

Read: 2 Corinthians 2:12-3:6

The Sweet Smell of the Gospel

2 Corinthians 2:14-16

But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumphal procession in Christ and through us spreads everywhere the fragrance of the knowledge of him. For we are to God the aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing. To the one we are the smell of death; to the other, the fragrance of life. And who is equal to such a task?

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

When a general returned to Rome after he won a battle, he would lead a parade through the streets of the capital (kind of like Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade). People packed the streets to watch. What did they see? They saw carts and wagons stacked with gold and silver from the conquered land. Dancers went in front of and behind the chariot of the conqueror, carrying huge garlands of flowers and pots of fragrant incense that filled the air with an intoxicating aroma. Behind the fragrant flowers marched thousands of captives, divided into two groups:

- The first group who followed behind were the lucky ones who would live.
- The second group were not so lucky. Shackled together, they dragged heavy chains. They were doomed for execution.

As the procession weaved its way through the cheering crowds, the incense pots and fragrant flowers were to the first group a fragrance of life, while the same aroma was to the second group a fragrance of death.

Today, you are part of a triumph parade. It began when an angel at the empty tomb said, "He is NOT here. He is risen!" Every day since, the resurrection parade led by Christ continues. You always fall short. Jesus did not. When you think of homework, you cry out, "It's never finished!" When Jesus thought of your sin, he cried out, "It is finished!" You're *in* the parade directly behind the Conqueror himself. It means you're part of the first group. You get to live!

As you walk the parade route today, at whom will you be pointing? When you point at yourself, you're saying, "Look at me!" When you point at Christ the Conqueror, you're saying, "Look at him!" And when you point out Christ to others, you're really pointing them to the gospel, which is God's power to save. You're inviting them to live with Jesus.

But I warn you, the reaction to your pointing to Jesus will be mixed. Why do some people believe Jesus and find the fragrance of life? Why do others reject Jesus and only smell of death? How sad. It doesn't seem to make sense.

But the victory parade goes on. You are still a part of it. Jesus promises to *ALWAYS lead us* in triumph. That's why it is so important to keep pointing more people to Jesus. May God bless your efforts as you bring the sweet smell of the gospel to those around you!

The questions below are to help families discuss this devotion. The questions are divided by age group as suggestions, but anyone could reflect on any of the questions as they desire.

Questions for the Younger Children

- Recount the last time you were at a parade.
- Why does Jesus lead Easter's parade?

Questions for Elementary Age Children

- Describe the two groups following behind the conqueror in today's parade. In which group are you?
- Why is it so important for you to point Jesus out to others?

Questions for Middle School and Above

- Why do some people believe Jesus and find the fragrance of life? Why do others reject Jesus and only smell of death?
- Give two ways you can smell like the fragrance of Jesus in what you say or what you do.

Closing Prayer:

Dear God, help me to spread the fragrance of life in Jesus so that many more may believe in him as their Savior. Amen.

Hymn: CW 560:1,2 – I Hear the Savior Calling

I hear the Savior calling! The gospel comes to me.
My eyes once closed in blindness are opened now to see
That I myself was helpless to live eternally,
But, dying, Christ did save me, and now he calls for me!

I hear the Savior calling! He leads a soul to me,
A soul in bitter anguish, one needing to be free.
The gift I have to offer is Christ, my Lord's decree
That all have been forgiven My Savior calls for me!