

Intercessions on 2 May 2021 by Andrew Goodman

Fifth Sunday of Easter

Readings: Acts 8. 26-end & John 15. 1-8

The writer Rhidian Brook's R4 Today Programme Thought for the Day on Friday reflected on his Covid experience of losing taste and smell. He observed:

"A malodorous cloud has hung over many recent news stories, a stench of injustice, a whiff of scandal, the smell of a rat, things that leave a bad taste in the mouth.

"Odours pleasing and poisonous hover over the scene in many a biblical story. Perfumes and pomegranates drip through its pages. But whilst taste and smell are sensual, they also have an ethical and spiritual dimension.

"The word 'offence' has a Hebrew root word meaning 'to smell bad'.

"To offer your service or an act of kindness is described as an aroma pleasing to God.

"The psalmist invites us to "taste and see that the Lord is good"".

Lord, may we be:

".....able to discern the good from the bad, the corrupt from the clean, and remind ourselves that life tasted and smelt good once, and that it can and will again."

Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer**

As the pandemic eases amongst the world's rich, Lord, we join with politicians and scientists urging for rescue

packages to low and middle income countries in Latin America and Africa, and to India, countries where the virus sweeps the world's poor.

The UK government has put out a statement outlining cuts to its foreign aid budget which will only worsen the calamity, making the world even more inequitable and fragmented.

Lord, we join with more than 200 charities to condemn the decision to slash aid and plead for the UK government to reverse the decision.

Our churches' Thought for the Day today reminds us of Isaiah's word's:

*"Learn to do good;
seek justice,
rescue the oppressed,
defend the orphan,
plead for the widow."* (Isaiah 1:17)

Therefore, Lord, we will keep in our prayers people affected by this decision, in particular:

- Humanitarian aid to Yemen cut by 56%.
- Humanitarian funding for Syria halved.
- Funding for the Global Polio Eradication Initiative cut by 95%
- Malaria drug treatments ended and research funding cuts.
- Bilateral country-specific aid to African countries cut by 66%.
- 40% cut in girls education.
- Water, sanitation and hygiene projects cut by more than 80%.
- Funding for the UN agency focused on fighting HIV/Aids cut by over 80%.
- UN's sexual and reproductive health agency funding cut by 85%.

Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer**

The UK government's new anti-protest bill has raised concern and alarm that peaceful protest is being criminalised in the UK.

It is part of a wider global phenomenon in which peaceful environmental protesters are being threatened, silenced and criminalised.

We are aware, Lord, that during the last few years there has been a marked increase in the number of environmental activists killed throughout the world, people working in the defence of land and environmental rights, and the rights of indigenous peoples.

Of the 331 murders registered globally in 2020, just one country, Colombia, had 177 murders (53% of the total).

Lord, we remember the victims:

- That no more people will be affected.
- For strength, courage and protection for communities and community leaders (and their families).
- For peace and wisdom.
- For those who have to relocate (and their families).
- For justice.

Lord, we also remember other 'actors' in the story:

- That perpetrators' will change their attitude, respect others, and stop thinking only about their own profit/benefit.
- That Governments will show care, ensure protection, oppose threats and killings, and bring those who caused harm to justice.
- That businesses, corporations and financiers respect communities, the environment and defenders.
- That churches will respond compassionately and also understand our role in responding corporately to these issues of injustice.

We thank you, Lord, for our right to vote in local elections on Thursday this week. Help us as we try to discern how to vote for the benefit of our local communities, our worldwide neighbours and the planet.

Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer**

Comfort and heal all those who are unwell, including:

Tom, Paul, Dean, Douglas, Claire, Susan, Bernard,
Yvonne, Joe, Pat, Forbes (Snr), Laurel, Imogen, Phil,
Julie, Barbara, Alma, Alan, Andree, Lilla, Paul, Suzanne,
Susan, Tim.

Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer**

We remember in Year's Mind those whose anniversaries fall
at this time:

Syd Elliott, Steven Childs, Win North, Martin Woollard

Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer**

Lord, may we abide in Christ and bear fruit:

- In our worship, whether in our buildings or at home;
- In our families; and
- In our residential, educational and working
communities.

Let us keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ
may give us the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that
we may know him better.

May the eyes of our hearts be enlightened in order that
we may know the hope to which you have called us, the
riches of your glorious inheritance in the saints.

(Based on Ephesians 1:17-18; NIV)

Merciful Father.....**accept these prayers for the sake
of your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen**

Transcript of the Thought for the Day given by Rhidian Brook

R4 Today programme - 30th April 2021

Good morning. I had Covid 3 months ago. Thankfully, it was a mild dose. The only lingering symptoms a loss of taste and smell. This is no great hardship and at first it was faintly amusing. When I told my neighbour I had loss my taste, he said "Don't worry, you've always dressed like that." Apples and onions still taste the same, i.e. of nothing, but at least I can't smell the traffic or the drains. After a few weeks, you get used to it. You forget. You try and get excited about the texture of things. The chewiness of bread. The silkiness of chocolate.

Scientists say you need to retrain the brain by eating strong foods like chilli, mint and oranges. For a few weeks I have literally woken up and smelt the coffee, and it's sort of working - marmalade no longer tastes the same as marmite. Beer tastes like a memory of beer, and my memories of beer are largely good ones.

But taste and smell aren't just about pleasure. They alert us to dangers. The other day, my wife came home to find me sitting in a room that stank of the glue from the building work happening below. I had no idea. I thought I really need to regain my senses, to be able to detect the rank and the rancid. Like the people of Silverdale in Staffordshire where the stench of the nearby landfill has given people headaches, asthma and anxiety, and levels of hydrogen sulphide have been found to be well in excess of guidelines.

Perhaps it is more important not to lose a metaphorical sense of taste and smell. A malodorous cloud has hung over many recent news stories, a stench of injustice, a whiff of scandal, the smell of a rat, things that leave a bad taste in the mouth. And it's all come at once. It is as if our senses dulled during Covid left us unable to notice the smell emanating from the landfill.

Perhaps as people regain them, they are better able to taste what is sour and what is sweet, to sniff out the fragrant and the foul. Perhaps as a nation we are actually waking up and smelling the coffee.

Odours pleasing and poisonous hover over the scene in many a biblical story. Perfumes and pomegranates drip through its pages. But whilst taste and smell are sensual, they also have an ethical and spiritual dimension. The word 'offence' has a Hebrew root word meaning 'to smell bad'. To offer your service or an act of kindness is described as an aroma pleasing to God. The psalmist invites us to "taste and see that the Lord is good".

The key in all this is that we are able to discern the good from the bad, the corrupt from the clean, and remind ourselves that life tasted and smelt good once, and that it can and will again.