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Heavenly Father, thank you for your goodness towards us. Thank you that you continue to use me to speak and minister to my friends here in spite of my sin. Please help us now to hear what it is you have to say to us through your word. In Jesus' name, Amen. Well, normally when I get up here to speak, or actually when I'm preparing my messages, I try very hard not to copy someone else's message. I try very hard to pray and see what it is God wants me to share. But this week, the message that was just really heavy on my heart was the same message that was given at the Unite Youth Workers Conference. So I'm saying that just kind of in disclosure that I've heard a very similar message to the one I'm about to give, and I'm not plagiarizing or anything, but it's really strong that this is what I should talk about today. I'm going to begin with the question, "What kind of aroma is your life?" I have kind of a picture. This is a censor on the front giving off incense. I came up with my sermon during the week and we got the Boltons ready on Thursday, and we started printing them out on Friday. As they're being printed out, I'm like, "Wow, I think I want to change the name." But I didn't want to have to reprint everything. I think I would rather call my sermon today "Censor," which is spelled C-E-N-S-E-R. If you put S-O-R, it's one of those people who says you can't say that on television. But C-E-N-S-E-R is this metal thing here, and it is used in religious services to give off incense. My question is, "What kind of aroma do you give off in your life?" What kind of aroma is your life? We're going to start with our primary scripture here, which is 2 Corinthians 2, 14-16. "Now, thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and through us diffuses the fragrance of his knowledge in every place. For we are to God the fragrance of Christ among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing. To the one, we are the aroma of death leading to death, and to the other, the aroma of life leading to life." We are to be a fragrance of Christ to this world. As you notice there, it says that "ru us," God diffuses the fragrance of his knowledge. That's why I kind of preferred the term "sensor," because we are these vessels through which God diffuses Christ into this world. How do you do that? How do you allow Christ to flow through you into this world? There are three ways, primarily, and that is, number one, you have to submit to let God transform you, be filled with Christ like we do in our quiet time or like you do in your Bible time or your prayer time. Number two is the choices you make, the things you say and the things you do with your life. Also, number three is the things that you don't do. I'll start with the third one, the things that you don't do. You can be emitting the aroma of Christ into this world, but not if you drown out that aroma with politics or nationalism or legalism. A lot of people get hung up on the Old Testament way of doing things, which is before we were filled with the Holy Spirit. It was a lifestyle of self-denial and self-discipline and saying, "Do this, don't do that." It's a lot of rules in trying to make yourself holy before God. While we still need to make good choices, at the same time, we also need to remember that it is God who changes people. It's God who changes hearts. We can't get too upset when we see people who aren't behaving the way we think they should behave, because God is the one who needs to work inside them and change them. So, back to being the aroma of Christ, don't be the person that when people talk about you or think of you, they think, "Every conversation comes back around to politics." Or, "Every conversation comes back around to... I don't know, it might be sports, I don't know." But make sure that everything comes back around to Christ with you. It doesn't mean that every other sentence has to be a Bible lesson, because that will start to get on people's nerves, but every conversation should be seasoned with grace, forgiveness, and love. The good things of Christ. And when you forgive those people who are mean or rude or inconsiderate to you, and when you love someone who has no way of returning that love or that favor to you, is this kind of goodness that is the true aroma of Christ in our lives. As you do this, as you admit this goodness, some people will say, "Wow, that's amazing, I love being around that person, they're just so good and loving." But there will be other people who don't like being around you. And this is what it's talking about in the verse we just read, to the one who you're the aroma of death, leading to death. Even though you're admitting the aroma of Christ, some people are going to look at your good life, and they're going to feel convicted, because that's not the life they live, and you're making them uncomfortable. And they're going to say, "Oh, you're being judgmental." So, understand that we're following in the footsteps of one who was crucified. And the more you act like Jesus, the more the world will respond to you, the way it responded to him. So don't expect everyone to love you when you're living and admitting the aroma of Christ in your life. But fortunately, other people will see your life and your goodness, and they will repent. And that's what our second verse talks about, Matthew 5, 14-16. "You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven." Our other verse here, too, Psalm 34-8, says, "O taste and see that the Lord is good." When you're living this life, when you are emitting the goodness of Christ into your life, it allows people to taste and see that the Lord is good. They cannot taste and see if God is not being lived out in front of them. And that's why God makes us his censors, so that we can demonstrate and show people, so that we can be the light that gives light to the world. Again, Galatians 6-9, "Let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith." Now, I remember when I first noticed what that verse was saying, it kind of made me scratch my head and said, "Do good to everyone, but especially other Christians." And I was like, "That's not... I mean, I know Jesus spoke verses on, 'Don't show favoritism' and stuff like that, but the fact of the matter is that there's always going to be a special place in your heart for family." Isn't there? And this here is your family. Your brothers and sisters in Christ are your family. They are your brothers and sisters. And so it is natural. It is the design of God's love that you have a special tender heart towards your family. And so that's why in this letter to the Galatians here, Paul encourages us, "Be especially tender-hearted towards your brothers and sisters in Christ." Because this is the kind of love that God fills us with. Christians, John 13, 35, "By this all will know that you are my disciples if you have love for one another." And that's another reason to especially focus on the love we have for one another here, because it demonstrates that we are the disciples of Jesus. The disciples of other religious teachers often compete. They try and get the highest rank. They try and outdo each other. They try to be the best in their religion. Jesus says, "I don't want that from you. I want you guys loving and serving one another. That's how people will know you're my disciples." Christians should be the best part of this world. People, when you start talking about Christians and Christianity, people shouldn't roll their eyes. Unfortunately, we have found ourselves in that situation, at least in this country, because we are being the aroma of something that's not Christ. A lot of times it is politics. I know I bring that up a lot. You can't say Christian without people thinking you're talking about a political position. As soon as you say, "I'm a Christian," and then they start asking you, "What do you feel about homosexual marriage? What do you feel about abortion?" All these political issues. They respond like that because so often in the name of Christ, we fight these little wars over national policy rather than defusing the love and grace of goodness of God. That's what God really wants us to do, is to be goodness and light in this world. He doesn't want us to be known for our political activism. He wants us to be known for our hearts, his heart, being put forth, re-demonstrated into this world. We sometimes want to be God's air force, where we fly over a situation, we drop our little bombs of Scripture and truth, and then we fly away. But God wants us to be an army that marches in and shows love, who doesn't leave, stays there in the trenches, loving people, helping people. He doesn't want us to give our words without action. He also doesn't want us to give action without words. It's a waste of time if all your good deeds are done without giving glory and credit to Christ. But I think a lot more important is don't just spout Scripture at people and then not have that heart there that actually cares about them. All you do is say, "You need to stop doing that. You need to be better. You need to change yourself because you're a sinner." First of all, that's unscriptural because it's Christ who changes our hearts. If you tell someone that they need to clean up their act, you're telling them to do something that they can't do. That's impossible. That's unloving right from the schedule. But God wants us to start with love and show the love, demonstrate the love, and then lead them to Christ, lead them to the one who can change them, who can make them the better person. In the book of Acts 5.13, it talks about the early church living out in the world, and it talks about the people who weren't in the church, that they were afraid to join these Christians, but they esteemed them very highly because of how they lived, because of the love and the sacrifice that they showed one another. People ought to esteem us highly because of how we live. This bracelet I'm wearing, I've been wearing it a couple of weeks now, it's called a mud love bracelet. Like Baker Haven recently, you've probably seen them. They sell them for five bucks, and a dollar out of every five bucks goes towards giving clean water to people in Africa. They have all different kinds of words on them, and you can order ones with custom words and everything. But that one dollar that comes from the sale of each bracelet is enough to provide one person a year's worth of clean drinking water. When I was at the Unite conference, one of the people who has been working at this company, he wasn't the founder, but he joined the company very early on. He kind of told us the story of where this all came from, about how this one guy, he was a potter, he was also a Christian, and he was writing in his journal one day, and he's like, "I think God wants me to make pottery and not take credit for it, not put my name on it." I guess a lot of potters, it's a big deal to assign your name on your pottery. And then a few lines or pages later in his journal, he's like, "I think he also wants me to give away part of my profits to help people." And that's where that company came from. But anyways, he was telling us the story about how this one person tried to order some of these bracelets, and they wanted a phrase put on there that was kind of anti-Muslim. And they said, "No, we're not going to do that." And they said, "Why? You're Christians, right? You believe this stuff, don't you?" But it wasn't because these guys were pro-Muslim or anti-Muslim or anything like that. They refused to put that saying on their bracelets because that's not the aroma of Christ. That is not conveying the heart and the love and the goodness of Jesus to the world. And they didn't want to put out the wrong aroma with what they were doing. We don't make ourselves the aroma of Christ. We submit to Christ in us and allow His aroma to come forth. Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we thank You that You are our God of goodness and love and forgiveness and grace and mercy. And we ask now, God, humbly on our faces before You that we need those goodness things put into our hearts. We need You to change our hearts and transform us into people who can be good and loving and gracious and forgiving. So please, God, as we seek You in our prayer time, as we seek You in our Bible reading, we ask that You change our hearts. Teach us how to control our words and not say the thing that will put off the wrong aroma, but help us, all of our words, to be seasoned with grace, to bring forth into this world the goodness and the light that is Jesus. We ask these things in His name. Amen.