TITLE: The Aroma of Christ

TEXT: 2 Co. 2:14-16; Jn. 12:1-3; Lu. 10:41-42

INTRODUCTION: This morning I want to talk about aroma. The ability to smell is one of the five senses that God has created us with along with taste, touch, sight and hearing. Each one of these God given senses is an amazing thing when you contemplate it. Often we take the senses for granted until one or more of them are hampered in some way. As a young person I took all of these things for granted. Back in the days when I could spot a rabbit in the bushes at 100 yards or hear a cricket chirping from two blocks away I didn’t contemplate just how amazing that really is…. Now, without the help of eyeglasses I would be lucky to see a rabbit 10 feet in front of me out in the open and without hearing aids I can’t hear crickets or locusts or birds chirping even if they are right next to me. So I am a lot more aware of just how spectacular the God given things we call the senses really are. I wish that I had appreciated them a lot more back when they all still functioned properly and where the most keen.

Example: When I first got my hearing aids…. I picked them up on the way to a men’s retreat in Northern Iowa. After we got to the retreat ground, which was in a timbered area, I thought that there was something wrong with the hearing aids. I kept hearing this sound that would waffle and sound kind of like being under a high voltage electric line. It drove me crazy and I can remember how I kept messing with the volume control trying to adjust them and even getting frustrated to the point of just taking them out of my ears. It wasn’t until the next day that I figured out just what was going on…What was going on was the locust! With my hearing loss I couldn’t hear the sound that locust make. I hadn’t heard them for years and now, all of a sudden, with the help of the hearing aid I was hearing them again but it had been so long sense I was able to hear them that I didn’t recognize the sound right away.

 I re-discovered a whole host of things that I had literally forgot what they sounded like. Locusts, crickets, birds chirping---and some things that I really didn’t miss hearing…creaky hinges, the rattles that my car made going down the road…Before I got my hearing aids I thought I had a pretty quiet car at the time…. I discovered It wasn’t all that quite of a ride.

The senses that God has given us are really pretty amazing acts of His creative genius when you contemplate them.

The sense of smell is one of these amazing senses that God has blessed us with and it is this sense that I want focus upon this morning.

 The God given ability to discern fragrance or aromas.

 Have you ever noticed how the smell of something can trigger the mind to remember something that you associate with that smell? Catch the smell of a fresh baked apple pie and your mind associates it with grandma’s house when you were a child. The smell of a perfume brings to mind someone long forgotten that used to wear a similar sent….

When 17 year old Gary Falkenham put on some Aqua Velva deodorant before going to school one day, he had no idea that he was breaking the law. Gary lived in Halifax Nova Scotia, where a recent law banned cosmetic fragrances in public places. The case actually highlights the absurdity of using law to deal with matters of social conduct. Gary’s typing teacher took offense at the scent of his deodorant, and instead of asking him to simply wash the scent off, she invoked the new law and had him removed from school. At least 10 other students were suspended for the same reasons. And it was not just the teachers that were invoking this law.

 The Boston globe reported that an 84 year old woman was booted out of city hall for wearing her customary cologne…. And another woman was ordered off of a bus for smelling too sweet.

 This absurdity has even entered the private sector as well in Halifax. The local newspaper ran an article that read “ strong mouthwash now off-limits to employees”.

 Now I think that we have all probably experienced a situation where we have been confined in a close area with someone with too much fragrance on and found it uncomfortable but I can guarantee you that it is no worse than being confined in same tight area with someone who has failed to use deodorant or mouthwash and needed to badly…

In fact, I think that most people use these things because they are moderately concerned for their neighbor’s sensibilities and sensitivities….

 So what does this have to with Scripture or with us as Christians?

 Do you realize that as Christians we have actually been called to wear or put on a fragrance?

Put on our spiritual deodorant, if you will!

**2 Corinthians 2:14 - 16 (NIV) 14But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumphal procession in Christ and through us spreads everywhere the fragrance of the knowledge of him. 15For we are to God the aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing. 16To the one we are the smell of death; to the other, the fragrance of life. And who is equal to such a task?**

**14But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumphal procession in Christ and through us spreads everywhere the fragrance of the knowledge of him.**

**15For we are to God the aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing.**

In short, we have been called and commissioned by God to be the fragrance and the aroma of Christ, both to God and to our world!

 So how does one put on or become the fragrance of Christ?

 A man by the name of Dr. Howard Kelly had a unique and effective way of "witnessing". He was never seen in public without a beautiful pink rose in his lapel. This practice gave him many opportunities to witness about his relationship with the Lord Jesus. Someone meeting him on the street might remark, "That's a lovely rose, Dr. Kelly." "Yes, it is," he would reply. "Actually, it's a 'Christian rose!'" "Why do you call it that?" he would be asked. The well-known physician would then turn back his lapel and display a tiny water bottle which held the stem of the flower and kept it fresh and sweet. "It's a 'Christian rose,'" he would explain, "because it has a hidden source of life and beauty. When our Savior pardons our sins, He also unites us with Himself and thereby nourishes and strengthens us. He becomes the secret reservoir of our joy, and any fragrance of testimony we exhibit to the world comes from Him."

 We put on the aroma of Christ when we live our lives dependent upon Jesus as the source of our life and strength and live our lives surrendered in obedience to Him.

**John 12:1 - 3 (NIV) 1Six days before the Passover, Jesus arrived at Bethany, where Lazarus lived, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. 2Here a dinner was given in Jesus’ honor. Martha served, while Lazarus was among those reclining at the table with him. 3Then 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.**

Let me ask you a question?

 What do you think offered up the greatest fragrance to the Lord here? The scent of the perfume itself or the fragrance of Mary’s heart of surrender and devotion to her Lord?

 I believe that the scent of the perfume itself was masked by the fragrance of what came from forth Mary’s heart…

I believe that the aroma that filled the nostrils of Christ was the sweet smelling fragrance of a heart that had been truly and fully surrendered to Him and willing to sacrifice such a costly gift to wash and anoint His feet.

 On one visit to the house of Mary, Martha and Lazarus, Mary was sitting at the feet of Jesus feeding upon every word while her sister Martha was busy cleaning the house and serving the quests and Martha complains to Jesus about Mary’s not helping her with the social amenities….

Jesus responds to Martha… **Luke 10:41 - 42 (NIV) 41“Martha, Martha,” the Lord answered, “you are worried and upset about many things, 42but only one thing is needed.Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her.”**

 Mary’s wholehearted devotion was a sweet smelling fragrance to the Lord and he defended her actions or inactions, if you will.

 A Scottish man shares when he was saved, during a mighty movement of the spirit of God in the city of Glasgow, Scotland -- a young lady was also saved that night-- her name was Helen Ewing.

 He said she was just a slip of a girl but at the very threshold of her new life in Christ, she crowned Him as Lord absolutely and was filled with the Spirit. The rivers of living water just simply flowed from that young girl's life. And although she died at the age of 22 -- all of Scotland wept. Someone who knew her once said: I know hundreds of missionaries over all the world who wept and mourned for her.

 She had mastered the Russian language and was expecting to labor for God in Europe. She had no outstanding personality. She never wrote a book. Never composed a hymn. She was not a preacher. Never traveled more than 200 miles from her home. When she died people wrote about her life story. Although she died so early in life she had led a great multitude to Jesus Christ. She arose early every morning of her life at 5:00 am to study God's word, to commune and to pray. She prayed for hundreds of missionaries. He said Her mother showed me her diary. One of many diaries. And there were at least 3 hundred different missionaries for whom she was praying for at all times. It showed that God had burdened that young heart with a ministry of prayer. She had the date when she started to pray for a request and the date when God answered it. She had a dynamic prayer life that moved God and moved man. He was talking one day with two university professors in London. He said we were talking about dynamic Christianity when one of them suddenly said, "Brother Stewart, I want to tell you a story. And he told me that in Glasgow University there was a remarkable little girl who wherever she went on the campus, left the fragrance of Christ behind her. For example if the students were telling dirty stories someone would say, "Shh! Helen is coming." And as she passed by, she unconsciously left the power and the fragrance of God.

 Have you ever noticed how that some Christians just seem to leave the fragrance of Christ in their wake when they pass by?

 That with their presence there is this sweet smelling aroma of God? An aroma or a fragrance that is sensed more than smelled but a fragrance none the less?

The fragrance of a life that has been fully surrendered and committed to Christ and the aroma of Christ just seems to seep from their pores!

Aromas can smell differently to different people can’t they? I suppose that is why there are so many different kinds of perfumes and colognes on the market…

You may like one and despise another….

A smell you may like I may not and vice-versa.

14But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumphal procession in Christ and through us spreads everywhere the fragrance of the knowledge of him. 15For we are to God the aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing. 16To the one we are the smell of death; to the other, the fragrance of life. And who is equal to such a task?

As a Christian when we live our lives in surrender and obedience to the Lord we become the aroma of Christ within our world.

**15For we are to God the aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing. 16To the one we are the smell of death; to the other, the fragrance of life.**

People respond to fragrances in different ways don’t they?

 That is why we can be living for the Lord and are the smell of life to some people and to others we are the smell of death!

The aroma of Christ may not be a pleasant smell to all people.

To the lost, the unregenerate of our world who have no desire to forsake their sin and come to God we carry the smell of death to them. The fragrance that may bring conviction and even guilt.

That is why there is often so much distaste and even distain for Christians in our world today. To those who are perishing we bring the smell of death.

To those who are seeking God we bring the fragrance of life.

 We offer the same fragrance to both, the fragrance of Christ, it is just received differently…

And sometimes, many times, it is a confrontation with the smell of death that will open ones senses to their need for life!

The point is that we have been called to be the aroma of Christ to our world regardless to how the world responds to that smell.

 A FATHER SHARES HOW HE AND HIS SMALL SON were taking a walk. He said that in the far corner of the field we found a small patch of beautiful and fragrant flowers. They were in the middle of weeds, almost completely hidden and unnoticed, yet these flowers were blooming in full beauty and we sensed their fresh fragrance.

 As Christians we may often find ourselves like flowers blooming in the middle of a field of weeds.

 All of us have met persons unnoticed by many, but who in the middle of struggle and unlikely surroundings live lives of beauty and fragrance. And living lives which often seemed obscure they faithfully fulfilled God's calling for them to produce the aroma of Christ in their world.

 God's question on the day when we stand before Him will not be, "How much were you noticed?" or even "How much did you do?"

 Rather, His question will be, "Were you faithful in fulfilling your calling where I placed you?" What kind of fragrance have you been in your world? Where you the aroma and fragrance of Me in a world of weeds! Did you do what was necessary to manifest My fragrance in your world?

15For we are to God the aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing.

Have you allowed, are you allowing your life to be a sweet smelling aroma to God? Is the aroma of your life a fragrance of life to those who are perishing and those who are being saved?

 We take on the fragrance of Christ as we live our lives surrendered and obedient to Him.

Emerson wrote, "The best effect of fine persons is felt after we have left their presence."

 What effect are our lives having on the lives of others?

 Do they sense the aroma and fragrance of Christ in our lives? An aroma that will lead them to desire the Savior?

 If not --then why not?

 Are we living lives that will product the aroma of Christ to our word? Fully surrendered and obedient to Him…..