

# Pursuing the Presence of God

by Todd Atkinson

---

*We must trust in Jesus and wear the robe of righteousness to access God's presence and receive the prerogatives of Jesus.*

**Duration:** 1:21:08

**Scripture:** Joel 2:28

**Topics:** "Presence of God"

---

## Description

In this sermon, the speaker begins by acknowledging the presence of the Holy Spirit and the unity it brings to believers. The worship team leads the congregation in a song that combines ancient liturgy with contemporary expression. The speaker invites two individuals to share additional insights during the sermon. The main focus of the sermon is on Peter's explanation and proclamation of the Holy Spirit's arrival, emphasizing the significance of the cross of Jesus Christ. The sermon concludes with the speaker leading the congregation in the observance of communion, highlighting the broken body and shed blood of Jesus as a means of remembering him.

---

## Transcript

I want to turn your attention briefly to Acts chapter 2. Very briefly and take you a little bit of a tour around scripture. But I just want to touch very briefly upon Peter's sermon. Acts chapter 2. The long-awaited Holy Spirit comes significantly on the day of Pentecost.

There's all kinds of spiritual phenomena happening. So the city hear this. And they come and gather and they ask the early church for an explanation.

What is happening? Give us an explanation for what's happening. And so Peter rises to that. We've looked at this many times.

But his sermon has actually two elements that are important. There's an explanation. And there's a proclamation.

So first of all, he responds to their question. What is this that's happening? And so he explains this is the promised Holy Spirit. Yes, you have never experienced anything like this.

And because of that, it might be kind of unusual. But it's not of God. And he takes them back hundreds of years earlier in scripture, where God prophesied through a prophet Joel that this would happen.

But then he moves on from the explanation part of his sermon to a proclamation part. I hope we'll get to know the proclamation part better this year. The one thing that I want to bring out of that section is this.

It's all about the cross. He gives an explanation. But when he shifts to proclamation, there is no doubt what is central to his message.

And that is the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. Because the apostles had a deep understanding of what was opened for them through the cross, and that God wanted all the world to rush in through that open place. And so they were so zealous to proclaim the message of the cross and what had been made available to humankind through the cross.

They just not only did they have a deep understanding of the cross, but as their understanding of the gospel grew, they saw it everywhere, including places we might not normally look. So when you read the apostolic writings, they're often going back to the Old Testament and saying, we see the gospel foreshadowed here. And we see the gospel anticipated here.

We see Christ prefigured there. And so all of these wonderful, rich Old Testament references are made use in the gospel story. I want to touch on one of those Old Testament stories this morning.

It's found in Genesis 27. You might not have thought a lot about this since Sunday school days. It's a little bit of an unusual story.

And yet I've grown to appreciate it more through the years. And so I won't take a reading because it's the whole chapter. It would take much of our morning.

But probably many of us are familiar with at least the broad brushstrokes of this story. So the story is about one of the patriarchs. His name is Isaac.

So Abraham's son, Isaac. You've heard of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the three great patriarchs. And so it's a story about Isaac who's reaching the end of his earthly journey.

He knows that death is not too far in front of him. And so his way of preparing for death is he wants to eat his final gourmet meal, a final dinner. And then he's going to bring his eldest son before him, which was the custom of the day.

And he will extend his hand. And he's going to deliver a blessing over his eldest son. And so we use the language of blessing a little bit lightly.

But in Bible times, the language of blessing is not used lightly at all. He is going to give something a way that he can only give to one. And once he gives it, it is completely irrevocable.

He can't change that. And it will affect the course of history, literally. Generations will be affected by that one pronouncement of that blessing.

So we use it casually, don't we? And it's not bad. It's good to be liberal with our blessing and blessing people. And so we always say to people, bless you.

Or we end a letter with blessings. And there's nothing wrong with that. But I think we would do well to grow in our appreciation of what's actually happening when you're delivering a blessing.

So that we could do it in a kind of a fuller and more robust way. So he's getting near the end of his earthly journey. So he calls his oldest son Esau before him.

He had two sons, Esau and Jacob. They were actually in their mother's womb at the same time. But of course, one of them came out just prior to the other one, which technically made him the oldest son.

And the privileges of being the oldest son. So he called Esau to him. He tells them this, I'm preparing to die.

You're a hunter. That was his profession. I want you to go hunt me some wild game.

And come back and prepare me a tasty meal. And then I will bless you before I die. But while he's asking him to do this, Isaac's wife hears about this story.

And she favored the other son. She favored Jacob. She didn't want to see the blessing go to the older son.

She had her own motives and wanted to see it come to the younger son. So the moment the oldest son Esau went hunting, she found Jacob and they began to conspire of a way to get this blessing away from the older son. And she said, this is what I want you to do.

I want you to take two goats and I want you to prepare them. We're going to prepare a tasty meal for your father. In other words, I want you to pretend to be your brother.

You're going to go deliver him a tasty meal because his brother is out hunting wild game. It's going to take him maybe all day or days to do that. So we'll beat him to it.

So he's like, mom, that's quite a plan. But like you want me to go in and like take him food and like he's not going to figure this out. He's nearly blind.

He won't be able to tell the difference. He's like, well, but what about my voice? And he talks to me. And worst of all, when he blesses me, if he reaches out and touches me, he's going to realize that I'm not my brother because he says my brother is a hairy man.

That's quite a compliment. Jimmy Ray. No, I just want you to know there's biblical precedence.

That's all. Okay. He says, my brother's a hairy man and I'm a man of smooth skin.

So the moment he reaches out his hand, don't we, when we're blessing, we often touch, lay hands on. He says immediately he's going to be able to tell I'm not that hairy and it's going to get me in all trouble. And he actually fears that if this, if this goes wrong and this thing is detected, instead of getting a blessing, the whole thing will go bad and I'll get cursed.

So again, for them, the stakes are, are really high in this story. So his mother says, I got a plan. Don't worry about it.

Go get the food. Also, I want you to clothe yourself in your brother's garments because it smells like his profession. It smells like the wilds.

It smells like what that clothes that a hunter would wear and your father can't see, but he'll pick up the fragrance. And then after we slay the goat, we'll take the skins and we'll wrap them. Sounds a bit vulgar, but we'll wrap them around your arms.

And just in case he blesses you by touching the back of your neck, we'll wrap it around the back of your neck and the disguise will work perfectly. So sure enough, he goes in and he says, father, this is Esau. And he said, whoa, that he can't see him.

But, but you're, that doesn't sound like Esau's voice. That sounds like Jacob's voice. He said, well, I'll come a little closer.

And when he comes closer, he tests it and he can actually smell the older brother. He can smell his garments. Oh, maybe this, maybe this is Esau.

But just to test it, he reaches out and touches his forearm and sure enough, it's a hairy man. So there's a little bit of conflicting, you know, things going on here because how do you get that food so quick? And it doesn't sound like his voice, but there's enough. And so he reaches out his hand and he blesses him and he releases something absolutely massive spiritually upon this guy.

And of course, later on, some hours later, poor old Esau comes and he's been hunting all day and here's my meal. And so the father goes, oh my goodness, didn't you already come? And wasn't that your meal? And I released that and literally he could not change it. The rest of us, we may just go, oops, I'll just do it again.

When you think of like, oh, just bring the next guy in front of me but this particular blessing, you could only release it once and you couldn't change it. Now, admittedly, there's some odd features to the story. So here's Isaac.

I mean, what's the last thing you'd like to do before you die? And he just says, I want like a really big meal. You can hear his wife saying, you probably won't need it where you're going, but like he's a man through and through. What do you want? I want food and I want like meat.

Like that's the last thing you want before you die? And he wanted a lot of meat. You know, we might think like lamb cutlets. He ate two full goats.

You're like, that's the last thing you want to do before you die is eat two full goats. And maybe it made sense. Like where I'm going, you know, indigestion won't bother me.

I don't know how he would do this. And of course, there's a few other odd features. Like, you know, you think you wrapped a wild animal around your arms.

Like just how hairy was that guy? That's a pretty serious disguise. Okay, like he's like the missing link. So there's all kinds of strange and inexplicable parts to the story.

But you know why the people in the New Testament loved it? You know why the apostles loved it? You know why it comes up in the book of Hebrews? Because it is rich with pictures of the gospel. And those are the ones I want us to appreciate. As we come to the Lord's table, that here we see a father.

And he doesn't just want to give a blessing. He's able to give a blessing. He has a blessing to give that is so profound.

It will go on beyond Esau's generation. It will affect his entire lineage. That must, that's something to carry that kind of blessing in your hands.

But that blessing is only with one. There's only one that is entitled. There's only one that has the rights to that blessing, which is the oldest son.

And in the gospel, God only has one son. Jesus is called the one and only son, the only begotten son. There's only one divine son of God.

And he has rights and privileges in that sonship. All of heaven is available to him as a son. His inheritance is beyond description.

And yet in his grace and love, the message of the gospel is he came and died because he wanted to open the way for others to become sons and daughters through adoption and to gain what he had by right. What he had is the one and only son. So through adoption, we don't become a divine son of God, but we receive the rights and the privileges and the prerogatives that the divine son of God has.

We get what he gets because of adoption. And so when we come into our father's presence, we're coming in asking for something that actually belongs to him and doesn't belong to us. But if you come in like Jacob did, and you come in and you know how to use the name of Jesus, who's there? He said, he saw us here.

It doesn't sound like he saw his voice, but he knew how to use his brother's name. And we must grow in our understanding. That's why in the book of Acts, the weight that there is on the name of Jesus.

The Bible says that the apostles went everywhere doing signs, wonders, and miracles in the name of Jesus. And so when the name of Jesus is properly used, the heavenly father will always incline his ear. You will get the attention of God if you know how to reverently use the name of Jesus.

You ever been walking through a mall or another crowded place? And if people were just to yell, hey you, I mean, that could be anybody. When they yell your name, you're like, did I hear my name? You know, I've been sometimes in a foreign country or completely another part of the world. Is that my name? Because when your name is spoken, especially when it's spoken with affection, like someone's not barking an order, it has this way of stopping you, even the busiest airport.

Does someone know me here? And so there's the father loves to hear the name of his son. And so when we come into his presence and we say, I'm coming to you, not in my own name, Jacob, I'm coming to you in the name of my older brother. I'm coming to you in the name of Jesus.

The father's attention is grasped immediately. And so then he leans forward to say, is that really my son? And you know what he, if we walk, like we're called to, we're actually called to walk wrapped in what the Bible calls robes of his righteousness. So just like Jacob put on his older brother's clothes, put on our older brother's clothes, robes of righteousness.

And so when the father leans towards, you know what he does? I smell my son on you. I smell his righteousness. I smell the uniqueness and the fragrance of my son on you.

And it's something about the favor of his heart begins to burst. And so, so, so we know how, something about knowing our place in Christ, knowing who we are in Christ, knowing how to stay inside that garment and cherish that garment around us. Walking in that garment.

And then just in case he wants to check, is that really my son? He's going to touch your forearm. Okay. Now remember, in order to get that, an animal had to be killed.

The goats had to be killed and they used his carcass to do this. And there's something about us who we understand that from the foundation of the world, our Lord was a lamb who was slain for our sins and we clothe ourself in his sacrifice. When we say, I'm not coming in my own righteousness, I'm not coming in and telling you about all my failures and all my mistakes and all my shortcomings, but I want to conclude in the sacrifice of Jesus.

That perfect sacrifice. The father will reach out and touch you and he'll feel the lamb of God. He'll feel the benefits of the lamb of God upon you.

And he will do just like this story. That's my son. I can smell my son.

Except that in the case of the gospel, he's not fooled. He knows exactly who you are, but you are coming the right way to him and he will extend his arm toward you and he will give a blessing that will go far beyond your life. It'll touch your children and your children's children.

It'll never stop. There are layers of blessing. There's power and blessing that even as his children, we have barely begun to tap because we tend to come to him in our own garments.

Well, Lord, my garments are kind of spotty and wrinkly and holes all over them and it doesn't smell any good. So I hope you'll excuse that. The good news of the gospel is we stand at the foot of a cross with a garment that is just like that.

Nothing could be said for it. And the message of the gospel is that he looks down and he just takes that off. Can I take that? And part of us wants to say, don't touch.

Don't touch my unclean things, Lord. Don't touch all my mistakes. Don't touch my garment because it reminds me every hole there is a mistake I made.

You know, every blemish on that shirt, it's a failure. Don't touch my garment. It's a shortcoming.

And I'd just like to keep this to myself. And there he is saying, no, give it to me. Look at it.

I don't mind dirty hands. Let me take that off of you. And so if we'll trust him, he'll actually take that old garment off of us.

And then to our enormous surprise, he'll take and he'll say, try my seamless garment. Here's the garment of my righteousness. He'll put it upon you and you'll feel like you have never felt in your whole life.

Because that garment is warm. You've never felt the texture like it. There's not a flaw or imperfection in it.

And part of us wants to say, but Lord, don't you know what's inside us? Don't you know what's underneath this? Yes, you put inside of me, but there's still me under there. There's still my mistakes and things. Yes, but I will cover them.

I will cover them so that when I look upon you, all I see is my son. Yes, I know I'm not fooled. The old man in the story was a disguised fool.

I'm not fooled. But this is the way I give my blessing. This is what gives me the right, the prerogative to bless you.

I am giving you rights that you would never otherwise have. Take them. And we let that garment come on us.

And then he said, oh, that's my son's garment. And he smells his son on it. You can't stop a father for blessing.

He extends his hand and all he wants to do is bless. Oh, the untold blessings, the power that is in that blessing. So the next time you pray, pray differently.

A friend asked me a couple of years ago, we were praying about something. I can't even remember what it is. But he said, Todd, do you feel like you're worthy of this prayer? Do you feel like you're worthy of this answer? And I went to answer and realized there was conflict inside my heart because I knew the right answer.

The answer is yes, Christ has made me worthy. But I suddenly realized for three months, at least every time I went to prayer, do you know how I started my prayer? Lord, I'm so unworthy, but please do this. And so before I could even answer my friend, I actually thought I know the right answer, but I'm not there.

I know there's a garment available, but I'm not wearing it. I actually took back my old garment. And said, I'd wear this.

I'll just wear this one. And I wasn't there. So afresh, I was able to slide off the old one and put on the new one and let him say, now, because of what you're wearing in him, now you're worthy.

You're as worthy as the one who gave you the garment. Jacob, I'll give you what he saw deserves. I'll give you his rights and prerogatives just because you wore his shirt.

Because you dared to embrace, to allow him to wrap you in a robe of righteousness. I will give you what was previously reserved for Jesus alone. That's a pretty big plate.

That's a tasty meal. Because what is Jesus entitled to? Maybe we would say this, what isn't he entitled to? What wouldn't the father give him? And yet I just contend for the, maybe something will fall off the table and I could eat that. I just live in my one worthiness.

And I just will think, well, maybe I'll just sit under the table and there's better people eating up higher and I'll, maybe a little something will fall down. I'll read an article on the internet. God will speak to someone else and I'll just get the breeze.

You know, as the Holy Spirit blows on them, I'll just get the scent downwind. And so when I hear the gospel, I want to pull myself up to a table and actually realize there's a chair that with my name on. Who knew? My name on.

I can sit here. But don't you? Yeah, just keep that garment on. Gives you access to a place you wouldn't have otherwise went.

Gives you access to heavenly places. Gives you secrets to revival in there. There's secrets to revival.

That's how the heavens open. This is the secrets of revival. When Jesus, the very first day he came public, the heavens opened.

And the Holy Spirit came. The audible voice, the audible prophetic voice of God standing. So these are the secrets of revival.

If you can stand in Christ and clothe yourself with him, every time you do that, the heavens will open over you and the Spirit will come upon you. The voice of the Lord will come forth because you stand and you suddenly get all the prerogatives that Jesus gained. The secrets of national revival.

Because that's what when Jesus came on the scene, literally it came on a nation he came to. Revival was offered to a nation. Signs and wonders and acts of power fell on a nation in the form of Jesus.

Their God in a human body. So now when the body of Christ will stand in our right place, stand in him, clothed in him. Oh, I navel-gazed too much.

Oh, I looked to him so little. He'll open the heavens. Is the Lord speaking to your heart? Is there old garments? Wouldn't it be nice to leave them behind? So as we come to the Lord's table, what garments would you like to come? What old, wrinkly, smelly shirt? Would you just say, this is my identity.

This is what I've clothed myself. This is how I'm known. This is how I think of myself.

It's not doing me any good. What would it be like if you just came and just left that at the foot of the cross today? And so I want you in these moments, I want you to hear the Lord. Let him speak to you.

What's the garment? What's the name of it that you've been wearing? That he says, you don't have to wear it anymore. And so we come to the foot of the cross and we're going to leave some stuff there. Is it the shirt of despair? That things are tough and they'll always be tough and they'll never get better.

Maybe that old shirt, you could let him take it off you. The shirt of self-pity. How's it working for you? Maybe we could come to the foot of the cross and say, this old shirt is killing me.

I think I need a new one. I think I need a new start. Like me, your shirt is like, I feel worthless.

And you're like, it's killing you. So let him speak to you now. And let him show you what he wants you to discard.

And then what he wants to clothe you with. All made possible by the cross. So let's listen.

Listen to him as we worship. You. By mercy, we've come to your table.

By your grace, you are making us faithful. He needs to come in again. We respond to your invitation.

Amen. So his body is blood. Now that he has earned a crown.

May we shine a little flame. And unto us to be saved. Unto broken or ashamed.

All are welcome in this place. By mercy, we've come to your table. By your grace, you are making us faithful.

As he leads us to worship. As we worship you. As he leads to communion.

We respond to your invitation. We will destroy. Jesus come in glory.

Lord Jesus come in glory. Destroy, destroy. So let's come and bring our things to him.

St. Paul said that before we partake in communion, we should first take stock of ourselves, examine ourselves. I wonder if we might do that this morning, particularly in the light of that message. What's this, to carry on the metaphor, what's this shirt you want to lay down? All kinds of stains, looks like it's been through the war and back.

So make your confession. What is it you'd like to have him remove from you? What is it you'd like to have him forgive, to have him wash you off? What is it from your past you'd like to never think about again? What is it you'd like complete pardon, confess it to him, say, Lord, this is where I need the help. This is what I want to forget.

I want to move on. I want to move past it. I don't want to be characterized by that anymore.

I don't want to be held back anymore. So we make our confession to him and we say, Lord, forgive us. We confess that we have sinned against you in many ways, in thought, in word and in deed.

By what we've done, sometimes by what we've left undone, things we didn't do. Forgive us. Forgive us where the cares of this world have become our cares.

Lord, forgive us where we have succumbed to the love of things. Forgive us where we've used our faculties in impure ways, our minds, our bodies and our language. Forgive us where we've given way to discouragement.

We've actually let it get a hold of us, despair, we chose it, self-pity, comparing ourselves one with another, false comforts, judgments against another person. That's not our place. Forgive us where we've clung to our pains.

Forgive us where we've been too proud to say I'm sorry. Forgive us where we haven't placed high enough priority on things that you have a priority on, on our families, our friends. Forgive us where we've clung to things that we should have let go of.

And forgive us where we've let go of things that were gifts from God, things that we should have clung to. For the sake of your son Jesus, because of him, because of our elder brother, because of his shining garments, his purity and holiness and righteousness, because of his self-sacrifice, forgive all our sin, heal our diseases, bind up our brokenheartedness, restore places that have been breached, fill our lonely hearts with joy. Free us where we've become captive.

So if you've made your confession to him, if you did it with a sincere heart and true faith, then receive the full remission of your sins. Receive his pardon and his deliverance. The Lord forgives you, the Lord gives you a clean slate and absolves you of your sins.

This is the gospel. We're going to sing I Stand Amazed. I stand amazed in the presence of Jesus the Lazarus.

The sinner comes to save us. God's love shall never die. Savior, you're the key to my soul.

And my soul knows when the end is very nigh. The sinner comes to save us. God's love shall never die.

Savior, you're the key to my soul. And my soul knows when the end is very nigh. God's love shall never die.

Savior, you're the key to my soul. And my soul knows when the end is very nigh. Oh, Christ-centered worship.

If he was to open the heavens now, and you could see with your naked eye into the very heart of heaven, you'd see a throne. And you'd see a lamb on that throne. Christ-centered worship, all of heaven has got Christ at the center.

Christ-centered worship. It says, and behold, the heavens were open, and I saw a man that was saved. Beloved worship is like climbing a mountain.

And guess what? We're not there. We're not at the top of the mountain. We are not at the top of the mountain.

It's called Mount Calvary. Hallelujah. So keep preparing your heart.

Let's keep moving up the mountain. I dream of us being at the top of the mountain. I dream of us being in worship and communion.

And we end up in places we didn't even know existed. We end up in a place that we're not even sure whether it's heaven or earth anymore. So there's something of faith in the flesh.

We think, well, that's pretty good. That's better than I've experienced for a while. But there's something of faith that said, I'm only halfway up the mountain.

It says, I'm not content. And so we continue to worship. We continue to hunger and long.

We know how much more He's got. We give Him thanks. Oh Lord, our God, we give You thanks for the goodness and the love that You've made known to us in creation.

The heavens declare Your hand, Lord. In their own way, they yell forth worship. Every sparkling star.

Thank You for calling Israel to be Your people. Your very own special people. Thank You that You led them, You guided them, and You spoke to them through the prophets.

But we give You thanks for Your Word made flesh. Jesus Christ, Your only Son, our Savior. For You sent Him to be born of the Virgin Mary.

To live a perfect life. So that the garment He gives us would be perfect. He withstood sin, so that the garment He gives us would be righteous.

He died for our sins. You raised Him from the dead Father. And You exalted Him as the King over all the earth.

So we give Him that kind of worship. The kind of worship that the King of the universe deserves. What kind of worship is that? Hallelujah.

We don't give Him a paltry worship. We don't give Him our scraps. Our leftovers.

The little bits of our heart that we haven't given away. We give Him our highest and our best. Hallelujah.

We give You thanks for Jesus who on that night. The night in which He was betrayed, beloved, He knew betrayal. On the night in which He was betrayed.

Our Lord Jesus Christ took bread. And when He had broken it. He gave thanks.

And gave it to His disciples saying. Take, eat. This is my body.

Which is broken for you. This is the way I want you to remember me. Because of His broken body.

Pour forth innumerable blessings upon us. After supper He took the cup. And when He had blessed it.

When He had given thanks. He gave it to them saying. Drink this all of you.

For this is the blood of the new covenant. Which is shed for you and for many. For the forgiveness of sins.

Whenever you drink this. This is your way of remembering me. Turning your attention to me.

Recollecting. Hallelujah. So Father we ask you.

Send your Holy Spirit. Upon us. And upon these gifts of bread and wine.

That all who eat and drink at this table. That we be truly one. One in heart.

Because we drink of one cup. One in mind. One in spirit.

One in vision. Inseparable from one another. Unbreachable.

And that we be a holy people. Who belong to the heart of God. Hallelujah.

In a minute. The worship team are going to lead us in a beautiful song. It's actually an ancient liturgy.

That our worship leaders have put to music. And it's beautiful. Our Christian faith is at the same time something very ancient.

And something incredibly contemporary. And our worship leaders are finding ways to bring together. And give expression.

To that faith. I'd like to invite. Brian and Laurence.

To come on up. And maybe get a few extras today. Can I get John Murdo to come and help me out.

Can I get all the servers to come up. If you're here today and it's a hard to get to the front. Please find a way to let us know.

Because we'd love to come and serve you communion just where you sit. Hallelujah. To come to this your table.

Merciful Lord trusting in our own righteousness. Mercies through your one and only son. You've made us worthy to receive your gifts.

Mercies through your one and only son. You've made us worthy to receive your gifts. Grant us therefore gracious Lord.

To eat of the sacraments and break our memories. Grant us therefore gracious Lord. To eat of the sacraments and break our memories.

We do not presume. We do not presume. To come to this your table.

Merciful Lord trusting in our own righteousness. We do not presume. To come to this your table.

Merciful Lord trusting in our own righteousness. Mercies through your one and only son. You've made us worthy to receive your gifts.

Mercies through your one and only son. You've made us worthy to receive your gifts. Grant us therefore gracious Lord.

To eat of the sacraments and break our memories. Grant us therefore gracious Lord. To eat of the sacraments and break our memories.

Let us not feed on another sinful body. Let our souls wash in his most precious blood. Let us not feed on another sinful body.

Let us not feed on another sinful body. Let our souls wash in his most precious blood. Which the prince of glory died.

Which his gain I count the loss. And for contentment all my pride. From his head I'll kiss his feet.

So whole and loud. It is such love inside of me. Oh thoughts come home.

So rich a crown. Nature too small. So amazing.

So divine. My soul. I thank you for the cross.

I thank you for the cross. My love for the cross. I love you for the cross.

My love for the cross. Thank you for your love. As a church plowing in a certain direction, you could probably use a lot of words to describe that, but I've been using the word encounter.

Our faith is not like hearing about a God in a distant universe. In earthly terms, not like having a father whose absentee on the other side of the world. He's one who wants to be encountered.

When you haven't had that for a long time, it's a muscle that goes limp. You hardly expect it. And so we build our expectation.

We build it. We grow in it. We let our faith rise in the kind of God He is and what's possible for us in terms of encountering Him.

The cross of our Lord Jesus Christ made possible all kinds of encounters. So as Dave leads us in worship, I want you to say, Lord, I could use one of those. I could use an encounter.

I want to know you, not in a distant way. But I'm close and personal. Maybe you'd say, Lord, just pray.

Pour out your heart. Learn to flex that muscle a little. The muscle will call you.

It's called expectation. Expectation. So, Father, we, because of Jesus, because you smell Him on us, because we're wrapped in His shining, gleaming robes, stretch forth your hand.

Bless us with your divine presence. Bless us with your Holy Spirit. Bless us with encounters of heavenly nature.

Bless us. Be with us. Thank you for your body.

Thank you for saving us. Saving us. Thank you for saving us.

Saving us. I'm sure, Lord, about your blessing. We've got it all started.

Thank you for us. In your righteousness, you've got us. Saving us.

Saving us. Thank you. Thank you.

Saving us. Saving us. It feels like it's been a really long time since you felt the closeness of Christ.

We want to pray for you today. We want to stand with you, believe with you. We want to build a culture of expectation, of expecting great things from God.

And so if that just feels like that's been too long, then let's spend some time praying for each other today, blessing each other. And next year, it'll be you up praying for me when it's been a while for me. It's the way it works, isn't it? We serve each other.

We never point fingers. We serve one another. We lift one another.

When I'm praying for people, I love that idea of standing on the shoulders of giants. That Einstein quote. But we're not giants here.

But the heart is to lift people. Lift them right up into the heavenlies. Serve them.

Lift them right up into the presence. Just that picture means a lot to me. But you're coming.

Our prayer teams, Bruce, can I make sure you're at the front? David, if you want to be. I know you've got a little one, so if it works for you. Because there might be a lot, we won't follow the station rule because we'll be able to pray for more people.

So just come. You can stand at the front or whatever. Just come.

We'll pray for as many of you as you would like to be prayed for today. Come to the front. Come to the front.

Worthy is the Lamb who was slain. Worthy is the King who conquered the grave. Worthy is the Lamb who was slain.

Worthy is the King. This is amazing grace. This is unfailing love.

That He would take our place. That He would make us His own. Oh, Jesus, we sing for all that You've done for us.

Worthy is the Lamb who was slain. Worthy is the King who conquered the grave. Worthy is the Lamb who was slain.

Worthy is the King. Worthy is the Lamb who was slain. Worthy is the King who conquered the grave.

Worthy is the Lamb who was slain. Worthy is the King. Yeah, worthy.

Worthy is the Lamb who was slain. Worthy is the King who conquered the grave. Worthy is the Lamb who was slain.

Worthy, worthy, worthy. Yeah. We stand in You, Lord.

Pour out Your goodness. Pour out Your goodness. Pour out Your life.

Pour out Your freedom. Pour out Your mercy. Pour out Your love.

Jesus is worthy. His goodness to every nation. We release the anthem of heaven here for love.

Lift up Your voices before creation. Declare His goodness to every nation. We release the anthem of heaven here.

Lift up Your voices before creation. We declare Your goodness to every nation. We release the anthem of heaven.

Sing a new song. Yeah, we'll sing of Your goodness. Sing of Your goodness.

Sing of His wonderful love. Sing a new song. Yeah, we'll sing of Your goodness.

Sing of Your goodness. Sing a new song to the Lord. Lift up Your voices before creation.

We declare Your goodness through all creation. We release the anthem of heaven here for love. We release You, Lord.

Lift up Your voices before creation. We declare Your goodness to every nation. We release the anthem of heaven here.

Sing a new song. Yeah, we'll sing of Your goodness. Sing of Your goodness.

Sing of His wonderful love. His love repairing hearts. Sing a new song.

Yeah, we'll sing of Your goodness. Sing of Your goodness. Sing a new song to the Lord.

Release the freedom, release the joy that You have filled us with Your love. Oh, oh, oh, oh. Oh, oh, oh, oh.

His mighty love. His masterful action.

---

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/28/SID28748.mp3>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/todd-atkinson/pursuing-the-presence-of-god/>

# *Grow in Your Walk with Christ*

---

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

**[www.sermonindex.net](http://www.sermonindex.net)**