

Rev Wendy October Prayer Reflection

"It's a matter of taste," is a saying relating to each individual's personal food and drink taste, preference or opinion. This being so, there will always be diversity because taste rests with choice, therefore there can be no right or wrong answer. The phrase has been in existence since the 18th century. When it refers to food or drink, taste buds determine our response. These are the cells on the tongue which allow us to say that something is sweet or sour, bitter or tasteless, pleasurable or detestable, acceptable or unsafe to eat. The number of taste buds vary from person to person, some 2,000-8,000. They are situated mainly on the muscle of our tongue, also on the roof of our mouths and in our throats. These tiny bumps covering the papillae are renewed every 10 days.

Taste perceptions are categorised into 5 distinct groups. 1). SWEET... experienced in foods containing sugar, glucose, fructose lactose, e.g. honey, jams and fruits. 2). SALTY,,, in foods containing sodium chloride (table salt) and minerals like magnesium or potassium. e.g. in crisps and like snacks. 3). BITTER,,, not uniformly experienced, because for some it is good and for others bad. e.g. dark chocolate. 4). SOUR....e.g. citrus fruits namely lemons and grapefruits, vinegars and chutneys, which contain some form of acid. 5). UMAMI,,,,,a meaty flavour in proteins triggered by salts, and acids like mono sodium gluconate

Flavour depends on the taste bud receptor cells. Each taste bud has 50-100 cells. At birth, a baby has 10,000 taste buds. These diminish with age so the elderly will only have 2,000-4,000. The sides of the tongue are more sensitive than the middle. Receptors send information to the brain to interpret taste and flavour. Physical disorders and infections can dramatically lead to taste impairment. Complete loss of taste is known as Ageusia, distorted sense as Disgeusia, and increased sense of taste as Hypergeusia. There is one other sensation of the tongue called phantom taste. This refers to an unpleasant taste which lingers on the tongue even when the mouth is empty. Eating hot foods like peppers and chilli excite the pain receptors in the mouth.

The ability to taste, reveals just how God has purposefully and intricately created us. It shows His care for our daily living. After Moses had led the Israelites out of Egypt and they had safely crossed the red Sea, they began their journey in the Wilderness. For three days they found no water, and when they did they were unable to drink because the water was brackish and bitter. The people complained, but Moses, who knew that God was leading them cried out to Him. Forthwith he was instructed to take a branch of a tree and cast it into the water. The Israelites witnessed a miracle as the waters became sweet tasting. God was looking after His people. They should have had no doubt, because when they came to the very next stopping place at Elam "there were twelve springs of water and seventy palm trees and they camped there by the water." Exodus 15:22-27. Springs of bitter taste still exist in the region. Sweetness also symbolises God's provision. A wise saying in Proverbs advises, "My child, eat honey, for it is good, and the drippings of the honeycomb are sweet to your taste." 24: 12. A key passage for Christians is found in Psalm 119:104. "How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth." The Word of God is our spiritual food, something to crave for and

digest. The more we eat,. the more we want, for it sustains us in fellowship with God and our Saviour, and assures us of the illumination of the Holy Spirit.

Nor only are there references in Scripture to water tasting bitter, but also with plants. God gave instructions for the institution of the Passover, a very special feast day in Israel's religious calendar, for future generations to remember the Exodus from Egypt. In the evening an unblemished lamb with its head, legs and inner organs, was to be eaten "together with un leavened bread and bitter herbs." Exodus 12:8-9. It would be a permanent reminder of the bitterness of slavery and suffering, and their deliverance. The plants are unnamed in Scripture, but two are associated with bitterness. The first is Wormwood, a plant native to N .Africa ,mentioned seven times, and known today as Artemesia Absinthium. Absinthin is a symbol for suffering. The second is Gall, an outgrowth or plant tissue, derived from insect, parasites, or fungi and its, noted fourteen times. Tannin gives Gall its bitter taste, as it interacts with the taste buds at the base of the tongue. A verse in Lamentations reads "The thought of my affliction and homelessness is wormwood and gall." 3:19.

The most famous passage relating to drinking Gall is when Jesus was hung on the Cross. The Roman soldiers offered Him "wine to drink mixed with gall." Matthew 27:34. Mark says the wine was "mixes with Myrrh." 15:23. It was known to be a sedative to dull the pain. 15:23. Luke explains that the soldier were mocking Him by "offering Him sour wine." 25:36., but did not mention that he refused to drink it like the previous two Receiving Gall was prophesied long before Jesus was born. "They put gall in my food and gave me vinegar for my thirst." Psalm 69:21 How courageous of Jesus the Son of Man, to face suffering full on, for us to receive salvation. Isaiah had prophesied that "it was the will of the Lord to crush him with pain." 53:10. The sacrificial Lamb of God takes away the sins of the world so that as Paul testifies; they "live no longer for themselves, but for him who died and was raised for them." 2 Corinthians 5:15.

May we each pause and offer God thanks for His redeeming love, sealed by the death of Jesus on the Cross, and for its transforming power in our lives. I cannot close before sharing a few more thoughts for prayer by sharing words from Edward Perronet's famous hymn, "All hail the power of Jesus' name," published under the title "On the Resurrection, the Lord is King." Perronet was a Dissenting Minister who knew persecution and suffering whenhe travelled and ministered with the Wesley brothers. John Wesley's Diary notes, "From Rochdale we went to Bolton and soon found that the Rochdale Lions were lambs in comparison with those of Bolton. Edward Perronet was thrown down, rolled in mud and mire, stones were hurled and windows broken." He certainly knew what it was to "Hail the **power** of Jesus' name."

Forgive us Lord that we pray in Your name, knowing that we are honouring You, and showing our allegiance, but we do not often link our praises with an acknowledgement of Your power, authority and saving grace. Praise You that You are Lord of All, and that Your power is present when we gather in Your name. Matthew 18:20. As redeemed sinners , we cannot forget "the wormwood and the gall," and the bitterness of sin from which Christ has saved us. May the Holy Spirit enable us to

enthroned Him daily, and in humility to "spread our trophies at His feet." Hallelujah! We proclaim You as King. Amen.