

# **Thought for the Day: 6 – 12 July 2020**

## **by Forbes Mutch, Lay Leader of Worship at St Andrew's**

*Every morning I look in the mirror. What do I think about?*



### **Monday – our hair**

The way everyone has been dealing with their hair over the past four months has been one of the most noticeable features of lockdown. Hairdressers have been closed and the approach to this isolation inconvenience has been varied.

Some people have let their hair grow. Others (mostly men) have shaved it off. Some have persuaded their partners to pick up the kitchen scissors, with varying effect - sometimes good, sometimes embarrassing (the son of my boss called his mother a hedgehog after a home cut).

Hairstyles are one of the most unique characteristics of individuals and are often the thing we notice about people when we see them for the first time. That person has long hair, this person has no hair; that person has curly hair, this person is blonde.

The full genetic basis for hair colour, style and shape is complex and not fully understood by scientists. But what is known for certain is that the hair on everyone's head and body (even if they seemingly have no hair) is unique to that person. Our hair is ours and ours only.

This reminds me that every person who lives is made in God's image but we are, at the same time, all different. When we comb our hair (or polish our heads), we should thank God for our uniqueness and know that every one of us is special to Him (and He likes our hair, whatever it looks like).

*Creator God, thank you that we are all different and it doesn't matter in your eyes.*

*Every morning I look in the mirror. What do I think about?*



## **Tuesday – our eyes**

A young friend of ours, hearing *Today in Parliament* for the first time on Radio 4 a few years ago, was surprised to hear how Parliament voted on important legislation. She heard: *Eyes to the right, nose to the left*. How on earth, she thought, can anyone count the eyes of all those MPs and see how many noses are pointing left?

It's a funny story, but it reminds me how often our eyes - even if we are partially-sighted or blind - can reflect what we feel.

We might catch someone's eye or we may cry our eyes out if we don't. Our eyes can grow dreamy with love or blaze with anger. If we're lucky, we may be born with stars in our eyes and, hopefully, we have all been the apple of someone's eye. Our eyes are also an important part of the way we smile.

In a world where so many people outside are wearing facemasks that hide many of our facial features, our eyes gain a greater prominence as the one true reflector of who we are.

We can rarely control the look in our eyes, so...

*Loving father, may we see this world through your eyes and always reflect the joy of its creation.*

*Every morning I look in the mirror. What do I think about?*



## **Wednesday – our ears**

The lobes on each side of our head are very useful if we need to wear a facemask. But, as you know, this is not the primary function of our ears.

Add the letter 'h' to the word ear and you spell the verb 'hear'. It's not a coincidence. Our ears allow us to process sound.

Ears are complicated, involving the mechanical interaction of muscles, bones, canals and thousands of tiny hairs. It's not surprising that the insides of our ears wear out with age and 50% of people over 75 suffer from some degree of hearing loss.

For many animals, this would be life threatening, as hearing is often the first line of defence against predators. For humans, however, physical hearing is useful but not essential to staying alive.

Even if we are deaf, there is another dimension to hearing which applies to us all. The phrase 'I hear you' usually means 'I understand you' and often 'I agree with you'.

When we hear, we shouldn't forget to listen as well. There's a difference. To 'listen' to someone, either when they speak or sing or write or make gestures with their hands or eyes, will always lead to learning and a greater understanding. You should try it sometime!

*Loving Father, when we hear you, may we listen to you. And when we listen to you, may we understand what you are saying.*

*Every morning I look in the mirror. What do I think about?*



## **Thursday – our nose**

A short time ago (I wish), when I was around 9-years-old, I was playing football in the park with some friends when a West Indian boy spontaneously joined our game. No-one minded. He was a good player and he laughed a lot.

After our kick-about, we walked off the ground in a group and I put my arm round his shoulders, as boys do at that age. He told me his name and I said: 'Wow, you've got a really flat nose'.

I'm embarrassed about it now but, back then, it was just an innocent observation and, I'm pleased to say, Kentry Alexander from Barbados became one of my closest childhood friends.

Like many of the facial features I've been writing about this week, everyone's nose looks different but is designed to have the same function. It sounds rude, but most of us smell.

Scientists have identified 10 basic odour qualities: fragrant (like flowers), fruity (like apples), citrus (like lemons), woody and resinous (like cut grass), chemical (like bleach), sweet (like chocolate), minty (like the herb), toasted (like almonds), pungent (like cigar smoke) and decayed (like sour milk).

Scents are part of the rich tapestry of life. They don't just help us identify ingredients but are also one of the most common memory triggers. We get a whiff of a particular aroma and remember a place, an occasion, a person, a time in our lives (or whatever). Our world would be so dull without the perfume of life.

*Lord, help us appreciate the joy of the interacting senses that you have created.*

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## **Friday – our mouth**

For most of us, the mouth is one of the most useful and emotive features of our face. Imagine life without a mouth - no talking, no eating, no smiling; no kissing. The thought is unbearable.

During a recent hospital appointment at the QEII in Welwyn, I was given a facemask that covered my mouth (and also made my glasses steam up, but that's irrelevant). Everyone there - all staff and patients - were obliged to wear masks and this muffled conversation. It was uncomfortable but, at the same time, strangely safe. People only said what was important.

Our brains are ultimately responsible, but our mouths are often the delivery mechanism for the things we regret most in life. We say things that we shouldn't say. There is a song by the 1980s rock band *The Smiths* called *Bigmouth Strikes Again*. The lead singer (Morrissey) sings that he has no right to take his place in the human race because of something he has said.

How many times have we felt like that?

The flipside of this is that the mouth is also one of the most sensual parts of our body. Our lips are personal and we offer them only to people we like or love fully. Consider Solomon's Song of Songs:

*Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth –  
For his love is more delightful than wine.*

Sure, without the risky mouth, temptation would diminish; we would lose weight and we would be less offensive. But wouldn't life be boring? We just have to keep our mouths under control.

*Oh Lord, guard us against misusing the features that you have so generously given us.*

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## **Saturday – our face**

There it is, then - a whole face. It's not my face (I think you'll agree, it's more attractive) but it has all the components that I've been talking about this week: hair, eyes, ears, nose, mouth.

Like our bodies, our faces are the sum of different features, and they have an equal part to play in the persona that we present to the outside world.

The particular face you see today (it's my wife, Jenny, by the way) started singing a traditional Sunday school song the other day (don't ask me why):

*Head, shoulders, knees and toes, knees and toes,  
And eyes and ears and mouth and nose  
Head, shoulders, knees and toes.*

This reminded me of what the Apostle Paul said about different parts of the body making a whole body (Romans 12. 4-6) because, in a different context, it applies to the features of our face. Eugene Peterson puts it like this in *The Message*: 'Each part [of a human body] gets its meaning from the body as a whole, not the other way around.' Substitute 'face' for 'body' and you get what I mean.

God made us in the image of himself, so when we stare into the mirror we should use our whole face to smile and say to ourselves: *That's God, that is.*

*Loving Father, help us accept and enjoy our faces and the way we look, because that is the way you created us and want us to be.*

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## **Sunday – facing the music**

The features of our faces - hair, eyes, ears, nose, mouth - are instruments of perception for the well-known senses of the human body: taste, smell, sight, hearing and touch.

For me, there is another sense that is the most complicated of all - the sense of faith.

Faith is often reflected in our faces so, when Irving Berlin wrote *'There may be troubles ahead, but let's face the music and dance'* I like to think it means that we should challenge the current chaos of the modern world with faith.

Loving Father,

Help us to see your glorious light  
beyond this temporary darkness.

Help us to hear the growing  
strength of your whisper.

Help us to speak with  
words of encouragement.

Help us to remember  
that you are walking with us  
so that we may face  
the music of change  
with courage.

Amen