

The Watford Word

www.watfordchurchofchrist.org

What's on

Sunday 07 April - 10:30AM. Stefan Wolmarans speaking

Sunday 14 April - 10:30AM. Visiting speaker Dr Sean St. John (<https://seanstjean.com/>)

Sunday 21 April - 10:30AM. Charl speaking

Sunday 28 April - 10:30AM. Malcolm speaking

Pentecost Sunday 19 May - 10:30AM.

International Sunday and international food

Sunday 02 June - 10:30AM. Visiting speaker Dr John Oakes (<https://evidenceforchristianity.org/>)

New Creation - New Life - New Smell

Sense of smell

In terms of the number of distinguishable stimuli, our sense of smell can detect thousands of different odours. Additionally, smell is closely linked to memory and emotion. During the COVID epidemic many sufferers lost their sense of smell, and speaking for myself I've occasionally experienced phantom smells - quite often dog poo! What do smells have to do with Easter?

Death smells bad

Perhaps you remember Martha's comment when Jesus ordered that the stone blocking Lazarus' tomb be removed:

"But, Lord," said Martha, the sister of the dead man, "by this time there is a bad odour, for he has been there four days." (John 11:39 NIV11)

It's not surprising Martha was reluctant to open the tomb. After four days of death, she knew her brother's body would smell bad. Spices were used to reduce the bad smell. Consider what happened when Jesus was buried:

"Nicodemus brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about seventy-five pounds. Taking Jesus' body, the two of them wrapped it, with the spices, in strips of linen. This was in accordance with Jewish burial customs." (John 19:39-40 NIV11)

The women who followed Jesus planned to finish the work Nicodemus had started:

"When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices so that they might go to anoint Jesus' body." (Mark 16:1-2)

Death smells bad. There is no way around it. It smells bad to human noses *and* to human hearts. The finality of it, the emptiness of it, the uselessness of it frustrates us. What is it *for*? No one knows — except Jesus.

Resurrection life smells good

When Peter and John reached the tomb they noticed something. The wrappings were there, but the body was not.

"[John] bent over and looked in at the strips of linen lying there but did not go in. Then Simon Peter came along behind him and went straight into the tomb. He saw the strips of linen lying there, as well as the cloth that had been wrapped around Jesus' head. The cloth was still lying in its place, separate from the linen." (John 20:3-8 NIV11)

Soon afterwards, Mary sees Jesus. She does not recognise him, thinking he is the gardener. Then he speaks, and she realises it is him. What does she *not* see? What did the Apostles *not* see? Spices. There is no mention of spices. The angels in the tomb don't mention them, nor do the Apostles or any of the witnesses. Why no spices? Because there is no bad smell!

God smells the good

The writers of Scripture often mix literal and metaphorical ideas. Themes like 'light and darkness', 'water', 'wilderness', 'the shepherd and his flock' and 'the garden' have both physical and spiritual meanings. The same is true of good and bad smells. Noah's sacrifice after exiting the ark is described like this:

"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..." (Gen. 8:21)

Our prayers smell like incense to God:

"...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." (Revelation 5:8)

Our sacrifices and prayers create a pleasant aroma to God. But how do we smell to our neighbours?

"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. For we are to God the pleasing aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing. To the one we are an aroma that brings death; to the other, an aroma that brings life." (2 Corinthians 2:14-16 NIV11)

We smell like Jesus

Our lives remind people of the Son of God so much that it is as if we smell like him. We are the aroma of death for those who wish for no change. In other words, we do not smell like hope to them because it is not the kind of hope they want. However, to those who want change, desire to be different and who are looking for meaning, purpose and healing, we smell like life. What kind of life? Resurrection life. Eternal life. New creation life. Christ's life.

Here's an unusual definition of a disciple of Jesus - 'Someone who smells like Jesus.' What do you think? Is that a reasonable claim? If so, what does it mean? Let me offer some words and Scriptures for reflection, discussion and prayer.

1. **A**ttitude - Philippians 2:5
2. **R**eady - Luke 12:35
3. **O**bedient - John 14:23-24
4. **M**erciful - Hebrews 2:17
5. **A**mazing - Matthew 8:27

The perceptive among us will notice that the first letters spell 'AROMA'. Will meditating on the Scriptures above help you be the aroma of resurrection life to the world? Let's pray to grow into the likeness of Jesus so that the world can smell him through us and find new life.

Your brother, Malcolm

Homelessness in Watford

If you find someone homeless in Watford and want to help them find accommodation you can advise them to do one of three things:

1. Call New Hope on 0300 012 0168
2. Go to <https://thestreetlink.org.uk>
3. Direct them to — The Haven, 4 Whippendell Road, Watford, WD18 7LU

<https://www.newhope.org.uk/thehaven>

Watford Contribution Details

If you want to donate to the work of the church here, please go to this link and look for the 'ICC Missions standing order and gift aid form' — <https://watfordchurchofchrist.org/podcasts>

Watford Media

YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCj9Qa8D9zumJZdoAtARDUww>

Podcast: <https://www.podbean.com/pu/pbblog-aiinq-1aef90>

Strength in Weakness

The Christian view on same sex attraction is a confused and conflicted area. How do we navigate the clash between our convictions and the values of this world? What is the right way to blend inclusive love with God's expectations? Simplistic answers will not do, and shallow answers are harmful. If you, your children or friends have questions, you might like to explore the resources at the link below. Guy Hammond runs 'strength in weakness' and is a member of one of our sister churches in North America and is himself a same-sex attracted person.

<https://www.strengthinweakness.org>