

REDOLENT AFFECT
[written in oral form]

Odorcan mean any type of smell we sense.

Redolent...describes a pleasant / fragrant scent.

Receiving an aroma is very tactile, much like taste or touch.

The odor particles engage our smell sensors, and then our brain interprets it.

Smell has a strong influence on how food tastes, and.... it is also profoundly connected to our memory.

Smell can be powerfully influential in affecting how we think and act.

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A redolent smell is a central part of the episode in the John text.

Jesus was spending time at the home of Lazarus, on his way to Jerusalem. Bethany is very close to Jerusalem.

Lazarus, Martha and Mary were the hosts, and likely other guests are present with Jesus, including Judas.

This Mary is Not Mary Magdalene.

After the meal, Mary brings a pound of costly perfume made of pure nard to Jesus, and pours it out on his feet.

A pound is nearly one half litre; that's a lot of perfume.

**Nard** is made from the flowering plant Spikenard by distilling the crushed roots. The Spikenard plant does not grow locally in that region. In fact, it is grown in high elevations in India, and that is why it is so expensive.

It has a very intense smell, and was often used in the temple and for preparing dead bodies for burial.

Both tend to be holy situations, and therefore the odor should prompt memories of past referent experiences.

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It seems that Mary was overwhelmed by the presence of Jesus. So, filled with a passion to honour Jesus, Mary, *fortunately chose to **not** anoint his head*, but instead poured the perfume out on his feet; she poured it all out. It was a fully invested outpouring.

She poured it all out for Jesus.

Can you imagine what happened? She probably wanted to avoid making a scene and didn't want to assume she had permission to anoint his head, yet instead she's drenched his feet.

The intense aroma is filling the room, saturating every nostril.

Everyone's olfactory [all-factory] senses have drawn all eyes on her, and to make matters worse, there is no towel handy,..... so without thinking, she uses her own hair to mop up the excess that is flowing off Jesus' feet onto the floor.

In a moment of emotional outpouring, Mary has created a commotion by saturating the room with intense perfume and by breaking into uncharted territory with her very intimate encounter with Jesus.

Women were not suppose to approach men without invitation, and this was not just any man. Plus, she touched Jesus' feet. Feet were regarded as a very humble part of the body, and to make matters worse and even more dangerously intimate, she wiped her hair on his feet. She laid herself wide open.... for all to see... and smell.

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The shocking silence of disbelief was broken by Judas.

This was six days before the Passover, and Judas was in good standing as one of Jesus' 12 disciples. Interestingly, the name Judas means Judah, and translates "God is praised." Judas managed the finances for the group, and likely behaved like a cautious business manager.

I think he had grand hopes and expectations for Jesus. He saw the potential in Jesus to make *Israel great again*. <

When a gifted, charismatic leader comes around, and starts to gain influence, it is not uncommon for people to project their wish list upon the person. In essence, turning that person into a "personal Messiah"--one who will fulfill one's personal agenda.

More than likely, much was projected on and claimed of Jesus.... by those who wanted to **own** a personal saviour..... instead of following and serving.

Conventional wisdom states that aspiring leaders must be very careful about what people think. Even little slip ups can have dire consequences, and this touchy-feeling exchange with Mary wasn't little. To the standard bearers, her display was shocking.

Judas was appalled, and maybe he possessed a touch of elder son jealousy. This reckless, effusive and impassioned woman was receiving approving appreciation from Jesus. And, to be sure, her actions collided with the frugal, pragmatic side of Judas.

Judas likely thought, dumping expensive perfume on someone's feet is just plain wasteful and wrong,.... it had to be..... What good could come of it? How could it be justified?

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So, Judas broke the silence by trying to shame Mary with his accusation, "Why wasn't this expensive perfume sold for 300 denari and the money given to the poor?"

A denarius was one piece of silver worth a whole days labour.

That perfume was worth nearly a year's worth of work,...poured out on Jesus' feet. It was ALL poured out,.... and for what reason?

What is the value of stain glass windows, steeples and grand cathedrals? What is the value in celebrations.... and art?????

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The Gospel writer, John, pointed out that Judas' lofty assertion was all talk and nothing else.

*It's easy to talk big / to inflate oneself, and it is all too easy to deflate another with "righteous" words that seem indisputable.*

Criticizing someone by saying "you should have" is a potent method of shaming.

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Notice how Jesus responded.

He confronted Judas and his shaming tactics and defended Mary.

Jesus said, "Leave her alone." He defended the victim,... and he restored her honour by affirming her purpose."

In essence, Jesus said, "I'm on her side."

Then, Jesus countered and exposed Judas' accusation.

In other words, Jesus said, "If you are suddenly so concerned about the poor, don't worry, they'll be around when I'm gone,..... because so far, you've done little to help free them from poverty."

Some people who are not fond of social justice, abuse what Jesus said by suggesting it means that we should Not obsess about inequality and the poor. But, that is Not what Jesus said.

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In addition to standing up for Mary / affirming Mary's action and undoing the shame, Jesus also did Not empower the squeaky wheel.

Instead, he by passed it--moved on without it.

Too often, we sanction and enhance the negative energy / the negative, criticizing voice, and in so doing..... we become preoccupied and drained by the very thing we are trying to avoid.

The practice of pleasing everyone is the sad path to mediocrity.

The purpose of the church is not to keep people happy and content.

The way of Christ is not the pursuit of personal happiness.

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Moreover, this interesting dinner episode, featuring Mary and Judas, demonstrates that Jesus is not just another application to download and use as we wish.

Jesus was full of surprises. The Gospel accounts present, over and over, Jesus' *narrative of unexpected twists*--situations where Jesus broke from the norm / the old routine and did something new and different.

The Isaiah text presents the same message.

Verse 18 of Isaiah 43: "Do not remember the former things or consider the things of old. I am about to do a new thing."

That passage prompts us to consider God making / doing new ways, God solving new problems with unthought-of "new" solutions.

God is full of surprises and fresh new ideas. God creates, and when we can't see a way out, God will make a new way.

And so, when we are not sure what to do or how to respond, then recall the story of Mary dumping perfume on Jesus' feet.

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In her desire to please and delight Jesus, Mary, without restraint, poured out nearly a year's worth of earnings for Jesus, and then ignoring all sensibilities, used her own hair to dry his feet.

She gave it all.

Some thought her actions shocking and disappointing.

However, it was Judas' reaction that was shocking and most disappointing. At the very least, why didn't the smell of that sacred perfume conjure up memories of past holy moments for Judas?

Where was Judas' passion and devotion, and why was he so afraid? Why couldn't he pour out his love, and allow others to pour out theirs? What was he afraid of? What was holding him back?

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I do believe this story is a sneak preview for passion weak.

Judas valued money. Judas withheld and would not give his all to Christ.....and he suffered much regret,... and he died.

Jesus poured it all out. Jesus gave his all.....and lived on / lives on.

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Love, abundantly poured out is truly a sweet aroma.

When we let go / break free of our fears and pour out our passion and love for others and for God,.....the redolent affect spreads to others.

And, God says, "Amen..... Christ is alive. Love is alive."

The effusive outpouring of love is powerful.

Generous, gracious love will open the hearts of others.

And, Unabashed, demonstrative love frees our soul to fully experience Life and the Love of God.

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Freely Loving and letting go..... leads us to healing and wholeness.

We know this..... Our soul longs and aches to love and to be loved.

We know this to be true.

We know this to be true, and we are keenly aware of the fearful reasons for our regrets.

Dare we hold on / hold back any longer?

People are waiting..... God is waiting.

Our soul is waiting.....for the outpouring of love.

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In a few minutes, you will have the opportunity to be anointed with oil.

Let the anointing prompt you to recall Mary's love for Jesus, and let it prompt you to remember Christ outpouring love for us.

Let it be permission to love without reservation.