

# The Aroma of Christ

*King Jesus, Pt. 13*

*2 Corinthians 2:14-17*

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# I. INTRODUCTION

- a. This morning, we will be concluding the second chapter of the King Jesus sermon series.**
- i. If you remember, this sermon series is all about what it means to submit our entire lives to the Lordship of Jesus as our King.
  - ii. And as we have been working through these two chapters, we have been building a theological foundation.
    - Every single sermon has been summarized with a short theological statement that helps us to remember what we believe about who God is, who we are, and how God has called us to live our lives.
    - And this morning, as we conclude chapter two, I am going to insert into this theological foundation that we have been building, the last building block.
      1. You'll see in your notes, we have listed all of the theological statements and gave you a space to write in this week's statement.
      2. And if you have missed any of these sermons, I do encourage you to go to our website and get caught up.
  - iii. **Because here is what I want to accomplish with this Sermon Series.**
    - I don't just want to show us theologically what it means for Jesus to be our King.
      1. I want to show us practically in everyday life how Jesus is our King.



- And so, we've been building this theological foundation and after a brief break through the month of August, we are going to return to the King Jesus Series in September with Chapter Three, entitled the King Reigns.
  1. And through this chapter, we are going to focus on a number of specific topics and situations that we all face in life.
  2. Topics like work, suffering, sexuality, relationships, anger, money, doubt and a number of other topics.
  3. And what we want to do is study what the Scriptures have to say about that topic and also stand upon the theological foundation that we have been building in this series to understand how we should navigate these situations in our life with Jesus as our King.
- And so, this morning, I am excited to add this last theological building block so we can move to chapter three in September.

**b. We began this series with chapter one entitled “The King Rejected.”**

- i. And we studied how God created us and how we rejected Him as our King and in order to be our own King.
- ii. And Chapter Two was entitled “The King Redeems” and we have been studying how God is eager to restore us to His Kingdom.
  - And he does this by sending His Son Jesus to give of his life to forgive us and to show us the way of the Kingdom of God and that there is everlasting joy in following Him and making Him the King of our life.



- iii. And last Sunday, we studied one of two responses that we have when we come to faith in Christ and accept His forgiveness.
- The first response was: “I will surrender all to King Jesus and make Him the center of my life.”
    1. And we looked at how we actually do that.
  - And this morning, we are going to look at the second response that we have when we come to faith in Christ.
    1. And that is today’s theological statement and the final in our foundation:
    2. *“I will commit to the church and we will be the aroma of Christ together.”*
  - And you say, aroma? What do you mean by that?
    1. Well, that brings us to our text this morning.

## **II.2 CORINTHIANS 2:14-17**

**a. In 2 Corinthians, Paul is writing to the church in Corinth and he encourages the church with a truth that he finds encouragement in when it comes to His ministry:**

i. **Read 2 Corinthians 2:14-17.**

- Paul says that the purpose of the church and the purpose of our ministry should be to spread the aroma...the fragrance of Christ and His Kingdom to the world.



1. And there are going to be people who will smell that fragrance, be attracted to the church, hear the gospel, and come to faith.
  2. And there are going to be people who smell that fragrance, and because they hate God, they will be repulsed and ultimately perish.
- But what we see is that one of the purposes of the church is to be the aroma of Christ to the world.

**b. So, our church offices are just down the street and right next to Guapos Rotisserie Chicken.**

- i. And I always make fun of Nick for this...
  - Because every time him and I are walking out of our office together and if the wind is blowing in the right direction...
  - Nick always goes, without fail, “Aw man! Do you smell that! That smells amazing!”
  - Because we’re smelling that chicken and it does smell amazing and it makes us crave a half chicken from Guapos with some Yucca Fries.
  - The aroma draws us in.
- ii. And here is Paul’s vision for the church...that it would be filled with people who live their lives together in such a way that puts out an aroma of what the Kingdom of God is like.
  - And that when people get a whiff of that aroma, when they experience the church, they get a whiff, a taste of the Kingdom of God.



- Because the church is filled with people who have submitted their entire lives to King Jesus and follow Him.
- iii. **The question is, does the church, smell like, feel like, give us a taste of the Kingdom of God?**
- The Kingdom of God being paradise.
    1. A place where you are fully known and fully loved.
    2. A place where your soul is at peace and there is no fear, no self-consciousness, no insecurity.
    3. A place where there no division, no prejudice, no agenda other than celebrating our God and enjoying Him.
  - Let's be honest. If you polled humanity, I'm not sure a very high percentage of people on this planet would say that when they think about the Church, it would be a similar experience to passing a Cinnabon at the mall, right?
- iv. **But, let's think about this for a second.**
- When we look at our text this morning, what we don't read is that the church should be a similar experience to passing a Cinnabon at the mall...because everyone loves that experience.
  - What we read in our text is that the church should spread the aroma of Christ and the Kingdom of God...
    1. And to some people that aroma is going to draw them in and to others that aroma is going to repulse them.



2. However, some churches try to be Cinnabon and create an experience for people that will be pleasing to everyone, and draw everyone in, and work very hard to be sure that there is no one that might be repulsed or offended by their ministry.
  3. While other churches, if I'm honest, are so entrenched in their brand of fundamentalism and prejudice, that it's like walking into the locker room at the gym and most people are repulsed by it.
    - So, when it comes to this call upon the church to be the aroma of the Kingdom of God, there is a balance that we need to be aware of.
      1. We need to make sure that even though we say we smell like the Kingdom of God, that we actually smell like the Kingdom of God.
    - Now I could spend a 20-part sermon series on different Scriptures about how the church can be the aroma of Christ to the world.
    - And so, this morning, I just want to give us two ways that we are the aroma of Christ and His Kingdom that I think we can see here in our text this morning.
- v. **And so here they are....**
- We are the aroma of Christ and His Kingdom to the world around us in our love for one another and in our love for the outsider.



### **III. LOVE**

#### **a. But, before we dig into those two, let me define this word love for you.**

- i. Our passage this morning calls the church the aroma of Christ.
  - So, when I talk about the way the church loves people...I am specifically talking about the way Jesus loves people.
- ii. **And there are two ways that I want to highlight how Jesus loves people.**
  - And this is really important.
  - Because it is when we emphasize one aspect of the love of Jesus over another aspect of the love of Jesus...that we begin to be unbalanced.
  - These two aspects of Jesus' love need to hold each other in tension. They need to be a checks and balances on one another.
  - And when we go with one at the expense of the other, we are not loving as Jesus loved, and we are not the aroma of God's Kingdom.

#### **b. The two aspects of Jesus's love that I am talking is being present and telling the truth.**

- i. Jesus loved us and the people around him through being fully present with them and also through telling the truth, even if it would get Him killed.
  - And this morning I want to talk about how we love one another through presence and truth.
  - And I want to talk about how we love the outsider through presence and truth.



- ii. And I want to show us that when we emphasize presence or truth at the expense of the other, we no longer are the aroma or Christ or His Kingdom.
  - Because, as we can see in the life of Jesus, when we love with both presence and truth, it draws some in and it repels others.

## **IV. LOVE FOR ONE ANOTHER**

### **a. We are the aroma of the Kingdom of God when we love one another with presence and truth.**

- i. Jesus says in John 13:34-35 - *“<sup>34</sup> A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. <sup>35</sup> By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”*
  - The way that we love one another in the church broadcasts some sort of testimony to the world.

### **b. So, let's talk about our presence with one another...**

- i. One of the things that I love about the Bible, is that, with the exception of Jesus, it very bluntly shares with us the flaws of its greatest heroes.
  - One of the greatest examples of this is Jesus with His disciples.
    1. Jesus picks 12 unremarkable young men and spends 3 years with them.
    2. He is present with them, not just physically, but also spiritually and emotionally.



3. He knows these disciples, and their stories, and their flaws, and their fears, and their strengths.

## ii. I love the story of Peter walking on Water in Matthew 14.

- Peter was always the overzealous guy who needed opportunities to fail in order to learn.
  1. Jesus knew this about Peter, not just because Jesus was all-knowing, but because of his presence and experience with Him
- And one day, the disciples saw Jesus walking on water and when Peter saw Him, of course he was the guy who also wanted to walk on water.
  1. Let's read the text - Matthew 14:28-31a -  
"28 And Peter answered him, "Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water." 29 He said, "Come." So Peter got out of the boat and walked on the water and came to Jesus. 30 But when he saw the wind, he was afraid, and beginning to sink he cried out, "Lord, save me." 31 Jesus immediately reached out his hand and took hold of him..."
- Jesus was present with Peter. Physically and spiritually.
  1. Jesus knew that this moment that Peter was going to have in the water would eventually be significant to His faith.
- And look here, Jesus' presence with Peter gives Jesus the credibility to speak truth to Peter in the moment.



1. Because I didn't read all of v.31, look at it again - *"<sup>31</sup> Jesus immediately reached out his hand and took hold of him, saying to him, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?"*
- What does Jesus do? He speaks truth!!
  1. A truth that probably was hard for Peter to swallow and also probably injured his pride.
  2. But it was a truth that Peter needed to hear and Jesus loved Peter in this moment through His presence and speaking truth.

**c. Now, just imagine with me if we loved each other like this.**

- i. Being present with one another and speaking truth to one another.
  - Because if you think about it, we have a hard time doing both.
- ii. In our culture, being present with one another is not a given.
  - We're busy. Our schedules are full. Our devices and technology fractures our presence.
    1. So, not only are we not as present with one another physically, but definitely emotionally and spiritually.
    2. We just don't know each that deeply.
  - Presence takes intentionality and sacrifice.
- iii. But, what's also not helpful is being strong when it comes to our presence with one another, and yet refusing to speak truth to one another.



- Because, the reason we may be fearful about speaking truth to one another is we don't want to offend one another and risk the relationship.
  - So, it is easier to keep everything on the surface, to never challenge each other, to always make sure our presence with one another is light and easy.
  - But the truth is, that's a façade. The relationship is a façade if you have to withhold truth to maintain presence.
- iv. **See, a healthy relationship has presence and truth. And here's why.**
- Presence kills assumptions and truth kills the façade.
  - When I am present with someone and know them deeply, then when I speak truth to them, it won't be based off of assumptions.
    1. For example, let's say you struggle with heavy social anxiety and that sometimes causes you to not come to church on Sundays.
    2. If I have not had any presence with you and gotten to know that this is a struggle for you, I might make all sorts of assumptions about you.
    3. I might assume your standoffish, instead of shy.
    4. I might assume you don't value the church.
    5. And so, if I ever say something to you in the name of truth but have not been present with you, then I am going to deeply hurt you.
  - But truth also kills the façade. It makes the relationship real. It forces the relationship to deal with challenges and grow.



1. Think of the same example. Let's say I know your struggle. I know you. We've spent time together. And yet I never enter in to that struggle, acknowledge that it is not good to neglect gathering with the church as God's Word says, and try to help where I can.
  2. Is that relationship real?
  3. Is our friendship so fragile that truth might break it?
- v. **See when the church can learn to love one another through presence and truth, we show something different to the world.**
- We show that our love for one another is not just a selfish love...but an other-worldly love...something that is only made possible by the gospel of Jesus Christ.
    1. Because in the gospel, Jesus became a man and was present with us so that he could offer himself on the cross to pay for our sins.
    2. And there is no truth that one could speak to us in the church that would be as humbling as the truth of the Gospel.
    3. Because the truth of the Gospel is that Jesus had to die on our behalf.
    4. That was how grave our sin was and that was how deeply Jesus loved us.
  - So, the Gospel allows us to love one another and the Gospel allows us to receive truth from one another because being deeply loved and also being deeply challenged are not categories that are opposed to each other.
    1. Gospel people are humble people who can handle truth.



## **V. LOVE FOR THE OUTSIDER**

**a. And learning to love one another in this way is also going to deeply impact the way we love the outsider.**

- i. And what I mean by the outsider is those who do not believe.
- ii. And if we look at Jesus, we see Jesus love the outsider with both presence and in speaking truth.
  - How many times do we read in the Gospels about Jesus spending time with people who were not part of the religious in-crowd. Jesus having meals with the “big sinner.” The tax collectors, and prostitutes, and those who are considered unfaithful.
  - And how many times do we see the religious elite, the pharisees, the fundamentalist chastise Jesus for being present with these people.

**b. The church has had an interesting relationship with people on the outside over the years.**

- i. On one hand, there are many churches who see Jesus’ presence with the sinful and the broken and they have centered all of their theology and ministry practice on that.
  - Because Jesus ate with people that the fundamentalist despised, they are going to be like Jesus and not like the fundamentalists.
    1. Radically inclusive. Accepting of all. Affirming of any lifestyle.
    2. Jesus loved all, so we love of all.



- The problem is, they have emulated how Jesus was present with people on the outside, but ignored how Jesus spoke the truth to people as well.
  1. They are not the aroma of Christ and His Kingdom. They are trying to be like a Cinnabon, and be attractive to all, by not risking repelling any through truth.
- ii. **On the other hand, there are many churches who see how Jesus spoke truth, and they have centered all of their theology and ministry practice on that.**
  - Those progressive churches care only about being nice but don't speak any truth.
    1. Well, we are going to speak truth and rebuke anyone who don't believe right or live right.
  - The problem is, they have emulated how Jesus spoke truth to people but not His presence with those people.
    1. They are not the aroma of Christ and His Kingdom, either.
- iii. **In John 8, we read the story of the woman caught in adultery and brought before Jesus.**
  - The Pharisees wanted Jesus to condemn her and stone her to death as is given in the Law.
  - And Jesus famously said to the crowd, He who is without sin, cast the first stone.
    1. And obviously the crowd left.



- And look at what Jesus says to the woman:
  1. John 8:10-11 – *“<sup>10</sup> Jesus stood up and said to her, “Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?” <sup>11</sup> She said, “No one, Lord.” And Jesus said, “Neither do I condemn you; go, and from now on sin no more.”*
- You see that? Presence, grace, kindness, gentleness...and truth...adultery is a sin...go sin no more.

**c. Over the last few decades, our country has been going through a moral shift.**

- i. See, when I was in high school, if you cared about sexual purity...if you had a sexual ethic...you were considered to be moral. Weird, yes, but also moral...you were the goody goody.
  - You could say that when it came to sexual ethics back then, the right had the moral authority.
- ii. But that’s changed now. Now, if you have a sexual ethic that contains any sort of limitation or constraints, then that is considered immoral, offensive, even oppressive.
  - The left has grabbed the moral authority on sexual ethics in our country.
- iii. And so, it can be very easy for people in the church to respond to this by believing that the right needs to reclaim the moral authority in our country and we need to go back to the way it used to be!
  - But not so fast! I don’t think that is true.



- I think the extreme when it comes to sexual ethics that we're seeing today on the left is a response to the extreme that we saw from the right in the past.
  1. Today, the left values presence. Inclusion for all. Don't challenge. Don't speak truth. Don't risk offending.
  2. But back then, when the right had the moral authority, there was a fear of presence. You had to accept the truth before we would get to know you and spend time with you.
  3. And a lot of people were burned by the church because they were shamed before anyone ever got to know their name.
  4. Many people were repelled by the aroma of the church, but it was not the aroma of Christ.
- iv. **The left is always going to value presence and inclusion and the right is always going to value truth and exclusion and Jesus shows us a way where we can value both...they need to live in tension.**
  - And what that looks like is we can love people, serve people, spend time with people, be their friends, know them deeply, and also speak truth to them that they may not agree with or accept.
- v. **At Grace Hill, you can come to this church if you:**
  1. Are gay.
  2. Struggle with your gender.
  3. Are an addict.
  4. Are prideful.
  5. Your marriage is struggling.



6. You don't believe in God.
  7. You struggle with anger.
  8. You're in legal trouble.
  9. You're an undocumented immigrant.
- We want you here. You don't have to have it all together to be here. We want to know you. We want to befriend you. We want to share our life with you. We want to know your story. We want to share our story with you and the things that we struggle with. We want to share meals and laugh with you.
    1. And at Grace Hill, we will preach the truth that we all need to hear from God's Word.
    2. And that truth will challenge all of us, call all of us to repentance, and that's because we love you.

vi. **It's both presence and truth.**

- If we emphasize presence at the expense of truth, then we not the aroma of Christ and His Kingdom.
  1. Because in the Kingdom, God is King, and we will live according to His ways for His glory with Him at the center.
  2. As Paul says in our passage here in 2 Corinthians 2:17 - that would mean we were peddlers of God's Word.
  3. Using it to draw a crowd, but not preaching its truth.
- But if we emphasize truth over presence, then we are also not the aroma of Christ and His Kingdom.
  1. Because in the Kingdom, our performance is not a prerequisite for the grace of God.



2. The truth is, that all of us were loved by God and recipients of His grace, while we were still sinning according to Romans 5.
3. It was while we were dead that God made us alive in Christ according to Ephesians 2.
4. To emphasize truth over presence is to forget and reject the Gospel.

## **VI. CONCLUSION**

### **a. And so, Grace Hill, here is my challenge to us this morning as a church.**

- i. Are we the aroma of Christ to the world?
  - Is this a place where we love and are present with each other no matter what we're struggling with?
    1. Do we put conditions upon our presence?
  - Is this a place where we speak the truth of God's Word to each other and we receive it with humility instead of defense?
    1. Or is it a risk around here for someone to speak truth to us?
  - Is this a place where the broken, the guilty, the ashamed, the confused, and the poor can come and receive the same kind of presence and love?
    1. Or are we uncomfortable with people who are different from us?
  - Is this a place where we will not waiver from truth, even if the truth causes some to leave...as our passage in 2 Corinthians tells us?



1. Or are we too afraid of rejection?
- ii. Because when we love one another and the world with both presence and truth, we love as Jesus loved and we spread the fragrance of His Kingdom to the world.
    - And Grace Hill, that is our mission here in Herndon.

## **VII. PRAY**

