

The Incredible Fragrance of Mercy

by Carter Conlon

The incredible fragrance of mercy is the scent of Christ that causes people to stop and consider their ways, and it's the testimony of God's mercy in this world.

Duration: 40:42

Topics: "Gods Mercy", "Christian Hope"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the incredible fragrance of God's mercy, highlighting the need for believers to be encouraged by the mercy of God in their struggles and failures. It discusses the importance of sincerity over perfection, the covering of God's mercy in our lives, and the power of God's mercy to transform us. The sermon also touches on the concept of the rapture of the church and the ultimate hope of believers in a new heaven and earth.

Transcript

I want to talk to you this morning about the incredible fragrance of mercy. And from Psalm 92, please, and if you find Psalm 92, then also put a marker in 1 Thessalonians chapter 4, just to save us some time of searching those out. The incredible fragrance of mercy.

Now, Father, I thank you, Lord, that in your word that you said that you send a plentiful rain to confirm your inheritance when we become weary. I ask you, Lord, for all those that are weary this morning, that are listening online, that are at Roxbury, that are here in the main sanctuary, God, thank you for mercy. Thank you for that incredible, incredible fragrance of mercy.

I ask you, God, in Christ's name to empower me to be able to speak in a manner that will be easily understood, and it will encourage those that have come to your house to hear your word today. Thank you for how good you are to us, Lord. Help us to be more aware of it.

Every day, we ask it in Jesus' name. Psalm 92, beginning at verse 1. It's a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord, and to sing praises unto thy name, O Most High, to show forth thy lovingkindness in the morning, and thy faithfulness every night, upon an instrument of ten strings, and upon the psaltery, upon the harp with a solemn sound. For thou, Lord, hast made me glad in thy work.

I will triumph in the work of thy hands. O Lord, how great are thy works, and thy thoughts are very deep. A brutish man knows not, neither does a fool understand this.

When the wicked spring as the grass, and all the workers of iniquity do flourish, it is that they shall be destroyed forever. But thou, Lord, art Most High forevermore. For lo, thine enemies, O Lord, for lo, thine enemies shall perish.

All the workers of iniquity shall be scattered. But my horn shalt thou exalt like the horn of a unicorn. I shall be anointed with fresh oil.

The psalmist in this psalm cries out from his heart, God, how incredibly great you are. And how foolish are those who resist their own salvation. Everything that they believe will advance their cause will one day soon be scattered.

They are heading towards an everlasting sorrow and have no idea. You have left a testimony of mercy among them called the Church of Jesus Christ. We are not a testimony of perfection, my friends, we are a testimony of God's mercy.

We walk through this earth as recipients of mercy daily, daily. We are encouraged in the morning, and we are thankful at night, and we have a song to sing because it's not about us, it's about Christ in us. That is our hope, that is our salvation, Christ in us is our strength.

Very soon the testimony of the church is going to be suddenly taken away, and suddenly unrestrained the full power of sin on the earth and rebellion will destroy that which is left. It's always been in the heart of fallen man to be as God. And God has never left himself without a testimony through the ages.

And since the day Christ died on Calvary, he's had a people on the earth. We're not perfect by any stretch, but we are sincere, and the power of God within us is real. And the mercy of God being explained or displayed to a fallen generation is as tangible as everything we can see around us.

But suddenly, the scripture says, Paul speaks about it in 1 Thessalonians, in chapter 4. Suddenly, suddenly, God's people are going to be taken from the earth. If you're not familiar with this doctrine, it's called the rapture of the church. It's been preached for 2,000 years.

It's something that's coming in a moment, and actually at a time when nobody really expects it. You'll be working in your workplace, or you'll be looking for a job, or you'll be just walking home with your groceries. You'll be on the bus or the subway.

And suddenly, the scripture tells us there's going to be a shout that comes from heaven itself. And I've always believed it's the very shout of Christ as he's waited to bring his bride home. It's a shout of glory, it's a shout of joy, it's a shout of victory.

And suddenly, the dead in Christ are going to rise first. That means everybody in the cemetery in New York City that has believed in Jesus Christ for their salvation are first going to rise out of the ground. I've always hoped that there's going to be a bit of a, it says, and then we who are alive and remain will be gathered with them.

I've always hoped that there's going to be a little bit of a stretch between the two to give them time to get to church, give them time to come walking in. The saints of old, what a day that would be. What a full altar we'd have in this church.

I can almost guarantee you that. Let me read it to you from 1 Thessalonians chapter 4, beginning at verse 16. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God, and the dead in Christ shall rise first.

Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore, comfort one another with these words. In other words, weeping may endure for a night, but joy is coming in the morning.

No matter how difficult this life is, no matter how hard your days might be, it's only for a short season. And then one day soon it will be all over. We will be gathered with our Christ forever.

Chapter 5 verse 1 says, But of the times and seasons, brethren, you have no need that I write to you. For yourselves know that perfectly, that the day of the Lord will so come as a thief in the night. For when they shall say peace and safety, then sudden destruction comes upon them, as travail upon a woman with child, and they shall not escape.

But you, brethren, are not in darkness that that day should overtake you as a thief. You're all the children of light and the children of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness.

Therefore, let us not sleep as do others, but let us watch and be sober. For they that sleep sleep in the night, and they that are drunken are drunken in the night. But let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation.

For God has not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him. Wherefore, comfort yourselves together and edify or encourage one another, even as you also do. It's so important that we encourage each other, especially at this time which we're now living in.

When men's hearts are going to soon fail them for fear for the things that are coming upon the earth, whether it's coming this month, this year, or this decade, I really don't know. But you and I know that everything is changing, and it's changing very, very rapidly. It's so important to encourage each other.

It's so important to just be able to look somebody in the eye and say, listen, you're not going down in defeat. We're going to walk this together. It's only going to be for a short season, whether it's through sickness or suffering or distress or somebody can't find employment, whatever it is, or depression that people sometimes have to go through and suffer in their minds.

We have to remind each other of the faithfulness of God. God cannot lie, and he promises to keep us as his people. As a matter of fact, he intertwines the very honor of his name in keeping us who have trusted in him, in not letting us falter, not letting us fail, not letting us give up, not ever suffering a trial or temptation that is so deep or vicious that we can't find the strength to get through it.

He says, no, you will not suffer anything that others before you have not been tried with. And when you're tried, he said, I'll make a way for you to get through it. David the psalmist said, yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, through, he said, not into, but through, I will fear no evil for your rod and your staff comfort me.

He said, you prepare a table for me, even when I find myself in the presence of my enemies, and you cause my cup to overflow. You cause me to have strength when I feel like my strength is gone. You cause

me to have joy when nothing around me is giving me a reason to be joyful.

And when I finally get through and I look behind at my life, I will say surely goodness and mercy followed me all the days of my life. And I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever. But there's going to be a season where it's going to be hard to be a Christian, a follower of Christ.

And you're noticing lately the anti-Christ sentiment that is gaining fervor and fervency, and it's accelerating in our generation more and more. It seems like everybody is advocating tolerance to everything and everyone, but the followers of Jesus Christ. We're the only people on the earth that it seems to be open season for mockery and defamation.

But one day soon, the church of Jesus Christ is going to be taken from this earth. I've always hoped that it's during church time, especially when we're hitting one of those high moments of worship, that suddenly you and I hear this trumpet and we are suddenly aware that we're not standing on the floor anymore. And we are rising through the air, and it seems that people out of those magnanimous cemeteries around New York City seem to be rising with us, the saints of old, and we're meeting together to be forever with Christ.

But what a tragedy it will be when that restraint, you see the only thing that restrains evil in the world, because man's heart is set on evil. Mankind wants to be his own God and is incapable of doing that or even governing himself. The only restraint is the church of Jesus Christ.

It's the truth of God. It's the presence of God's Holy Spirit in his people. But when that restraint is removed, there will be a pungent and devastating smell of sin that will so permeate the earth that even God at a certain point will no longer be willing to bear it.

The Bible tells us the heavens will melt with a fervent heat at the anger of God what an enemy has sowed in his creation. And the time of rebellion will be over. The time of mercy will be finished.

The time of mankind's arrogance in thinking that he can be his own God will have come to an end. The seed that Satan sowed in humankind in Eden will finally reach its own destruction, its own day of judgment. Peter the Apostle said in 2 Peter 3, verse 10, but the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise and the elements will melt with fervent heat and the earth also and the works that are in them shall be burned up.

John the Apostle also saw this in Revelation 6, verse 14, the heavens will be departed as a scroll when it's rolled together and every mountain and every island will be moved out of its place. This is a day that's to come. I don't know how soon it's coming but there's an inner witness in those that love God that we're not that far from that day.

When the elements will melt the heavens themselves will be on fire. Scripture bears witness to it all through the Old Testament and I think it's particularly relevant in the light of even the threats that are coming from North Korea at this particular time. It's only the beginning in a sense of what we're going to be facing as these weapons of mass destruction get into the hands of unstable people around the world.

But John saw something else other than the destruction, other than the elements melting, other than the heavens and the earth as it is being rolled away and a new heavens and a new earth. He saw in Revelation 21, let me just read it to you. He saw a new heavens and a new earth and he said, I saw a new heaven and a new earth for the first heaven and first earth were passed away and there was no more sea.

And I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, behold, the tabernacle or the dwelling of God is with men and he will dwell with them and they shall be his people and God himself shall be with them and be their God. And God will wipe away all tears from their eyes.

There shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain for the former things, thank God, are passed away. And he that sat on the throne said, behold, I make all things new. And he said to me, write for these words are true and faithful.

And he said to me, it's done. I'm the alpha, the omega, the beginning and the end. I will give to him that is thirsty of the fountain of the water of life freely.

And he that overcomes shall inherit all things and I will be his God and he will be my son. But the fearful and unbelieving, the abominable and murderers and whoremongers and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death. John saw a new heaven and a new earth, but sadly it wasn't a place for all people.

Heaven was only a place for those who had bent their knee and received the mercy of God through Jesus Christ. I thank God for the hope, if you know him as Savior, that he's put in our hearts. I thank God for the eternity that awaits us.

I thank God as I get older for a body one day that won't get weary at 8.30 at night and we'll be able to run with the strongest of them. I thank God there'll be no more sorrow, no more sighing, no more grieving. We won't even have memories that cause us pain.

I thank God that you and I will be standing around the throne of God and if we sing anything, we'll sing it. It will be worth it all. It has been worth it all.

We lived for God. We trusted him and it has been worth it. But until that day, you and I carry in these frail earthen bodies this incredible fragrance of the mercy of God.

We are the testimony of God's mercy in this world. Paul said in 2 Corinthians 2.14, Now thanks be unto God, which always causes us to triumph in Christ and makes manifest the savor of his knowledge by us in every place. And when you look at the word savor, it means the fragrance.

It means the odor. He makes known by us this incredible savor, this incredible fragrance of his mercy. As I said earlier, we're not testimonies of perfection.

We're testimonies of mercy. We're testimonies of grace. An attractive scent can cause you for a moment to stop and consider its source.

Has that ever happened to you? You're walking through a department store. You're down the street and somebody walks by or walks past you and they have a fragrance on that just, it suddenly catches your attention because it's attractive, the fragrance. And it causes you to stop and consider its source.

And it's the same way on you and I, there's a scent of Christ, which causes people to stop and for a moment to consider their ways. It's called the restrainer. There's a scent of Christ on you.

If you have Christ in you, if you and I have come to him in sincerity, if you have bent your knee to God, if you have said, Jesus, thank you for dying for me on a cross 2000 years ago, I opened my heart to you and

I invite you to come in to be my Lord and my Savior. If you prayed that in sincerity, God has received you. The Holy Spirit has come into your life and the restrainer within you, that which causes evil to be restrained as you walk through this world, as you walk through your day, causes a fragrance of Christ, whether or not you and I are even aware of it.

There is a fragrance of Christ. Hard to believe that, isn't it? Sometimes. As someone puts on a natural fragrance in the morning, so too we read in 1 Thessalonians 5, verse 8, that we in the morning put on the breastplate of faith.

We believe God for change. We believe God that we're not as we were yesterday and by God's grace tomorrow we will not be as we are today. We believe God that all things within us are passing away and behold, all things are becoming new.

We believe God that we will be given the strength and the giftings of the Holy Spirit to be the people that God has called us to be, even though we struggle in some areas of our lives, even though it seems that some battles go on forever. We get up in the morning and we put on that perfume of Christ as it is and we believe God. We get up with faith.

Today is going to be different. Today is going to be a day when the kingdom of God is going to begin another advance in my life. And the scripture also says we put on love, this love of God that we need for people that only God can love.

Would you agree with me? All day we're meeting people that only God can love. I can't love them in my own strength. Only Christ in me can love them.

And so not only do I put on that breastplate of faith, but I put on love, as Paul said, for those that God loves. I put on love so that as I walk through this world that somehow the love of God will be seen in me for God so loved the world, he gave his only begotten son. And for a helmet we put on the hope of salvation, which means our security in Christ.

In spite of what I have to go through, in spite of what I have to face, in spite of the fears within and the fightings without, as Paul the apostle said, I know my redeemer lives. I know that I'm covered in the blood of Jesus Christ. I know that my heart is sincere in wanting to walk with God.

And yet though I fail seven times in a day, seven times my savior will pick me up by the hand and give me the strength to keep going. Through the ups and the downs, the victories and defeats, the efforts and exhaustions of the day, a quality perfume still smells good, even though the one who has it on is not as aware of it as they might've been in the morning. Have you ever had that happen to you? You get up in the morning and you're just full of God.

You read your Bible and it talks about have faith in God for verily I say to you, whosoever shall say to this mountain be removed and be cast into the sea and shall not doubt but believe in his heart that the things which he says shall come to pass. He shall have whatsoever he sayeth. And so you go into that prayer closet and whatever that mountain is, you begin to speak to that thing and you command it to get out of your way and to get out of your life and to get out of your mind.

And then you go through the day and suddenly the mountain's not moving as fast as you thought it should move. You're experiencing, you're walking into the workplace, you're walking into where it is you have to go in the day and you're filled with that victory of Christ because you've spent those first few moments and

you're sitting on the subway and you're going to work and there's a sweet song in your heart that's being played over and over again. Maybe it's something you heard and even the choir sing in this church this morning and you go into the workplace and throughout the day, the ups, downs, the battles, the defeats, the efforts, the exhaustions, the sweat.

You get back on the subway at the end of the day and your head's not up anymore, your head is down and the devil's trying to tell you what a failure you've been. What an awful testimony of Christ that you are. Yeah, you might be exhausted and you might have a little bit of sweat for what you went through throughout the day but I want to tell you something, you still smell good.

You may have had a hard day, a hard week, a hard month. You've had your head down going out the door but the scent of God's mercy in Christ is still strong and as you pass by, people still stop to consider their ways. That is the truth.

It is the scent of incredible mercy. Not that you have had a perfect day, not that I've had a perfect day, not that we've spoken right all day. We have not walked around all day quoting scripture folks.

That's just not what happens to most of us. There have been those moments when something slipped out that shouldn't have an attitude towards somebody that we'd rather not display and yet we walk out at the end of the day and as we walk by, our head is not up, it's down but the incredible fragrance of the mercy of God is still on you because this is a testimony of mercy. My life is about mercy.

When I get to heaven, I'm not presenting a list of accomplishments because there's nothing I could do that could ever have gotten me to heaven. It's all about mercy. It's the mercy of God.

The mercy wakes me up. The mercy opens my mind to the truth of God. The mercy sets me free from the snares and traps of the enemy.

The mercy of God does not impute my sin. When I make a mistake throughout the day, I am still covered in the blood of Jesus Christ. Hallelujah.

I don't have to be perfect. I have to be sincere in my walk with God. That is all that God requires of me.

When he called Abraham and said, Abraham, I'm going to bless you and I'm going to increase you and I'm going to make you a blessing in the earth. You and I know he was talking about the church of Jesus Christ, the ultimate lineage of Abraham but he told Abraham, he said, now be perfect and I'll do this. When you look at it in the original Hebrew, it means be sincere, Abraham.

That's all God asked of this man. Be sincere. Did Abraham make mistakes? He made incredible mistakes.

He sold his wife off. He let his wife be taken into another man's harem. He did things he shouldn't do.

All through his life, he made mistakes but the promise of God kept on going through his life and when we think about Abraham, we think of mercy. Mercy, mercy, oh God. How merciful you are.

How wonderful you are. Glory to the Lamb of God. That's why in the Old Testament, it is recorded that we have the right to condemn every voice that rises against us in judgment.

The scripture says, this is the heritage of the servants of the Lord. You have the right to condemn the condemner. When the devil comes against you and says, look at your life, look what you did, look what

you said, look what you did, look what you didn't do.

You can point right into his face and say, listen, I have something that you don't have. I have mercy covering my life. Hallelujah.

You can say to him, devil, you stink of rebellion but I smell of mercy. The mercy of God is on my life. Not only that, just as the psalmist said, I'm going to give thanks unto the Lord and I'm going to sing praises to his name.

I'm going to show forth his loving kindness in the morning and his faithfulness every night. In the morning, he gives me promise. And at the end of my day, he says, don't you worry about your failure.

My promises to you are true. They're yea and amen. You may have a struggle for a night, but joy is coming to you in the morning.

You are going to walk in victory and you're not going to be defeated by your enemies. The psalmist says on an instrument of 10 strings and upon the psaltery and upon the harp with a solemn sound. Oh God, you have made me glad through your work.

I will triumph in the work of your hands. Lord, it's not my hands. It's your hands that have done this work.

It's not my covering. It's your covering. It's not my strength.

It's your strength. It's not my joy. It's your joy.

It's your joy to cover me. It's your joy to change me. It's your joy to walk with me.

It's your joy to call yourself my God. And so Lord, thank you. As David once said, you are my glory and you are the lifter of my head.

Thank you Jesus for lifting my head. Thank you God. I will not let this testimony of mercy be taken from me.

I will not fall to this incredible trap of the devil that is wrapped in the arrogance of pride and accomplishment. Oh no. Oh God, I will walk with you in sincerity.

And as I walk through this life, I don't have to be perfect. I have to be sincere. And people are not looking for perfection because they couldn't follow it themselves and they know it.

But every man who's a sinner can follow someone who is sincere. They're not afraid actually of our weaknesses. Yes, they will taunt our weaknesses.

But actually it's an attractive thing to those who are looking for Christ. I don't know about you, but when I was a lost man, if I would have seen somebody and they spoke everything right and they did everything right and they were flawless, I would have thought it would be hopeless for me to ever come to God because I could never measure up to that. But I thank God that the examples that Christ put before me were just ordinary people, ordinary lives, ordinary speech.

Sometimes they made mistakes. Sometimes they didn't. I remember one time I invited a fellow to my house.

Well, actually I went to his house for lunch before I was saved, Pastor Teresa and I, and he was a Christian. And he and his wife were so intent on winning us to Christ. He was another cop.

And instead of winning us to Christ, I talked him into having a glass of wine. And actually they didn't drink. So I was, you know, I was very persuasive and talked him into it.

And he felt so condemned about it after that he had done this. He felt it was such a demeaning of his testimony. And I don't know what, I don't advocate that.

I don't advocate taking a glass of wine at any time. But I'll tell you one thing. It showed me the guy was human.

It showed me that he was sincere. I saw in his heart, he was so downcast. And I ended up encouraging him.

He's trying to win me to the Lord. And I ended up encouraging him. It's not that bad.

Like you haven't, you haven't really destroyed your testimony by doing this. And he's got his head down and I'm encouraging him. But there was still this incredible fragrance of mercy on his life.

That's what I'm trying to say. In spite of what he felt he had done wrong. In spite of how he felt he had failed and fallen short of the glory of God.

There was still this incredible fragrance of just a normal man, a normal woman who truly loved God and wanted to walk sincerely with God. And were deeply affected by what they felt was a failure of a testimony before my wife and I. But all we saw was mercy. And somehow, I don't know how to explain it, but somehow you know that maybe their testimony that night was not as good as it should have been.

But there's this, the fragrance of mercy was still on them. The mercy of God still touched them. The mercy of God was still emanating from them.

And I found it very attractive that God loves and covers normal people. Who are not perfect, but they are sincere. And I thank God for that with all my heart.

As you and I walk through our day and we make mistakes along the way. We say things among our fellow workers that we shouldn't say. And we do things that we shouldn't do.

And we walk home with a head down thinking, I've just so blown it. I've just so destroyed the testimony of God. I've just so failed.

These poor people are never going to find Christ because of me. And we fail to understand that sincerity is incredibly attractive. And the fact that we are covered in our struggles is a sweet fragrance to this world that knows that in themselves they can never be perfect.

That the only one perfect is Christ within them. The psalmist says in verse 10 of 92 Psalm, he said, My horn thou shalt exalt like the horn of a unicorn. I shall be anointed with fresh oil.

In other words, Oh God, in spite of the mistakes that I've made. In spite of how I feel about myself. In spite of how I feel sometimes that I've made the testimony of your life within me.

An odor in a sense is not very attractive. But yet, Lord, when I come to you, you will anoint me again. And you will touch me again.

And you will strengthen me again. And you will lift me up again. And you will put my feet on the right path again.

And you will raise my head again. And you'll give me a heart for the lost again. And you give me kind words again.

Lord, you will anoint me with fresh oil. I don't come in and sing songs to you on Sunday morning because I've had the best week of my life. I come in because you are the best friend that I've ever known.

And Lord, you're not angry with me at my failure. You're not disappointed because I've not been perfect. But you're more than willing to touch me once again with that sweet fragrance of your mercy.

Oh God, it should cause us to love him. It should cause us to lift our voices. It should cause us to sing like we've never sung before.

It should cause us, as the scripture says, to take these instruments and begin to praise him and say, God, thank you that this is all about mercy. This whole walk is about the mercy of God. No one expects us to be perfect.

But they do expect us to be sincere. There's something about sincerity that is so attractive to everyone who needs to know that there is a savior. I know I'm speaking to people today that have walked through your week and you've come in here this morning and you just feel like your testimony stinks.

If you're a sincere believer in Christ, I tell you, you still smell good. Don't give up. Don't lose heart.

Don't let the scorning of this generation take away your joy. Don't let your own struggles cause your hands to hang so low that you can't praise God anymore. Remember that we are the recipients of such incredible mercy.

It is the delight of God to cover us and to give us the power to change and to invite us on a journey to represent him in the earth. And I thank God with everything within me that you and I are not called to be perfect in ourselves. We're simply called to be ambassadors of incredible mercy and to tell others that the mercy that I have known from God in all of my struggles, my frailties, and my failings, my trials, the mercy that I have known can be yours.

That is the message of the church of Jesus Christ. That is the power of God that restrains evil. That is who we are on the earth until the day that humankind gets to the point where that testimony is no longer received.

But till that day, may I encourage you, don't give up. Don't quit. Don't fall to the lies of the devil.

You are not a failure. Jesus is not turning his head away when he looks at you. As a matter of fact, he is speaking your name to his father.

And the father fully receives you because he sits there as your intercessor speaking your name. He has received you. I want to give an altar call this morning and here's what it's going to be like.

It's for those who just say, I'm just so down on myself. I feel like such a failure. Sometimes I wonder if even God loves me.

I try, but I fall. And I want to change, but change seems so slow. The promise of God is a fresh anointing, a fresh touch of mercy, a fresh awareness of how deeply you are loved.

For those who really would like this fresh touch of the Lord, to be encouraged today by the encouragement that only God can give you. I want to open up this altar in a moment and invite you to come. And we'll just pray together, then we're going to rejoice together.

Following that, we're going to dedicate some babies this morning. But I want to invite you to come. In Roxbury, you could stand between the screens, if you will, in the annex, the same.

And those that are listening at home, maybe you could just get on your knees in your living room. And my brother, my sister, would you just let the Holy Spirit touch you again? Would you just let God encourage your heart? Would you say like the psalmist, I'm going to believe that God's going to raise my head again and that he's going to touch me with the encouragement that only God can give to me. Life is hard, but God is good.

And he will keep you if you will let him. In this book, in the Old Testament book, the Song of Solomon, he said, he talked to his bride, which you and I are. And he said, come out of the place where you're hiding.

Let me see your face. And he said, let me hear your voice. For I love the sight of you and I love the sound of your voice.

Don't hide. From the goodness of God. Let him embrace you, especially those who feel worthless this morning in the sight of God.

Just let him embrace you. We're going to worship at this altar. And I believe that as you make the choice to come, you will feel the tender embrace of Jesus Christ.

Let's stand together, please, if you will. And just come if the Lord's drawing you to come. You know, some of the most profound words in the New Testament were spoken by Jesus to Peter.

And this is after Jesus had rose from the dead. And he gave Peter a vision of what he intended on doing in the future. And he said to Peter, whatever I cleanse, you don't call it unclean anymore.

And if Christ has cleansed you, don't call yourself unclean anymore. Yes, we're not perfect, but we're sincere. We believed in Christ and we are moving from place to place in him.

And we're believing for the victory over our struggles. But there is an incredible covering for the sincere believer in Christ. And it should cause us to clap our hands and shout with joy and to rejoice that I'm loved of God and I'm covered of God.

And I'm not called of God to be perfect, just sincere. And in that sincerity, I will change. Paul says from image to image and glory to glory.

It means place to place, step by step, little by little. I will change into that which God wants my life to be. And I will fall maybe along the way, but I'll get up again.

And God will, he doesn't have to re-cleanse me. I'm already cleansed. He's already forgiven me.

He's already covered me. And even in my struggle, he's still proud of me. Still speaking my name to his father.

And that gives us victory over every lie of the devil that will ever come against you and tell you you're worthless. I am a testimony of mercy. That's what I am.

That's what you are, a testimony of mercy. Thank God we don't have to be perfect in ourselves. We have testimonies of God's mercy.

God who came and died has been merciful to us. Father, I thank you, Lord, for these men and women who have gathered, Lord, at this altar today, not feeling lovely, not feeling worthy, not feeling like success in the kingdom of God. But Lord Jesus Christ, today I'm asking you just to put your arms around them.

And one more time, just show them how precious they are in your sight. And as you said to the bride, let us go into the vineyards. Let us walk together.

Let me be your strength and your covering. And Father, I thank you for this, God. I thank you that this will be a good day.

And the fragrance of mercy will be on our lives. And every day we will be anointed with fresh oil. God, thank you for that fresh reminder of your mercy.

Now keep these, Lord. Let nobody fail or falter because of discouragement. We stand against every lie of the devil.

Satan, you have no right to these, for they've been bought with the precious blood of Jesus Christ and they belong to God forever. You have no right to condemn that which God himself has cleansed. And so, Father, I thank you for victory.

I thank you, Lord, for a new song. I thank you, God, Lord, for the ability to go back into whatever their situation is, Lord, with a new song and a new assurance, with our heads lifted up and saying, I may not be perfect, but I am a testimony of the mercy of God. And Father, I thank you for that.

And I bless you in the mighty name of Jesus. Hallelujah. Give God praise.

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