



Following Jesus

Part 4 – Make Us a Pleasing Aroma

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We're in this series called *Following Jesus* and we're talking about discipleship. Last week, we looked at all the purposes and today, we are going to pick it up with this big idea: *Following Jesus Make Us a Pleasing Aroma*. This is a little bit different message, but we are going to work the whole message toward just asking one question when you leave here today.

Throw me the answer when I ask this question. What was the most watched presidential debate of all times? Bush/Carter? Who said Bush/Carter? You knew that didn't you? How many viewers? There were 80.4 million people that watched the Bush/Carter debate. He had some great lines and I'd love to go through that. We're thinking tomorrow night may beat 80.4 million. We are going to see because it's going to be highly entertaining. I have an 11 and 13 years old that are asking if they get to watch the presidential debate tomorrow night. Yes, we'll bring dessert in and have a good time.

We planned the topic and the text for today's message long before this debate was scheduled. I want you to know that. It's true; we did. Now, to say that the message hasn't been guided by tomorrow night as we've prepared this week, that would not be true; it has been. I thought, *how did we end up with this topic on the Sunday before the Monday?* I believe for many of you, the sole application of today's message will be how to handle tomorrow night, but not only how to handle tomorrow night, but what you're going to do with it on Tuesday morning. How are you going to approach co-workers Tuesday morning with what you watched on Monday night and then how you're going to handle the last few weeks of the election? It's not a political talk at all, but that's going to be some of the application.

If you have your Bibles, turn to 2 Corinthians 2. We are going to look at a great word picture that Paul uses to talk about how you and I are to follow Jesus. Before we do that, I want to recap those five purposes from last week. Did anybody find any opportunities last week that you didn't see coming. Would the three of you just share those with me on social media. Nothing encourages a pastor more than people actually doing something with a message. I don't even want to do this message now. This message doesn't even feel quite worth it.

The five purposes of the church are worship, fellowship, discipleship, ministry, and evangelism and here we have them in Matthew 22 and Matthew 28. Matthew 22 says, ***37 Jesus replied: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind." 38 This is the first and greatest commandment.***

We read this in Deuteronomy 6 as well. **4 Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one.** There is a God, there is only one God, he is the Lord, he is our Lord. **5 Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.** These are to be upon our hearts and then we pass them onto the hearts of our children.

Back to Matthew 22 - **39 "And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'" So now we are moving from worship into ministry. Invest in the lives of other people. Jesus was asked this question and this was his answer to the question of "What's the most important law?" Of all the laws that we read, the hundreds and hundreds of laws in the Old Testament, what is the most important law? And he said, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. 38 This is the first and greatest commandment. 39 And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' 40 All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."**

This is what is called The Great Commandment, but then we also have The Great Commission. The Great Commission is going to tie in with the text that we're looking at today in 2 Corinthians. It's found in Matthew 28 - **19 "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit..." We have discipleship and fellowship. After baptism, you came up out of the water and I whispered in your ear, "Welcome to the family. We're glad you placed faith in Jesus and now you're being baptized and following him in this first step of obedience. 20 "...and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."** We have evangelism, ministry, discipleship, fellowship, and worship in these two texts.

But, now we are going to look at this word picture as you and I see we are called to be the pleasing aroma of Christ as we go out into the world. We pick it up in these two verses in 2 Corinthians 2. **14 But thanks be to God...** So there's this heart of gratefulness. We are thankful as followers of Jesus. **...who always leads us as captives in Christ's triumphal procession...** We are going to get this beautiful picture of a Roman triumphal march.

Here's what it looked like. You would have the commander... We would consider that a general that would have led out down the streets through the Roman Empire after they had won a victory, after they had won a battle. The commander would lead out and then his soldiers, the victors were right behind him. Behind them, you had the loosing army; whoever was left. There would be incense that you could smell all throughout the streets. You knew it was coming even before it got to you. But, you would walk behind the commander.

The picture we are going to get is that Jesus is the one who has won the victory for us. When it uses the term *captive*, it doesn't mean we are the losers, it doesn't mean we are prisoners. We are now walking in victory behind Jesus. For many of you, this is a word picture that you need to get today as part of your faith because maybe your faith is solely built on footprints in the sand. I'm not going to tear down footprints in the sand. I know it's on many walls in many offices and many homes. The picture we often have of walking with Jesus comes from that poem where I was walking and I got to a point that I became so tired and what life was throwing at me was too much and then I only saw one set of footprints. Where were you, Jesus? It was at those moments that I picked you up and I carried you."

That's not the word picture we have in 2 Corinthians 2. What Paul is going to paint for the church in Corinth is this idea that we are walking behind Jesus, truly following Jesus because he has won the victory. Some of you are looking for the victory when you need to understand today that you already have it in Jesus. What you need to do is claim the victory. Claim the victory, walk behind him.

...and uses us to spread the aroma of the knowledge of him everywhere. Now, when you see knowledge in the scripture... The word *knowledge* is being thrown all around the church today and taught all around the country in so many different ways, but what you need to understand about knowledge and what we teach clearly here at Woodland Hills is knowledge is not to bring glory to you. Knowledge is not to make you smart or academic so you can impress other people and win arguments. That is not the goal of knowledge. Paul also tells the church at Corinth that knowledge puffs up, but love builds up.

We have the knowledge of Christ and this is to make us a sweet aroma. We have the knowledge of Christ and he uses us to spread this aroma of him everywhere. We don't do Bible study just for personal edification. We do Bible study so that we can take what we've learned and teach other people. This is a key to what we believe. It's not just about us. That's why we don't consider you in here just Bible students. We believe discipleship is important, yes, but it's so much more than just that. You should be taking what you learn in here and what you learn on your own, as you learn more and more about what it means to follow Jesus, and doing something with it and part of that is sharing it with others.

15 For we are to God the pleasing aroma... So, as we talk about smells today, there are really two types of smells or we put them in two categories. You have aroma which is the pleasant smell. And you have odor which is unpleasant smell. Now we're going to also get into the text today and the passage we end with this morning is going to refer back to Leviticus and the sacrifice. When they would make sacrifice for the atonement of sin, that smell, that aroma, that fragrant offering was pleasing to God. Not the smell, but what the smell represented.

You and I, as followers of Jesus, walking behind him in victory, are to be a pleasing aroma. Everywhere we go, we should be letting off this pleasant smell. Now stick with this today. It's a word picture. We are going to use this figuratively, not literally. But, I want this image in your mind this week as we move forward. **...of Christ...**

This is important because now Paul is going to continue to play off that word picture. **...among those who are being saved and those who are perishing.** The actual language used in this text is referring to those who are perishing as those who are doing so as an act of their own will. Those who are being saved... This is the glory of God and this is an act of God; this is the will of God. So you have the same image. This smell, this fragrance... Look at how he does this with this processional. You have those who are being saved, those that are walking in victory; to them it is life, to those who are not, the same smell represents death.

Let's talk about this a little because I just... We are going to talk a lot about smell so you leave here with this big idea today. I am supposed to be an aroma, not an odor when it comes to my faith in Jesus. How many of you believe too many Christians today smell bad? How many of you have had situations this

week where you were a little smelly and you walked away going “I don’t think I left a good aroma...” You didn’t say this at the time, but...

I’ve been laughing at this because the more I thought about smells this week, I asked Dr. Travis Brawner, one of our elders and an ear, nose, and throat doctor. I even wrote it down on paper before I asked him this question. There are billions of smells. He responded back that there are trillions of smells. Smells are important because smells protect us from danger. They help us know if food is spoiled, but, it’s the same sense that we have that helps us enjoy our food and drink. Thinks about this for a second.

There’s something I’ve learned... next month, I will have been married to Amy Cunningham for twenty years. We’ve been married 20 years and I’m learning something about her that I never knew. Okay, so she’s buying me stuff and I don’t buy any of my personal hygiene stuff, you need to know that. I know it’s important, but it’s not high on my radar of things I really need to be taking care of. You’ve probably figured out by now that I’m not the trendies hipster pastor in town. That’s a guy at another church. We do have some hipster pastors in town, but it ain’t me.

So, Amy came home one day with these two things. I want to show them to you. Well, first of all, this looks like a flask. I grew up independent, fundamental, Baptist and we had a verse that was drilled into our brain. It was 1 Thessalonians 5: 22 - **Abstain from all appearance of evil.** Does anybody know what I’m talking about? It’s why we didn’t go to movies, right? That’s because you walk in and people don’t know what movie... Just abstain from the very appearance of it. My brother and I weren’t allowed to smoke those fake cigarettes, the candy cigarettes. Nope. People will think you’re smoking because we see six year olds smoking all the time.

This is one is an ouie in my heart, Mom, and I’m going to share it. You may get sad, but... My mom will probably mouth “I’m sorry.” My brother and I weren’t allowed to chew the gum, Big League Chew. Does anybody know what I’m talking about? Raise your hand if you weren’t allowed to chew it. It was a pouch of tobacco. So all our friends are chewing gum. We could do Hubba Bubba or we could do Bupalicious, but not Big League Chew. Abstain from the very appearance of evil. This is what’s crazy and I’m sorry, Mom and Dad, to call you out on this, but at the holidays, we drank Welch’s Sparkling Cider. We could look like we were drinking, but we couldn’t look like we’re smoking or chewing. How many of you say that’s the very definition of hypocrisy?

So, when Amy pulled this flask shaped bottle out of the bag, I asked “What are you doing?”

She goes, “This is what I want you to start bathing with.” This may be too much information.

You can tell I’ve been using it once I knew how turned on she was by what I’m about to tell you. I wish you could smell it. It smells like the Alaskan wilderness. It’s smells like I’ve been raking leaves. It smells like I’ve been doing yard work. It smells like I’ve been outside for a week and haven’t bathed. I’m like “Babe, I can save you some money if this is what you want.”

And then she got me this. How many of you know what this is? It’s beard oil. Do you want to know what this smells like? I’m not making this stuff up. It smells like tobacco. I said, “That is 1 Thessalonians

5: 22 material right there. We can't use that." I thought to myself, *good night, Amy, 20 years married and I'm finally figuring out that you are turned on when I smell like I just walked out of the woods, smoking a pipe.* Now just let me ask you a question. Does that look like me? Do I scream outdoorsy. Do I scream tobacco? But that's her deal. That's how she wants me to smell now. Between that and the sports Right Guard, we're just all sorts of confused about what I'm supposed to smell like.

Then I thought about all of the ways we try to mask odors. Here's the point I want us to start getting. **We absorb the aromas and odors around us.** This is pretty powerful. Remember when smoking was in every restaurant and in every bar. You would come out and you could just smell it on you. I'm not picking on smokers because... We do have people here that can help you quit. We want you to be healthy and all that. My independent, fundamental, premillennial, Baptist past would say, "Smoking doesn't send you to hell. It just makes you smell like you've been there for a little bit." I just want you to be clear on the theology at Woodland Hills Family Church before we go any further. But, you've absorbed that smell.

How many of you know... We've all done it. You're in the car and you see the skunk up ahead. You don't smell it yet and you don't smell it as you drive over it. It doesn't get through the ventilation of your vehicle until maybe 50 yards past and then it never goes away. The rest of the day, you're smelling it. How many of you... I have to do this all the time because I don't trust my own smelling. I have to ask my wife, "Do I smell?" How many of you have a good friend or a spouse, someone in your life that you trust enough to smell you and be honest with you? That's a big reason, singles, to get married. You need someone that will help you keep track of your smell.

Then we have all sorts of... Febreze was invented for parents of teenagers. We had something similar to this when I was in college. I had friends in college that wouldn't do laundry. They just had a can of Febreze. How many of you remember your college roommate picking up their dirty laundry and smelling it? He was looking for the thing that didn't smell... This is guys. I'm probably talking to the guys. The ladies never did this. He would find the outfit that smelled the best and then he would just douse it in Febreze. You'd walk in to the strong aroma of the Febreze. We try to mask these odors. I love spraying this room deodorizer with the lights up here. Doesn't that look good with the fog. Everything in our home right now is apple spiced or pumpkin. Amy made her candle trip and spent \$832.00 at Yankee the other day. Do you ever go into a candle shop and be like *how do you people sleep at night?* What makes candles so dang expensive.

Then I walk in our home and I can tell what we were having. I can tell whether Amy is cooking something savory or sweet. One of my favorite smells in our home is Chili Garlic Lawry's. Then you need these as well. These are Altoids. These help you mask that smell. But, I know when it's cinnamon or nutmeg. Right now, our favorite cookie is the molasses cookie. All of those smells come alive.

Then when we decide we don't want to clean anymore... We don't want to clean out the vehicle so we just go spend 99 cents on an air freshener to hang from the mirror. It lasts about three days in our car and then it's no good. I've been out to the parking lot to see that some of you can actually remove the old ones before you add the new one. You don't have leave them there. We're not trying to collect

these things. Don't let everybody you drive past know how much of a slob you are. Just take them down.

I love the smell of fabric softeners. The dryer sheets are my favorite. Sometimes Amy will walk in on me smelling the dryer sheets. I have to remind her that there is nothing wrong with what I'm doing.

We absorb the smells around us. This is the important part. This week, I thought about one of my favorite country songs, Thunder Rolls by Garth Brooks. He absorbed the smell and we hear about it in the second verse. *"In all the wind and rain a strange new perfume blows and the lightning flashes in her eye and he knows that she knows. And the thunder rolls."* Because a man just cheated on his wife and absorbed the smell of that woman's perfume and brought it home. Be sure your sins will find you out. All of that to say, if we are to be the sweet aroma of Christ, let me ask you this question. What are you absorbing from other Christians? Not what are you absorbing from the world? There are plenty of smells we can talk about from the world. But what are you absorbing from other Christians. Would you define your walk with Jesus as an aroma or as an odor?

I thought we would have some fun and some serious here. I'm going to just put some words, one at a time, on the screen and I want you to participate. I want you to just yell out, as fast as you can, as loud as you can whether it's an aroma or an odor. First word – Cubs. I'm not hearing anything. Aroma! I was in Chicago yesterday and I bought this W flag for my dad. Dad, this is your gift after the second service. Fly the W. If you're not familiar with sports, this means the Cubs just won. How many Cubs fans do we have? The same ones that are applying the messages.

Next word- Kindness. Aroma! Again, I thought about my Grandma Mary Jane this week. Do your grandparents have smells. Yes, they do, but you know what I'm talking about. I'm not talking about the Ben Gay and the powder. I loved that kindness lingered with my grandma everywhere she went.

Next word – Service. Aroma! Isn't it something in the church... Again, you're going to see the purposes of the church in this as well when it comes to following Jesus, but isn't it something how when someone is serving, it's inspiring to walk alongside and serve with them? You'll find, in a lot of churches, the people that are serving the most are having some of the greatest community in the church. Honestly, the people that are serving and giving their all in following Jesus and in giving to the church are the folks that you find are complaining the least. We often take criticism or the good critical feedback from people who are serving because they are doing it in a tone and in a spirit that is an aroma. They want us to be better versus those who bring criticism as an odor. What are you absorbing from other Christians?

The next word – Anger. Odor! If you hang around angry people or you spend a lot of time with those who are frustrated and haven't worked through their issues in a way that honors Christ, you're picking that up. That smell is getting on you.

The next word – Hatred. Odor! The next word – Racism. Odor! The next word – Political Ranting. Odor! Maybe the email you sent last week was odor. I'm not talking about the three that sent me emails. I am actually talking about those three. It may have been humorous, but I just want to guard

you and encourage you for just a minute. Just think through even before you hit send on an email to someone.

I had a rough couple of days this week in a task that I was assigned, and I found myself moving from... I was asked to do something to be an aroma, but the situation was so odd for me that I found myself moving towards odor. I had to catch myself and I had to keep reminding myself to stay in this lane over here. I am following Christ. I'm picturing that Jesus is out in front and I am walking in victory.

The next word – Love. Aroma! The next word – Forgiveness. Aroma! The next one – Bitterness. Odor! The last word – Joy. Aroma! Yeah. I hope you're picking this up because... I feel like we are a charismatic church this morning. Welcome to the Pentecostals in the room.

For those who are struggling in the odor area and you just find yourself... This is an important message and thought for our home groups. We want home groups to be the sweet aroma, the pleasing aroma of Christ, not the odor.

We were at a conference this week and I was talking to so many different church ministry teams and trying to help and encourage them. Stephanie and Denise were there. We would walk out of some of our gatherings and just look at each other. We were overwhelmed with gratefulness for Woodland Hills Family Church. What some people are dealing with in their churches, we haven't dealt with in years. It's something we have to stay on all the time. So, we are grateful for you creating an environment and an experience each week that is an aroma, not an odor. I've been in churches where I could smell something was going on there even before I knew what actually was going on.

The scripture says this. Again, it's Paul to the church in Corinth. 1 Corinthians - ***33 Do not be misled: "Bad company corrupts good character."*** If you get around those who have the attitude, you're going to absorb it.

Here's the next thing. Not only do we absorb it, but **We remember the aromas and odors we absorb.** This sticks in our memory. Amy and I talk about this all the time. There are certain smells that when we walk into a room, they remind us of grandma and grandpa's house or our home. There is one smell that always reminds me of home. For you, you probably consider it an odor, but for me, it's an aroma. It's the smell of a cow pasture. I grew up in a cow pasture community. I don't know why I called that a cow pasture community; it's a farm community. I'm overusing words this morning. Some of you are hobbyists; you run a few head of cattle. That doesn't produce the smell I'm talking about.

Driving to our home down T Highway, we have a neighbor that probably runs 30 to 50 and sometimes maybe 100 head of cattle. He doesn't even run enough cattle to get that smell going. But when I visit this church in Gilbert, Arizona, Mission Community Church... It is still ranch land. I step out of the car and every time I step out of the car, my childhood hits me in the face. I step out of the car and I just take a deep breath in and savor it. Most people think it's a terrible smell. A rancher caught me one day and I was telling him how much I love that smell because it reminds me of my childhood. He goes, "I do the same thing every morning. I get out every morning and take in a deep breath and go 'Ah, the smell of money.'"

We remember those smells. We're coming into Christmas. Christmas has all the good smells. It has all the pine cones and the fireplaces. If you just want a great date night that's free, just go walk at Big Cedar when all the cabins have the fireplaces going. That will take you back.

So that's the question I want to end with this morning. We absorb the smells that are around us and we remember smells. So, the question, the application for you today is: **What will people remember about Jesus after spending time with you?** This is now evangelism. Remember, you have the knowledge of Christ to spread everywhere. Guess what? You spread Christ, follower of Jesus, everywhere you go. Everywhere you go, you're spreading either an aroma or an odor.

So, after you've spent a little time with someone at a meal or they've spent time in your home, don't be like... Now, not to pick on cat owners in here, but you know when you walk into the home of a cat owner and you want to say "Man, you should have cleaned out that litter box before I came over because that smell is knocking me out the front door." Some of you have gotten so used to the smell that you don't smell it, but you don't want that. Don't be a kitty litter Christian. That's will probably be the number one tweeted thing of the morning. Don't be that person. I hope when you leave, others have absorbed your aroma. I hope people for a long time to come say 'Man, I remember when I was with them the last time and how good that was.'"

Young people, you're not out of this. I'm not just talking about your mom, dad, grandma, and grandpa; I'm talking about you. What are people thinking about Jesus after spending time with you? What are they remembering. Was that such a good experience that they want more of that. I have to be honest with you, this is why we think so much about what takes place here on Sunday morning. We're careful with it. We want to make sure this church doesn't say and do things that is an odor to the communities of Stone and Taney Counties. We want people to know that it is the sweet aroma of Christ coming out of that church. They are walking behind Jesus in victory and it is obvious in everything they say and do.

So, as you think about that question: What will people remember after spending time with you this week? I want to take us to this final passage in Ephesians 5. It's also the Apostle Paul. **1 Follow God's example, therefore, as dearly loved children** (follower of Jesus) **2 and walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us...** Here again, we have Jesus now as the final sacrifice. He's the complete sacrifice for the atonement of your sins and that was pleasing to God. **...as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.** And God said, "This satisfies me. My wrath is satisfied because of the work of Jesus Christ, the one who walks in victory before us."

I just want to end with this story of a lady. I had a dear friend, a charismatic, Pentecostal pastor in Minnesota. He told me this story a couple of weeks ago. It's of his mom in her mid-70s. When I heard it, I thought *That's who I want to be when I'm in my mid-70s.* Senior adult, you're not out of this. "You've heard it said, Ted, you can't teach an old dog new tricks." That may be true, but I believe you can teach a follower of Jesus new tricks. Don't let the grumpy, grumbly attitude set in. No more odor. I should just walk around in Branson with this air freshener all week and when I sense you putting out an odor, I'll spray it right in your face. When you start getting stanky with your language and your words are coming out, I'll spray you in the face.

The pastor told me, that at the concert... I'm not going to tell you the artist's name, but there was a concert in Minneapolis and if I said, everybody here would know him and you may have teased and made fun of the guy, but after the concert, he asked somebody that worked at the arena if they knew of a church he could attend the next day. Somebody mentioned my friend's church.

My friend said, "I showed up Sunday morning and there this guy was in the green room." He just had one handler with him. He said, "My mom was in the green room." She's in her mid-70s. She was unimpressed with this individual. It wasn't George Strait... It wasn't a Branson entertainer. It was someone the younger people would really love.

She was sitting in the green room and then she went over to this guy and said, "Can I pray with you?"

He said, "I would like that very much."

She goes, "I just need you to know a couple of things. Sometimes the Lord speaks to me when I'm praying and he'll tell me something I need to tell you." Let me remind you this is a charismatic, Pentecostal woman. Probably Pentecostal more than charismatic. She said, "Do I have your permission to tell you something?"

He said, "You sure do."

My friend said she brought down the thunder. She was praying heaven down on this young man and even said, "He would no longer compromise..." Tears are coming down this guy's face. This is fantastic because after the prayer, he asked if he could sit with her in church. They sat on the front row. I can only imagine... I love sitting next to 70-year-old Pentecostal women during worship. You get involved with it, if you know what I mean. They're bringing you into the worship experience. During the last song, they took him out back to the green room and grandma follows.

He asks, "Would you pray with me again before I leave?"

But do you have that type of walk with Jesus that people don't just accept what you believe, they don't just take a prayer you offer. More than that, they want more of it. You have left that in them that they're now requesting that of you. That's the sweet aroma of Christ. I pray this word picture is in your mind tomorrow night as you watch Hillary Clinton versus Donald Trump.

Father, it's in the name of Jesus, the one who has won the victory for us, that we pray. We walk in victory behind him as champions, as victors, not as prisoners. We are grateful that we get to leave here today to take the knowledge we have of Jesus and to be a sweet aroma everywhere we go. I just pray for anyone that right now the Holy Spirit is calling them by their name and by their odor. For some, it's their mouth. For some, it's their habit. For some, it's a behavior that they need to end immediately. For some, it's just the tone of their voice when they speak to their family and friends.

Whatever the odor is in them right now, I pray the Holy Spirit calls them by name and today they confess that before you, and they become the sweet aroma of Christ, spreading knowledge of you everywhere they go this week.

It is in the name of Jesus that everyone agreed and said... Amen.