

Sunday Sermon
Christopher Arcadi
8/6/17
Scripture: Luke 12:1-11

"What do We Smell Like?"

I want to talk this morning about how we smell. Generally, when we think about smell we think about it either as positive or negative. "You smell bad." Or "you smell good." We often think about it with a pass/fail mentality. But this morning I don't want us to think about our smell in terms of bad or good but rather in terms of what we smell like. Because the truth is we all smell like something (perfume/cologne, deodorant, laundry detergent, shampoo, food, gym) Trust me, as a youth Pastor I can tell you that the Jr. Highers has a unique smell, old people have a unique smell, even babies smell like something. And the truth is we all smell.

I've titled the sermon this morning "What Do We Smell Like?" because the fact is that while we all have a physical smell, the truth is that as Christians also have a spiritual fragrance as well.

- 2 Corinthians 2:14-16 tells us ***"But thanks be to God, who in Christ always leads us, 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."***

This morning I'd like to take a close look at three of the characters in this passage in John - Mary, Judas and Lazarus - in order for us to see how this truth in God's word plays out in real life.

But before we do that I need to first give some context to what is happening in this passage.

Jesus, Lazarus, Martha, Mary, Judas (and probably the other disciples though they aren't mentioned here) are gathered at a home in Bethany about 1.5 miles outside of Jerusalem. This was the day before Palm Sunday, Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem. It was six days before Passover, less than a week before the crucifixion. It was no longer safe for Jesus to go out in public, because after he had raised Lazarus from the dead the Jewish leaders determined that Jesus needed to go.

Lazarus, who had been raised from the dead a chapter earlier, as you can imagine had become somewhat of a celebrity. People wanted to see him, the dead man who had been raised to life by Jesus. And a day before the start of the most important week in human history, Jesus decides to visit a home in Bethany, the place where Lazarus was with his sisters, Mary and Martha.

We have to ask ourselves the question, why is Jesus there?

- Not preaching, teaching, discipling, doing miracles
- We find Jesus in an intimate setting with those he was closest to. They were simply having dinner, they were hanging out, enjoying one another's company before the craziness of the passion week.
 - o You see, we often deify Jesus to the point of excluding his humanity. Here we find him taking a break, simply sharing a meal among friends.

You can imagine like with any meal there was the sound of conversation and the bustling of activity. In the midst of this activity, Mary, without introduction or any sort of pomp and circumstance, stands up, walks over to the shelf, retrieves her most expensive perfume, quite possibly the most expensive thing she owned, walks back to the table, gets down on her knees, and quietly pours it over the feet of Christ. A love offering to her Lord.

I'd imagine this was done silently, not to keep it a secret, but also not to make it a show – you see, this was Mary's gift to Jesus, a sacrificial offering, her own act of worship, an act of love.

Then the text says something that is almost completely unnecessary, but I believe is an important phrase in the text.

v.3 – *“The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume.”*

Question for you this morning – What fragrance fills your house?

- When people come into your home, when people encounter you, when others encounter your life – what fragrance do they smell?
- Of course I'm not talking about our physical fragrance but our spiritual one.
- 2 Corinthians 2, God ***“through us spreads the fragrance of the knowledge of him everywhere. For we are the aroma of Christ.***
- What do you smell like? What fragrance fills your house? – Are you allowing the aroma of Christ to fill your life in the way that you live and the offerings you make and the people you love?

Illustration: One house that was like this for me growing up was the Sharpe's. Many of you know Mike and Amy Sharpe. They were like adopted parents to me, they were my youth leaders while I was in high school. Perhaps the first experience of missional community that I had. They opened up their home to me (and others) regularly. I was able to do life with them, and watch them and began to smell the fragrance that filled their house. This was before I became a Christian. And you know what? It smelled like the aroma of Christ and thankfully that aroma was life to me.

In this story in John, this home was filled with the smell of an offering to the Lord Jesus.

- If you put yourself in that place, I can imagine as the potent, wafting perfume reaches each person, I imagine the bustling dying down and each

person being like, “what is that?” and the conversation becomes quiet and all eyes turn to notice Mary quietly wiping Jesus’ feet with her hair.

- A simple and humble offering that moved what was a common gathering into a sacred moment.
- Mary’s life bore testimony to the glory of God. What fragrance fills your house?

Then there’s Judas. You know not every likes the aroma of Christ. I’ve been in ministry long enough now to notice how some people become super uncomfortable in sacred moments - anything vulnerable, anything beneath the surface, anything reflective. There’s a recoiling in that happens in those moments. I see it all the time in some of my students, let me tell you who they are...

- It’s a defense mechanism, it’s a reaction of the natural self, the worldly self, the sinful self because it feels threatened in that moment, it feels exposed and it wants to protect itself.
- You see God knows that our hearts are deceitful and desperately wicked and he wants to expose our brokenness in order to replace those broken things with something new and whole.
- But when we don’t want that to happen what do we do? We do anything we can to distract ourselves and others, to avoid the exposure, to break that spiritual tension (we: leave, shut down, laugh it off).
- In this case Judas questions the value of Mary’s sacrifice

Verse 5, “*Why was this perfume not sold for a year’s wages and that money given to the poor?*”

Judas begins shaming Mary in front of everybody. To get out of whatever is going on inside him he lashes out at her. And he does so by calling into question her actions and character. That’s why Jesus is so quick to defend her.

- In his statement he not only answers Judas’ question but he defends the worth of Mary’s offering.
- Mary didn’t know the purpose that God had for her offering, but she gave it.
- Have you ever refrained from doing something that perhaps God was prompting you to do simply because it didn’t make any sense or you could rationalize it away? We need to listen in those moments.
- At some point during dinner Mary thought “You know I love Jesus so much, I really just want to bless him right now with a gift.”
- Little did she know that through her offering she had the sacred task of anointing Christ for his burial, and the fragrance of that offering filled her house.
- What fragrance fills your house?
 - o What offering of sacrificial living are you giving to the Lord?
 - o Are we like Mary, who counted Christ as more valuable than money? As more valuable than ridicule?

- Or are we more like Judas, in that we are so motivated to protect our own self interests that we avoid sacrificial offerings and balk at sacred moments?
- What do you smell like?

A third character in this story is Lazarus. What did Lazarus smell like?

Verse 9, *“When the large crowd of the Jews learned that Jesus was there, they came, not only on account of him but also to see Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead.”*

Here is a man who wasn’t doing anything. He wasn’t saying anything. He was just being. His very life was a living offering to God. His fragrance of just being screamed testimony to the glory of Christ.

- Why? Because he was literally brought back to life by the power of God.
- Back in John 11 just before Jesus raised him from the dead, he asked that the stone be rolled away from Lazarus’ grave and Martha said, “Lord! He’s been dead for 4 days, by this time there will be an odor!”
- I love the KJV when it comes to translating Martha’s response. “Lord, he stinketh!”
- In other words, he has on him the fragrance of death.
- But don’t miss Jesus’ response to her. He said, “Did I not tell you that if you believed you would see the glory of God?” and he calls “Lazarus, come out!” And Lazarus comes out clothed not with the fragrance of death, but the fragrance of life.
- And now his whole purpose was just being the fragrance of life.

And people hated him for it. So much so that (12:10) they made plans to put him to death as well because on account of him many were going away and believing in Jesus.

- Just because he was a living testimony of God, people hated him enough to want to put him to death.
- But many also came and experienced for themselves in that sacred moment of seeing a living dead guy the fragrance of the glory of God and the knowledge of Christ and they put their faith in him.
- “To one a fragrance of death to death, to the other the fragrance of life to life.”

I want to close with this. Last week it was brought to my attention that apparently someone hates me. No, this person does not go to this church. But apparently this person, who is newly engaged, when my name was brought up as someone who could officiate the wedding, uttered the words “I hate Chris Arcadi.”

But here’s the kicker. I don’t even personally know this person. As far as I know we’ve never met, and if we’ve met it was just in passing.

Now I don’t need to tell you what the spiritual condition of a person must be in order for them to say the words “I hate someone” but I bring this up for this reason:

We are the aroma of Christ, for some Christ is the aroma of death, for others he is the aroma of life. Since I have had no personal interaction with this person by which I could have mistakenly done something so terrible so as to cause such an offense that it warranted hatred, I must come to the conclusion that my life then must in some way smell like Christ. To which I say thank God I smell like something! For any day I would take following Christ with people hating me, if the alternative is abandoning Christ and smelling like nothing. He wants to cloth you with life this morning and I exhort you to put your life in his hands.

Pray