night.

Symbolic of worship and prayer.

In fact, when you read the Book of Kings

You will see that from Solomon onwards the kings sinned when they burnt incense to other gods.

They, as it were, worshipped other gods.

Until we read in **2 Kings 23:5** about the reformer King Josiah, who:

2 Kings 23:5 (NIV)

He did away with the idolatrous priests appointed by the kings of Judah to burn incense on the high places of the towns of Judah and on those around Jerusalem—those who burned incense to Baal, to the sun and moon, to the constellations and to all the starry hosts.

3. Who or what do we burn INCENSE to?

(Mark 14:3-9)

A question today would be, what do we worship? Should I say 'who' should we worship?

No, because when we worship something other than God, it tends to be a what, not a who!

We often worship the created, not the Creator.

Also, what do we pray to?

Pantheism. **Pantheism is the belief that God and the universe are the same things rather than separate things. In other words, 'God is all, and all is God.'**

But we don't believe that. We believe **There is a Creator behind creation.**

The Creator God is revealed to us in creation, but God Himself is revealed to us in Jesus.

Then we read this beautiful story about smell: Mark 14:3-9:

Mark 14:3-9 (NIV)

While He was in Bethany, reclining at the table in the home of Simon the Leper, a woman came with an alabaster jar of very expensive perfume, made of pure nard. She broke the jar and poured the perfume on His head.

Some of those present were saying indignantly to one another, "Why this waste of perfume? It could have been sold for more than a year's wages and the money given to the poor." And they rebuked her harshly.

"Leave her alone," said Jesus. "Why are you bothering her? She has done a beautiful thing to Me. The poor you will always have with you, and you can help them any time you want. But you will not always have Me. She did what she could. She poured perfume on My body beforehand to prepare for My burial. Truly I tell you, wherever the Gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her."

This story is talked about in all 4 gospels.

This was a year's salary, the equivalent of 25k today!

As my friend Johannes Hartl says, **This was a beautiful waste.**

Or, as one old Scottish preacher put it, 'A bonnie thing.'

Jesus said that it was a lovely thing the woman had done. In Greek, there are two words for good. There is *agathos* (G18) which describes a thing which is morally good; and there is *kalos* (G2570) which describes a thing which is not only good but lovely. A thing might be *agathos* (G18) and yet be hard, stern, austere, unattractive. But a thing which is *kalos* (G2570) is winsome and lovely, with a certain bloom of charm upon it. Struthers of Greenock used to say that it would do the church more good than anything else if Christians would sometimes "do a bonnie thing." That is exactly what *kalos* (G2570) means; and that is exactly what this woman did. Love does not do only good things. Love does lovely things.

When it comes to God, we should worship more than necessary.

We should pray more than necessary.

They say that Christ would still have smelt of this nard when He hung on the cross!

His ultimate sacrifice for us was marked by incense, and then we look back to the temple in Exodus 30 when they burnt incense with the sacrifice of atonement, or when they sacrificed grain, or when they sacrificed a pigeon, every time there was a sacrifice incense was involved!

Sacrifice without incense is almost like mission without prayer.

4. We SMELL.

(Malachi 11:1; Romans 12:1 2 Corinthians 2:14-16)

Then, in light of this sacrifice, we worship, BUT we also become a smell!

Romans 12:1 (NIV)

Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship.

2 Corinthians 2:14-16 (ESV)

But thanks be to God, who in Christ always leads us in triumphal procession, and through us spreads the fragrance of the knowledge of Him everywhere. For we are the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing, to one a fragrance from death to death, to the other a fragrance from life to life.

When a Roman general had conquered land, he came back and paraded in a triumph, prisoners were displayed, plunder was shown, he was pulled on a chariot, priests offered incense, and the army followed behind him. His army chanted 'Lo triumphe' 'Hail triumphant procession' or 'hurrah oh triumph.'

As the procession moved throughout streets the streets had flowers it was decorated and garlanded, this was almost a once in a lifetime thing.

This procession left an aroma, it smelt, as it moved you could smell it, when it left the smell clung on.

We are part of Christ's triumphal procession, and through us, His fragrance is diffused throughout the earth.

We are the aroma of CHRIST.

THERE IS ALMOST A DIVINE EXCHANGE, AS WE WORSHIP AND PRAY, WE ARE INFUSED WITH THE AROMA OF HEAVEN, THE AROMA OF CHRIST.

WE ARE THEN CALLED TO DIFFUSE THAT FRAGRANCE THROUGHOUT THE EARTH.

Malachi 1:11 (ESV)

"For from the rising of the sun to its setting My name will be great among the nations, and in every place incense will be offered to My name, and a pure offering. For My name will be great among the nations, says the LORD of hosts."

Conclusion

God smells, He takes pleasure in pleasant aromas.

When we worship and pray, this is a pleasing aroma to God.

We smell; we are the aroma of Christ.