

The Aroma of Christ

Written by Bill Perkins

I find it fascinating and a bit wonderful that three or four notes of a song, or a taste, or a smell can trigger a vivid memory. I mention this because a few years ago I was walking along a street in New Delhi. The bike bells from bicycle rickshaws told of their approach from behind.

Busses and motorized rickshaws and cabs, and cars all sped past me in both directions. To my left vendors in small shops sold the same sorts of things you'd pick up at a Seven Eleven in the States--soda, cigarettes, magazines and water. Men, women and children brushed past me on the dust covered asphalt road.

And then I experienced three sensations--I saw a large pile of garbage strewn out along the road in front of me. At the same time the stink of rotting meat, spoiling fruit, sour milk and human waste drove from my mind an awareness of anything else. All I could sense in that moment was the horrible smell. A moment later, through the stench, I smelled the fragrance of a magnolia blossom.

Instantly I remembered the magnolia tree that grows in our yard in Oregon. I've occasionally pulled down a branch and pressed my nose against a white petal and breathed in the fragrance.

At the same time Paul's words took on a vividness I had not known before. In 2 Corinthians 2:15 he said, "For we are to God the aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing."

Even in the midst of great filth and foul odors, magnolia trees blossom and spread their sweet fragrance. I am certain that in the future every time I smell a magnolia blossom I'll recall that moment in Delhi.