

**Notes for Children's Talk & Sermon Outline for
Sunday, 26 September 2021**

Children's Talk: Thank the Lord for Smell and Taste

- We're going to be talking about our five senses for the next few weeks.
- Can you tell me what our five senses are? (Sight, hearing, smell, taste, touch)

- Today, we're going to talk about smell and taste.
- What are some nice smells?
- What are some bad smells?

- What are some good tastes?
- What are some bad tastes?

- You can play the game of trying to figure out what these smells are and whether or not you would like to eat what's in these containers.

- I wonder why the Lord gave us the ability to smell and to taste?
 - One thing that smell and taste tells us is whether something is good for us or not—whether it's going to make us sick or not.

- The Lord has also given us a spiritual sense of smell—an ability to tell if something is good or not.
 - But sometimes we can get confused about what is good for us and what is not.
 - Something that might seem good is actually not.

- Isaiah 5:20-21 (NKJV)
 - ²⁰ Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil;
Who put darkness for light, and light for darkness;
Who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!
 - ²¹ Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes,
And prudent in their own sight!

- Some examples are books, TV shows, and movies.
 - We can think that something is good if we like it but sometimes those things actually stink and aren't good for us.
 - If there's a lot of people being cruel to each other.
 - Or if there's a lot of creepy stuff—vampires, ghosts, zombies.

- We can thank the Lord that He gave us the sense of smell and of taste so that we can tell what's good for us and what's not.
- *Amen.*

The Five Senses, Part 1: Taste and Smell

A Sermon by Pastor Malcolm G. Smith
26 September 2021

Intro

- Have you ever thought about the dangers involved with losing your sense of smell?
- The challenges involved with being blind or deaf are pretty obvious but the loss of smell by comparison can seem relatively minor.
 - And maybe it is minor by comparison, but it's not actually a minor problem to lose one's sense of smell.
- There's the loss of enjoyment of good smells and good tastes (because a lot of our sensation of taste comes from smell).
- But there's also the loss of the ability to recognise things that are dangerous to us.
 - People who have lost their sense of smell cannot tell when there's a gas leak, cannot tell when something is on fire in another room, cannot tell that some milk or meat that they're about to eat has gone off.
- There are similar dangers when we lose our spiritual sense of smell and I wonder if many people in the world have this problem and don't even realise it.

Why a Sermon Series on the Five Senses?

- We're starting a sermon series today on the five senses.
 - It's not going to be a comprehensive covering of the topic; it will be a few reflections on each of the senses.
- I acknowledge that this might not seem like the most relevant of topics.
 - But, if I were to ask you to reflect on what your life is like right now, you would likely think about it and talk about it in ways that you have before many, many times.
 - We can tend to get stuck in mental ruts with these things.
- However, if I were to ask you how your life is going in terms of how keen your spiritual sense of smell is, I would guess that you haven't thought about things in that way very much.
 - And maybe you'll gain some useful insights in the process.
- First, we'll talk about the five senses in general.
- Then we'll talk a fair amount about smell.
 - Fair warning so that you're not caught off-guard: this is going to get into some heavy stuff like adultery.
- And then we'll end by talking a little bit about taste.

General Concepts About The Five Senses

- Often when we talk about the five senses in church, we're talking about needing to rise above them.
 - You know we might say that we need to rise above just what looks good, feels good and sounds good.
 - Or we might say that we need to be willing to believe in more than just what we can see with our two eyes.

- But, the teachings of the New Church also say that the five senses can give us a way of better understanding what goes on in our spirits.
 - *Secrets of Heaven* §4404
 - Each of the five external senses—touch, taste, smell, hearing, and sight—has a correspondence with one of the internal senses.
- When two things correspond it means that they are performing the same sort of function but on different levels of existence.
- You have internal or spiritual senses and the best way to understand what they are and how they work is to understand the natural senses that correspond to them each of them or that does the same sort of thing on the natural level.
- *Secrets of Heaven* §6013:2
 - [E]xteriorly,... a person is so created that he conforms to an image of the world.... The ear has been made to conform to the whole nature of air and sound; the eye to conform to the whole nature of the ether and light; the tongue to every perception of particles dissolved and suspended in fluids; the nostrils to the perception of particles suspended in the atmosphere; touch to the perception of cold and heat, and also of weights; and so on. Just as a person's external senses conform to an entire image of the natural world, so his internal senses, which are those of his understanding and will, have been so created that they conform to an entire image of heaven. They have been created like this so that the human being as an individual... may be a recipient of Divine Good from the Lord.
- Your natural senses are designed to help you receive information from the natural world; your spiritual senses are designed to help you receive information from heaven.
- Here's a passage that provides more detail about what our natural and spiritual senses are designed to receive.
- In each case it talks about what pleasurable things the natural sense enjoys taking in and the spiritual love that that arises from.
 - *Married Love* §291
 - Every love has its own special sense. The love of seeing, arising from a love of understanding, has the sense of sight; and the things that give it pleasure are symmetries and qualities of beauty. The love of hearing, arising from a love of listening and complying, has the sense of hearing; and the things that give it pleasure are harmonies. The love of identifying odours floating about in the air, arising from a love of perceiving, has the sense of smell; and the things that give it pleasure are fragrances. The love of nourishing oneself, arising from a love of filling oneself with good qualities and truths, has the sense of taste; and the things that give it pleasure are fine foods. The love of identifying objects, arising from a love of looking out and protecting oneself, has the sense of touch; and the things that give it pleasure are sensations that tickle and tingle.
- Did you catch what our sense of smell and our sense of taste correspond to?
 - Our sense of smell corresponds to a love of perceiving.
 - Our sense of taste corresponds to a love of filling oneself with good qualities and truths.
 - Let's talk about each of these senses in more detail, starting with smell.

Our Sense of Smell

- It's interesting, our senses of smell and taste are both quite remarkable.
- Both use what are called chemoreceptors or things designed to receive and process chemical information—either in the air that we breathe in or in the food that we eat.
 - Our sense of sight uses photoreceptors to receive light waves.
 - And our senses of hearing and touch use what are called mechanoreceptors to detect sound waves moving through the air and pressure.
- If you think about it, your phone has devices for sensing light waves (the camera), sound waves (the microphone), and touch (the touch screen and buttons) but it doesn't have ways of sensing smell and taste.
 - And I don't think you can buy a device that's as good at analysing as many different chemicals as quickly as the nose can.
- The teachings of the New Church explain that spiritual smelling has to do with perception—being able to tell what's going on in a situation.
 - Intriguingly we use smelling imagery in our everyday language to talk about people being perceptive.
 - We might say that someone “has a good nose on them” to mean that they are good at figuring out what's going on.
 - Or if someone has a sense that something is wrong in a situation they might say, “Something smells off....”
 - There can be a whole lot of different dynamics going on in a given situation but a perceptive person can identify all of them, like a skilled wine sommelier can pick out all of the different flavour notes in a wine, including being able to tell if something has gone wrong in the wine making process.
- In general our spiritual sense of smell can pick up on perceptions of good from heaven or perceptions of evil from hell (*Secrets of Heaven* §4628).
 - These seem to relate to the two main roles of our sense of smell—to help us find good things and to help us avoid dangerous things.

Avoiding Dangerous Things

- We can have a pretty immediate disgust reaction to certain smells.
 - Think of sewerage or rotten eggs.
 - Just smelling those kinds of things can make us want to vomit.
 - And that's good—we need to keep away from those things in the natural world.
 - If we do, we'll stay healthier.
- In the spiritual world there are also things that stink terribly and we need to learn to perceive that and keep away from them for our own spiritual safety.
 - For example, we read this:
 - *Secrets of Heaven* §7161:4
 - [The fact that] people who are in evils and from that in falsities have a stink, is very evident from the hells ...which are called excremental, where [there] are adulterers and those who have filthy pleasures as their purpose.

- If we're married, the idea of cheating on our partner or even lusting after someone else should disgust us.
 - We should be able to perceive that anything that would make our eyes wander to some other person is actually from hell and smells like a ruptured septic tank because it's just as poisonous.
- But the scary thing is that there's something called olfactory fatigue.
 - It means that the longer you're exposed to a given smell, the less you notice it.
 - I remember going on a field trip as a kid to a sewerage treatment plant.
 - It stank badly but by the time we had been there for a while it didn't seem to stink nearly as badly as when we first arrived.
- The more we expose ourselves to adulterous things, the less we will notice how toxic it is.
 - So be careful what movies and TV shows you watch and what books you read.
 - Disgust and revulsion are the appropriate responses to adultery every time.
- It's difficult, though, because sometimes our sense of smell has not just become less sensitive; sometimes we come to enjoy disgusting smells.
 - We catch a whiff of something hellish and it smells really delightful to us.
 - We need to learn to block our noses against those appealing smells.
 - There's a very useful passage in the book *Married Love* that talks about what people can do to make it most likely that they will be able to find an internal marriage on earth.
 - It says that this doesn't happen for most people, except
 - *Married Love* §49
 - ...in the case of people who from their youth had loved, desired and sought from the Lord a lawful and lovely partnership with one, and who spurn and reject roving lusts as an offense to the nostrils.
 - They reject the desire to wander from their one and only partner as if it were "an offence to the nostrils" or something that smelled terribly bad.
 - It didn't say that the desire to wander to smells bad to these people.
 - It's likely that they would feel like acting on those lusts smells very, very appealing.
 - But they still choose to reject them as if they smelled terrible.
 - They trained themselves to have that reaction.
- Keep this in mind the next time you're scrolling through posts on Instagram, Facebook, or TikTok or when you're deciding which articles to read on News24 or flipping through channels on TV or looking through a list of series or movies you could watch.
 - What do those different pieces of content smell like?
 - Some content might smell genuinely good—like a good, aromatic, interesting meal.
 - Others might be quite innocent and smell like a newborn baby or a garden full of flowers.
 - But those ones that have people wearing not enough clothing, being suggestive, or with a rating for nudity, sex, etc.—those might seem like they smell good but, if they're pulling you away from your partner then try to train your nose to recognise that they actually smell like sewerage.
- When things smell bad, we move away from them and this is good advice for how to handle spiritually dangerous things.

- We can tend to think that we're grown up and that we can handle some questionable content and not be that affected by it.
- Nope, you can't handle it.
- It's safer to have the humility to just try to get as far away from it as you can.
 - Listen to how this passage describes what forgiveness of sins is:
 - *Secrets of Heaven* §9448
 - Being able to be maintained by the Lord in the good of love and the truths of faith and to be withheld from evils and falsities constitutes the forgiveness of sins; and at the same time keeping well away from evil and falsity and detesting them constitutes repentance.
- Before moving on I do want to acknowledge that these are some big topics that I've just opened up.
 - How we relate to our evil and selfish inclinations is a big topic.
 - How we relate to our own past sinful behaviour is a big topic.
 - And how we relate to other people who have sinned is a big topic.
 - It's worth remembering that Jesus still reached out to and loved people who had messed up—even people who had commit adultery.
 - He associated with people that everyone else had shunned.
 - But, at the same time, I think it's fair to say that He didn't lose His sense of smell.
 - He had mercy on people but He also didn't start to think that those things that people had done were fine.
 - As He said to the woman caught in adultery, "Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more" (John 8:11).
- Having a good spiritual nose is not just about avoiding bad things.
 - It's also about learning to pay attention to and move towards things that smell good spiritually.
 - We'll talk about that a bit more as we shift into talking about taste.

Finding Good Things and Making Them Part of Us

- Have you ever gone outside of your house and suddenly been able to tell that one of your neighbours is having a braai?
 - If there weren't walls between the properties and, you know, social norms against it, you could probably follow your nose until you found the source of the delicious smells.
- Your nose would lead you to good things to eat.
- And smell and taste are intimately related.
 - People say that 80% of our experience of taste is actually the effect of our sense of smell.
 - When people lose their sense of taste and smell when they get COVID or other things that inflame their nasal passageways, nothing has happened to their tongue's ability to sense flavour, the whole problem is what has happened to their sense of smell.
- But taste is a lot more intimate of an experience than smell.
 - Smell can still be done at some distance but to taste something requires putting that thing inside of our body.

- Taste is a sense connected to making something a part of us—to consuming it.
 - This is why that passage earlier said that our sense of taste comes from “a love of filling oneself with good qualities and truths” (*Married Love* §210).
 - That’s why we have a sense of taste so that we will enjoy taking in the nutrition that we need for our bodies and for our minds.

- But, of course, I don’t need to tell you that we are not always the best at deciding what’s good for us to eat.
 - We eat junk food.
 - We eat too much.
- And so the Lord says,
 - ² “Why do you spend money for what is not bread,
And your wages for what does not satisfy?
Listen carefully to Me, and eat what is good,
And let your soul delight itself in abundance” (Isaiah 55:2).

- We need to learn to be more discerning about what content we consume, what stuff we make a part of us.
 - Honestly, part of how we figure this out sometimes is by trying something and experiencing the consequences.
 - With natural food it sometimes tastes fine when we’re eating it but later on we are punished for eating that by our digestive system.
 - And so then we know to avoid that food in the future, even if it still might seem appealing to us.

- On the other hand, we might also need to learn to like some foods that initially are not that appetising to us.
 - The Children of Israel were given bread from heaven in the wilderness but they eventually said to Moses, “Our soul loathes this worthless bread” (Numbers 21:5).
 - And sometimes reading the Word can seem pretty dry and tasteless to us and it feels hard to even choke down a few small bites.
 - Given the choice to read the Bible or read a juicy novel, it’s hard to feel like the Bible is going to be worth it.
 - But we can learn to enjoy it and we can eventually come to treasure the Lord’s Word more than any other content we might take in.
 - Part of what might make us start to value the Lord’s Word is when we start to get a feel for how good we feel after we’ve read the Word.
 - Sort of like how much better your body feels when you’ve eaten some good, healthy food, as opposed to some junk food.

- We can hear a person reflecting on the positive effect of the Lord's Word in their life in Psalm 19.
 - Psalm 19:7-10 (NKJV, modified)
 - 7 The law of Jehovah is perfect, converting the soul;
The testimony of Jehovah is sure, making wise the simple;
 - 8 The statutes of Jehovah are right, rejoicing the heart;
The commandment of Jehovah is pure, enlightening the eyes;
 - 9 The fear of Jehovah is clean, enduring forever;
The judgments of Jehovah are true and righteous altogether.
 - 10 More to be desired are they than gold,
Yea, than much fine gold;
Sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb.

Conclusion

- There is a lot more that we could talk about with the senses of smell and taste.
- I hope you've learned some useful things—even just the basic fact that you have spiritual senses, designed to receive heavenly things.
- And I hope that listening to this sermon will encourage you to pay more attention to developing your ability to perceive the real quality of things around you and to be more discerning about what you choose to consume and make a part of you.
- And I hope that you will come to gain a clearer and clearer sense of the value of what the Lord offers you.
 - Psalm 34:8 (NKJV)
 - Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good;
Blessed is the man who trusts in Him!
- *Amen.*