

The Beautiful Aroma - Part 2

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[0 : 00] We are victorious because he is miraculous.

Victory in Jesus. No other place. Thank you, choir. Thank you, praise team. I apologize for last Sunday.

I was not able to greet any of you. It seemed when my wife and I got back from the Dominican Republic, we were serving our MTW missionaries there for a week. They go, the missionaries in different regions every three or four years go for a retreat at a time of encouragement and refreshment.

And this year, the missionary, this group was from the North America, South America, Central America, and Caribbean. And these missionaries came to the Dominican Republic for that time. And they amazingly, again, asked me to preach and for Sandy and I to come and to minister to them and to serve with, just be with them and pray with them.

[1 : 15] And it was an amazing time. We saw several missionaries that we support here from our church. We bring you greetings from the Grams and for Bethany Alms.

They send their love to you all. But when I got off the plane, Chattanooga had its revenge. I guess it didn't like me leaving. And so it greeted me personally with an allergy attack that, I mean, I was taking COVID tests.

I was taking, I took flu tests to make sure I didn't have any of that stuff. It was, I think it was just the greeting from Chattanooga. And so it knocked me down a bit.

Fall, just the worst fall I've ever had here physically. And so it hit me good. And so I'm recovered pretty much, pretty much. Pretty much.

I'm sorry? I praise God. Pretty much. But God, some other areas have popped up that I need to kind of take a, pay attention to in my life.

[2 : 22] So I've covered your prayers for that, my health, and certainly my wife's health as well. She's just close to me. And so I try not to infect her. But that's hard.

So pray for her. Thank you for your, thank you for your prayers. That's not part of my time for preaching, so. So, why don't you stand with me, please, as we honor the reading of the Word of God.

We're returning to John chapter 12. I want to tell you, this passage has blown up on me. As the Lord, I believe, has been just opening my eyes to more. You know, you think you know something and then you realize you don't.

So I'm seeing more here. There may be a third part to this. I don't think I can finish with all I have here this morning. But it's an amazing passage.

So let's ask God's blessing upon his Word. Father, thank you for your mercy and for your Word that is life. Your Word. Lord, it amazes us how after all years of study, we still come to your Word and we see more than we saw before.

[3 : 34] I don't know how you do that. I just know that it's, we're not reading a novel. We're not studying an owner's manual.

We are reading and studying the Word of the living God. Your Word. And so we pray that you would speak to us in it and that we would hear and apply it well.

And that Jesus would get the glory. We pray that your Word would not return to you void, but it would accomplish in us what is pleasing in your sight. That you reprove, rebuke, exhort, and give me great patience and care in my teaching.

Oh Lord, may your people be fed, nourished up on the Word of God in Christ, the center of the Word. So are we here?

Here we are. Here we are. Your sheep. We are here together. We are here. Here we are. O great shepherd, feed us now. Use your unworthy servant.

[4 : 42] In Jesus' name. Amen. John chapter 1, chapter 12, excuse me, verses 1 through 12. Six days before the Passover, Jesus therefore came to Bethany where Lazarus was, whom Jesus had raised from the dead.

So they gave a dinner for him there. Martha served and Lazarus was one of those reclining with him at table. Mary therefore took a pound of expensive ointment made from pure nard and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped his feet with her hair.

The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples who was about to betray him, said, Why was this ointment not sold for 300 denarii and given to the poor?

He said this not because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief and having charge of the money bag, he used to help himself to what was put in.

Jesus said, Leave her alone so that she may keep it for the day of my burial. For the poor you always have with you, but you do not always have me.

[5 : 46] When the large crowd of the Jews heard 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. So the chief priests made plans to put Lazarus to death as well.

Because on account of him, many of the Jews were going away and believing in Jesus. That is the word of the Lord. Praise to God. Please be seated.

Thank you, choir. Thank you again, praise team. You know, we saw this a little bit last time, and I'll give a little review, but as Christians, we give off an aroma.

Now, one thing about aromas I've learned is that they can be pleasing or displeasing. And the same aroma can have different effects on different people.

The same aroma. I mean, I found out recently, for instance, that in America, we generally like the smell of wintergreen.

[7 : 03] Anybody know what I'm talking about wintergreen? Yeah? I love wintergreen lifesavers. That's my favorite lifesaver. It really is. Since I was a kid. Since I was a kid. Love that smell.

We put wintergreen in this country in candy. But I found out that in Britain, wintergreen is often used to make medicine.

And so they find the odor less pleasing. Who likes the smell of medicine? Same odor. Same aroma. Different cultures respond to it differently.

Now, when it comes to unpleasant aromas, we try to mask them. We mask them by spreading a more pleasing aroma across it.

Like air fresheners, candles, deodorants, and colognes. We use those things to hide offensive odors.

[8 : 12] Jesus gives off a very distinct aroma. And so should his people. What do you smell like?

You have an odor. A spiritual, attitudinal aroma. What do you smell like? Christ or the world?

Are you masking your aroma with the smell of the culture? So you can fit in. Or are you boldly smelling up your spaces with the aroma of Jesus?

What do you smell like? We saw last time a beautiful aroma in this passage begins with celebrating Jesus.

That's what the occasion was. They were celebrating Jesus for his resurrection of Lazarus. And then Mary, we know that her devotion to Jesus, because that's what the beautiful aroma is.

[9 : 31] It's our devotion to Jesus. It's him smelling us up and flowing out of us and smelling up the spaces around us.

Remember Mary, that she wiped... Remember the perfume that she wipes off his feet is in her hair. And wherever she went with her hair, that aroma just filled and followed her around.

She stunk up the place in a beautiful way. But that aroma was... Her devotion was revealed in a humble surrender of her destiny to Jesus.

You see, it's one thing to celebrate Jesus. It's another thing to give yourself to him. You see, religious... Religions and religious people will gladly celebrate Jesus.

Have you noticed that? I don't know any of... I don't think I know of any religion that doesn't celebrate Jesus in some way. The most people I meet who are religious in any way will always tend to speak well of Jesus.

[10:46] But we celebrate Jesus and then we choose our own way. Likely the way of least resistance and least sacrifice.

And see, that's not a beautiful aroma. And lastly, we saw that that beautiful aroma can be one of life and death. Life or death. That's how we ended last time.

We were looking at... We looked at 2 Corinthians 2, 14 to 16. I want to read that again because we're going to flow right into that thinking. Paul says, To one, we are a fragrance from death to death.

Those are the perishing. To the other, we are a fragrance from life to life. Those who are being saved. And then he says, Who is sufficient for these things?

In other words, I love that statement at the end because he's telling us that we can't do that on our own. We're not sufficient. But he is all sufficient.

[12:10] His grace is all sufficient grace. His love is all sufficient love. And when he is at work in you, when you are near him, you ever get near people?

Say you're in a room and people are smoking. Right? You notice that when you leave the room, you smell like smoke? When you get near Jesus, his aroma will infect you.

And the more we stay close to Jesus, oh, glory to God. His smoke gets on us. His fragrance gets on us. And Paul says, we are the aroma of Christ.

And wherever we go, people smell Jesus on us. You see, when Jesus is our passion, our lips and our lives will spread the knowledge of him, as Paul calls it.

The knowledge of him. That's what we want to spread. We want people to know about Jesus. You do know people don't know about Jesus in this country. You do know we are the most biblically illiterate generations, two generations now probably, in America, in American history.

[13:34] We don't know. Don't think even in the Bible, though, that people know about the real Jesus. Spread the knowledge of him. Spread the knowledge of him.

And some will welcome that, as Paul is suggesting, some will welcome that odor like the smell of baking bread and salivate for him. Woo! It went out.

Piece of Jesus. Piece of Jesus. But others will be offended by that odor like the smell of garbage on a hot summer day.

And they'll want to get away. They'll want to run away from that. So that brings up the next point in the text and back in John 12. The beautiful aroma is too much for those who don't believe or love Jesus.

You ever get on the elevator with someone who took a bath in their perfume or cologne? Crutch, you're feeling me.

[14:41] I hear you. I see you. I mean, I mean, I had a—I was—this one hospital I worked at, this guy, man, I love this guy. He always smelled good. I'm in the—I'm into the smells, man.

I'm down with the smells. I'm in the cologne. I believe in it. But when you got in the elevator with this guy, you wanted to call—you wanted to, oh, okay, what floor are you on?

You wanted to open that door and jump out. Take your chances. Because in that enclosed space, when you've got a strong, even a nice smell, that smell becomes nauseating.

You see, our culture can handle a little bit of Jesus, especially at Christmas and Easter. But full devotion to Jesus is nasty and painful.

It's nasty. Considerable space in this passage is given to the response of Judas. Did you catch it? I mean, it's so much—Jesus is dealing with him.

[15:55] The reason is, John says, he's going to betray Jesus. He notes that for us. This episode shows us where Judas' heart is and is not with Jesus.

He's the treasurer. Can you—can you see this, people? Jesus—Judas is the treasurer. Means that is a trusted position.

Not Matthew, who had been a tax collector and good at accounting. I would have considered—I would have made Matthew the treasurer.

Now, Matthew would have been considered a thief by the Jews for collecting taxes for the Romans. I wonder if the disciples didn't trust him at first. They're human.

I'm just wondering out loud. Yet it is Judas. Judah. A faithful Jew who is the real thief.

[16:54] Not Matthew. Judas stinks. Jesus isn't worthy of the gift that Mary gave.

They're not worth—Jesus is not worthy. But the poor are. I'm having a moment here. And it seems the other disciples agreed with him at first.

Matthew 26, 28 and 29. When the disciples—when the disciples, plural, saw it, they were indignant, saying, why this waste?

For this could have been sold for a large sum and given to the poor. It wasn't just Judas who felt this way about Mary's gift. The rest of the church felt that way.

Again, why did John single out Judas? Okay, we knew he was going to betray him, but there's more. Why did he single him out?

[17:57] Because Judas was playing the hypocrite. Hypocrite. And the word for hypocrite in the New Testament, hypocrite, it comes from the theater of that culture.

The theater. In that theater, they would wear masks. If you were playing a character, you would wear a mask to show, I am this character. Then you would pick up another mask and become another character.

The idea of the hypocrite in the New Testament is one who wears masks and pretends to be something he or she is not as a way of life.

We all hypocrite sometimes. But the issue in the New Testament is, is that your way of life? Judas was a hypocrite by way of life.

He appeared to be a disciple of Jesus. In particular, here in the passage, he appeared to care about the poor.

[19:08] Remember, note the bent of our falling human nature. Sometimes the things we are most vocal against is the thing in which we ourselves are failing.

I wish I hadn't said that. How many times I got to talk about my folk? How many times pastors have been strong against a particular sin?

I can think of one example that was huge back in, I think, the 90s. It's not, it happens more. But strong against a particular sin, and then we find out the sin, especially the sin of sexual immorality. Then we found out the guy has been hanging out with prostitutes. Sometimes the very thing that we speak against with such vehemence is the very thing we ourselves are struggling with.

Judas makes himself sound like the champion for the poor. I can hear him now. I know what the poor need. I'm here to help the oppressed.

[20:27] You people don't care about the poor. I do. I can see him looking down on the apostles, possibly. Or maybe they were looking down on the rest of the Jews.

I don't know. But I think some Christians today would probably have agreed with Judas. Especially people who champion social justice.

All this spiritual devotion to Jesus. Let's do something practical. Let's do something practical. When you put the emphasis on the practical, you sometimes miss the heart of Jesus.

Because he wants your heart. Not merely your actions. Actions. Actions can mask. The heart don't lie.

He sees the heart. A beautiful, costly devotion to Jesus will always show up.

[21:40] Shallow devotion. Of those who just speak about Jesus. But are not devoted to him. Jesus is the prototype of the false disciple hiding among true disciples of Jesus.

Jesus. He doesn't care about Jesus. And he certainly don't care about the poor. He wants to appear to care. I'm saddened to know that in this country, many people believe the gospel is simply this.

Love people. Is that your view of the gospel? Love people. Here's an example of putting people in their needs ahead of Jesus and his kingdom.

You know you could do that. Did you? Yes, you can. You see, Jesus taught that the greatest commandment. Listen. The greatest commandment is not to love people.

Or even the poor. Matthew 22, 37. The greatest commandment, he says, you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.

[22:56] He gave a second. We'll come back to that next week probably. We'll see how far we get. Probably next week. But he gave a second. It's important. But that wasn't the greatest commandment. Are you with me?

Are you thinking with me? The greatest commandment. He was asked what the greatest commandment was. He could have said, love people. And that's what people would say the gospel is.

Love people. I'm not saying it doesn't include that. I'm just saying, is that the gospel? Jesus said the greatest commandment was love God.

To be devoted to God. Be devoted to Jesus. Mary's gift is doing just that. When she gave that year's worth of ointment and poured it out upon the feet of Jesus, she was saying her life belonged to him.

She's giving herself and all of herself to Jesus. He is the great treasure to her. More of a treasure than that material possession that represented her future happiness.

[24 : 17] You see, when Jesus resurrected her brother, Laz, from the dead, he also deepened Mary's faith in him.

Now, she loved him before. We know that. She loved him before. But her love grew a bit. He's everything to her now.

He says, there's always room for spiritual growth, saints. There's always room for spiritual growth. You have not arrived. I know you've been at New City for 30 years.

You need help. You need Jesus. I don't care how long you've been helped, how long you've been saved. There is room for spiritual growth.

You ain't there yet. You have not arrived and you will not arrive until you see him. When you see him, then you can say, yes, it is finished. But until then, brothers and sisters, you are a mess.

[25 : 18] You may be a good-looking mess. You may be a very moral mess, but you're still a mess. There's stuff in you that Jesus wants to root out.

He wants to reveal to you. And that's why you need us. That's why I need you. Because I really found out how loving I am when I get around folk who make me mad.

And I use that phrase loosely, make me mad. No one makes me mad. I just get mad. I don't like what you did or said. I find out how forgiving I am, Brother Salter, Deacon Salter.

I find out how forgiving I am when you offend me. You see, I need you. You help me. As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another.

That's when we find out what's really inside of us. There's always room for more spiritual growth. Mary is growing here. But listen, I got to ask you a question, a practical question.

[26 : 23] Are you daily beholding Jesus so that he is growing your devotion? Are you daily smelling Jesus?

Are you daily living in his presence so that his aroma, which is intoxicating, so that his glory and majesty, his love continues to just waft over you?

You see, I think I told you last time, it was weeks ago, you probably don't remember, but I'm into scented candles. I love scented candles. Bath and body wash has gotten a bunch of my money. Because I don't buy that cheap stuff from Walmart. I buy the stuff, my candles last a year. Because I got so many of them. I just burn.

That's how I get through fall. See, I used to have seasonal depression. It kind of went away in Florida when we lived in Miami. But coming back here, it hit me again. Because I don't, the shortness of the days.

[27 : 24] And then it gets cold. Not so cold here, but it changes. And it just messes me up, y'all. Now listen, here's what helped me. I started burning candles. Woo!

I saved my pumpkin candles for the fall. So I'm looking forward. Andrew, I'm telling you about it. When September comes, me and I get my pumpkin candles.

I got tons of candles. I set them bad boys up, and I'm burning candles. Come upstairs in the office, all you smell is bath and body works, baby. Pumpkin everywhere. And that's what helps me.

That aroma, it helps my mood. Somebody knows what I'm talking about. And then Starbucks starts selling the pumpkin spice latte. I need help.

The aroma. You see, that's what Jesus, even more, even more. Jesus, when you stay next to Him, His aroma, that love, that grace, that acceptance, that kindness, that holiness.

[28 : 33] It soothes you. He reminds you that you're saved by grace, not by how good you are. He reminds you that, yeah, you played the hypocrite the other day, but I still love you.

He reminds you that you still got more growing to do, that you're not done growing. That I don't care how long you've been a deacon, how long you've been an elder, how long you've been in church. It don't matter. You still got rough stuff in you. And yet, and yet He says, but I love you. I'm not going to let you go, Rachel.

He's not going to let you go. He died for you. He's the good shepherd. And when His sheep wander, He goes after Him.

Hallelujah. But to Judas, listen, to Judas, her devotion smelled like waste. It smelled like waste.

[29 : 38] He says it, right? Why was this anointment not sold for 300 denarii? That's almost a year's wage. And given to the poor. She stunk to Him.

This great devotion to Jesus. This great sitting at the Lord's feet and pouring out her heart. Pouring out her life. Pouring out her future. 300. Would you give a year's wage to Jesus?

I don't care who you work. A year's of your salary. Whatever you make. Would you give that to Jesus?

She did. She... And He said it stunk. Listen.

Listen. People will tell you. You are wasting your life following Jesus. You are wasting your life or missing opportunities when you make decisions that honor Christ.

[30 : 40] That go against the prevailing ideas or prevailing desires of the culture or crowd. They'll tell you... Come on. Some of you have heard this.

Girl. Girl. Don't let Him get away. You know what they want. Be your authentic self.

Follow your heart. Talk about how the culture talks to us. Missions. You want a mission?

You have a good job. You're making good money. You're talking about going on... You're going to become a missionary. You're giving that money to the Lord?

Save that for your house, boo. You've been saving. You've been saving. You're going to give what? You're going to give that to the Lord? He got a house.

[31 : 41] He got a house. He got a house. He got a house. He got a house. He got a house. You're going to give that to the Lord.

But because you've been won by the love of Jesus, you don't want Him to get away. Now, look, he ain't trying to run away. I'm just saying.

I'm just making a joke here. But think about it. When we give to the Lord, whatever that is, we're giving. Because we love Him.

We desire Him. We want Him more. And the culture will look at you and think you are dark, stark, raving, crazy. Saving yourself for marriage.

Are you kidding me? And Christians are falling for these things all the time. Jesus is better.

[32 : 45] When you see Jesus, like Mary did, when you see Him as better and the greater treasure, you want to be who He has created you to be. You want to follow Him in His word because His kingdom is the greater treasure.

Go back and read Matthew 13 when you get a chance. You want to smell like Jesus. And that's not waste. Don't let the world—don't listen. That is not waste.

That's wealth. Smelling like Jesus is the great life. That's the good life, brothers and sisters. In the words of Christian martyr Jim Elliott, you know these words.

He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose. There's nothing in this world you can keep.

It can be taken away from you. You can lose it. It can walk away from you. There's nothing in this world that you can truly keep. And certainly when you leave it, you're leaving it. Amen.

[34 : 01] We spend so much time—that's what we're doing. We spend so much time fighting and clawing to hold on to the creation rather than the creator. Amen.

Are you fighting to hold on to something or someone that you need to let go of so you can better see and value Jesus? Jesus. I'm so glad his grip on you is strong.

If you belong to him, his grip on you will not fail. But our grip on him gets kind of weak. You know I like playing disc golf.

And there's a—when you're throwing a disc, your grip is important. It's called the power grip. You get fingers underneath there and thumb on top of the disc, and you grip it hard.

I've been having a trouble. I've been having a little problem. I'm on my reach back, which is what disc motions is called. And as I'm coming around the pull, I loosen my grip.

[35 : 05] I don't know why. I don't drop the disc, but I loosen my grip. And when I throw it, it doesn't go as far. But when I tighten my grip, when I focus, and our grip is tight, and I—and I—it—poo!

It—you know, brother's chest get pumped out. A strong grip.

Some of us need to strengthen our grip on Jesus. He won't let you go. His grip is—but brother Taylor, he got you. He ain't going to let you go.

So you ain't got to worry about that. But it's our grip that gets weak. It gets slippery. Mary had a grip on Jesus.

I suggest to you, she had a power grip. Death grip. And I'm sure she had her moments. She's human. She had her moments, I'm sure.

[36 : 08] But brothers and sisters, I just want to encourage you. You're either holding on to stuff, and this world stuff, and creation. You're either holding on to creation, as much—all the stuff—you're either holding on to that very tight, or you're holding on to Jesus.

And why are you holding on to Jesus? Because he's got his grip on you. He's—you feel the grip. You feel the love. And it just makes you want to love him more. It just makes you want to go, ha, ha, ha. It just makes you want to reach over and hug him more. And hold on to him tighter. Like a drowning person.

You're drowning, and you just want to hold on to something that's going to be solid and stable. And I'll tell you, if it's anything we've made, it's not solid or stable.

Jesus is the rock. To stand on him, to hold him, is safety. We love because he first loved us.

[37 : 15] We hold because he's holding us. If you let go of what the world says is the greatest treasures, what the culture tells you you have to have, if you let that go— It doesn't mean Jesus won't give you some of it.

He will. He does. But he may not give you as much as you think you need. But if you will cast your destiny and life and hope on him, maybe you need to give away some of that stuff.

Maybe there's some things you just need to let go of. Say, Lord, I just trust you. Because you're calling me to go this way. So I'm going to trust you with that.

I would like to have that or that or her or him or whatever. But I see you're calling me to go this direction. And I want to follow you because you smell good.

You smell better. You're the good shepherd. You're going to feed me. I'm going to follow you here. I'm going to trust you and follow you. And as I do that, as you do that, because you see him and his kindness to you as greater treasure, you know what's going to happen?

[38 : 44] Some people are going to tell you you stink. Is that okay? Are you willing to be funky for Jesus?

Where is your treasure? If he's your treasure, you smell wonderful. You know, I'm amazed. How many movies come out year after year about treasure seeking?

Have you noticed that? Movies, movies, year after year, there's always a new movie about some treasure people are seeking. The Indiana Jones movie came out this year. I haven't seen it yet. I heard it wasn't that good, but I don't know.

I'm going to watch it because I love Indiana Jones. But he's always looking for some treasure. I'm assuming that's what it is, some treasure. And it's always a race to get to the treasure. You notice that? It's always a race. Because there's only a little bit of treasure.

It's a zero-sum game. Either I have it and you don't, or you have it and I don't. Zero-sum game. And in these movies, what's happening? The stories, people will risk their lives.

[39 : 59] I mean, do crazy stuff. It's TV and movies, I know. But they will do the craziest thing to get that treasure, to be the first one there. You think that ain't life?

You think that's not how we all live in? It's a zero-sum game, see? When you let the treasure of this world color you, there's only so much to go around.

And we will fight, claw, and kill to get it. We will abase ourselves. We will shame ourselves. We will compromise ourselves. But here's the good news.

Jesus is the greatest treasure ever. And there's plenty of him to go around for everybody. There's no race to be first.

If I get there last, the last will be first. If I get there last, I still get as much Jesus as you got. See, that's a true treasure. That's a real treasure.

[41 : 06] And he says, when you got me, you smell wonderful. Because his aroma doesn't mask our bad odors.

His aroma changes our odor. Hallelujah. Amen. Amen. Hallelujah. What do you smell like? What do you smell like?

Father, in Jesus' name, help us. Oh, there's so much more to be said about this passage, Lord.

Next week, I pray you help me to share it and to proclaim it, God, me.

But bless us, Lord. Today and all this week, may we pursue you so that, Lord, we might know you and have your aroma all over us.

Lord, we want to know you. We keep us, deliver us from treasure-seeking of this world. And the damage it does to our souls, to our hearts, too, Lord.

[42 : 06] We are so messed up inside because we treasure the wrong things. Sometimes we even treasure the wrong people. Help us, Lord, to treasure Jesus.

Find in him, oh, Lord, that which is of most value. And saturate us with his aroma.

Lord, if there's anyone here who has been treasuring the wrong things, if anyone here, Lord, who doesn't treasure Jesus, I pray that you would have mercy upon them and that today would be the day that they see the real treasure is Jesus.

That all these other things and people they've been seeking just will not, hold them, cannot change them, and will not be there when they face the final curtain, death.

Let them see that Jesus is truly humanity's great need and great treasure. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.