

Tough Questions 2026

Week 3

Fairview Missionary Church | Angola, IN

Scripture: Assorted

Speaker: Joel Greenwood

April 26, 2026

We are in overtime with the series now, today, all right? So I decided to extend the series called Tough Questions, where I am answering the questions that you as a congregation have sent to me and even people online. Questions about life and about Scripture and maybe some difficult questions that you may be wrestling with. And as I said before, I'm not going to get through all of the questions that have been submitted, but I have taken notes and done research on all of those questions. And I will send those out tomorrow in a Joel's journal. And so you can get those.

If you need to sign up for that, you can go online and you can find where you can sign up for Joel's journal so at least you can get the notes to the answers of these questions that you submitted. Now, as a quick recap, before I get into the questions, you need to know how I am answering these. And the first way that I'm answering them is from a biblical perspective. And so the first thing that I'm going to do is look at Scripture. And if Scripture gives us a black and white answer, we will come to that conclusion. If Scripture doesn't give a very clear answer, my next goal then would be to look for truths that Scripture would give us that would lead us in a direction to answer that question.

So Scripture is going to be my guide all the way through in answering these questions. And if Scripture seems to be silent on the topic altogether, I simply pray for wisdom. I do as much research as I can. I enjoy trying to answer these questions. And so we move in a direction that way. And as I have said the last two weeks, I will repeat again. It is obvious I'm not God. And so as I share these answers with you, I am simply viewing this as a conversation between friends as we try to answer some of life's difficult questions.

And if at any point in the future somebody gives me more insight or more information into one of these questions, I do reserve the right to change my answer. Now, obviously not biblically. I'm standing strong on that, but some of these other ones, maybe there isn't a biblical precedence. And so I do reserve the right to change my opinion in the future. So please don't record me and then share it 20 years from now and say you said. Let's go ahead and pray. I'm going to get through as many as I can. My goal is at least five. We're going to try to do five, all right? Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we come before You.

We thank You for Your Word. As Scripture says that it is a lamp unto our feet. It does guide us. It gives us light into the steps that we're taking. And so I pray that we would gain wisdom through Your Word as there are some great questions that we are going to wrestle with today. And so we pray for Your insight. We pray for Your wisdom. And Father, that You would just guide us and draw us closer today. We ask this in Jesus' name, amen. Again, I'm answering these in the order that I received them.

I'm not skipping any, so we're just going to go through as many as we can. All right, number one. In the Lord's prayer, why are we praying to God our Father, asking Him not to lead us into temptation? This is a great question. I'm assuming the person that's asking this question is asking because he or she, James 1:13, they know that it says this, "When tempted, no one should say, "God is tempting me. For God cannot be tempted by evil,

nor does he tempt anyone." And so the question is, why then do we pray, keep me from temptation if he's not the one doing it in the first place?

Well, let's talk about some definitions here. Temptation is often meant for destruction. It is to entice people towards evil and away from God. That is temptation. We have the same Greek word that can be translated, temptation, or it can be translated as tests or trials. And God does allow us as believers to go through tests and trials and that sometimes term temptation in order to refine our faith, to build our character, or to strengthen our spiritual maturity.

So when you and I are following the command of Scripture, praying the Lord's prayer, and we say, "Lead us not into temptation," what we are asking is we are asking for God's protection to not let us fall into situations where we may be tempted beyond our ability and to guide us away from moral danger. When we say, "Father, lead us not into temptation," we are asking for Him to lead us away from those temptations that we would fall into that are beyond our ability.

Scripture is clear that God does allow spiritual testing to take place and trials because it can be good for our spiritual growth. But temptation comes from the enemy and is designed to cause failure. This is one of the struggles in translation between Greek and English and other languages, is that you have this Greek word that can have multiple meanings, the same Greek word.

And so here, maybe it would be better to translate it as, "Lead us not into these temptations that can lead to a moral collapse." Let me just give you some biblical assurance that God does allow us to experience trials and seasons like that. In Matthew chapter 4, even Jesus is said to be led into the wilderness for a time of testing. But he would be tempted by the devil, not God. So God led him. The Spirit led him into the wilderness for a time of testing.

But the tempting actually came from the devil, not God. Being tempted or tested is moral. And our prayer, as we are tested and tempted, is that we will not fall or fail, and that we would be honest in our weakness. So that's the difference. It's a great question. We got through that one fast, all right? Question number two. What does faith look like on a daily basis? More practically speaking, when I get up on a Monday morning, what should my agenda look like? In other words, the question is, it's a great question.

When I give my life to Christ, when I am doing my best to follow Jesus, how does my life change? What looks different in my life? Now, I can give you a tongue in cheek kind of funny answer and say not much changes. A lot is going to stay the same. You're still going to go to work. You're still going to have a family. You're still going to eat and you're going to have hobbies and friends. You're still going to have a job in which you make money that you are going to spend and give and save. But in another sense, I would honestly say when you give your life to Jesus, everything changes.

Let me explain what I mean by that. You'll still go to work, but you will work as an opportunity to serve Jesus and love others. You will still eat, but you may eat different things or different amounts. You'll still drink, but you may drink different things or different amounts. You are still going to have a family. You're still going to be a spouse or a parent or a brother or sister. But your goal is going to be that you would be the best spouse, the best parent, the best person you can be by following the example of Jesus.

You're still going to have hobbies, you're still going to have friends, but you're not going to be worried as much about breaking 80 on the golf course as instead you see it as an opportunity to have investments in friendships and fellowship and sharing Jesus. You're still going to earn money from your job because you're going to view it as a gift from God. And this will cause you to maybe spend or to give or to save differently. So in that sense, everything is going to change. You will begin to value time with Jesus or you should.

And so because of that, because you will value this time with Jesus, you probably will desire to be into His Word. You will desire to pray and to meditate and value sitting in the presence of Jesus. Now, does that mean that the

day after you give your life to Jesus, the next day you're going to wake up and want to spend five hours in the Book of Leviticus? No, probably not. It's a gradual progression where you spend time with Him. You spend time in prayer. You spend time in His Word. And there is this internal desire to become more like Jesus.

And that would include character traits like compassion and forgiveness and becoming less selfish. Think about the fruits of the Spirit. You will begin to exhibit these fruits. Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. These will begin to exude out of you as Christ continues to fill you. You will also begin to do what He did. The same things that He had passion for, you will have passion for.

Things like caring for the poor, loving others, making disciples. Your attitude will begin to change. As Christ continues to flow through you, your response to situations will be different than what it was before, no matter where you are at. I like to think of it this way. He will change my reactions and how I act on the basketball court when things don't go my way or what I even post on social media. He will help control my reaction when I'm standing on the first tee of the golf course and I top the ball right away at the beginning.

My reactions will be different. Now, I need you to know this doesn't mean that I'm going to be perfect. You and I are not going to be perfect. That's not what I'm suggesting. But we will consistently be turning towards God for strength and for wisdom and for comfort every single day of our lives when we wake up. Real faith isn't just looking the part. It's not just going to church and reading your Bible and praying. It's not about those acts externally, these rituals that we do. Real faith involves a changed heart.

It's something that takes place internally that allows us to sincerely put our trust and our faith in Jesus to meet our deepest needs. Life could look very similar on the outside from people that are looking in and don't know us well, but those that do know us will recognize even though life looks similar, the intentions and the heart behind our life has totally changed. What we value as important, why we do what we do. Here is a good summary of what this actually looks like on a practical level.

Faith on a daily basis is the practical moment-by-moment trust in God that transforms mundane tasks into acts of devotion often characterized by choosing peace over worry, active prayer, and treating others with love. It acts as a guide for decision-making, influencing how individuals speak, how they work, and how they manage relationships by applying spiritual beliefs to real-world situations. Does that make sense?

This is what faith does. It changes why we do what we do as our heart is transformed to become more like Jesus. All right, next question. Question number three. Do we offer forgiveness over acts of hate? Follow up, there are a lot of crazy things happening in the world. How do we love and forgive others? Now, I know the person that has asked this question knows the answer. Should we offer forgiveness even over acts of hate? The answer is yes, of course.

We are to offer forgiveness. But the trickier question, how do you do that? How in the world do we offer forgiveness in these crazy situations that may happen in our lives? Let me first assure you that while offering forgiveness is commanded in Scripture, this does not mean forgetting or condoning abusive behavior or mandating reconciliation without repentance. One of the struggles that we have with this idea of forgiveness are some untrue statements that we maybe have learned to believe.

That if I forgive somebody, I'm condoning what they have done, or I am approving of their action, and that's not what forgiveness is. Scripture does not teach that forgiveness means that there are no consequences here on earth for the actions of those that sin. You see, there's a difference between how we are viewed before God and what we have to deal with while here on earth. Let me just explain this to you.

Oftentimes, we get this confused and we think that because of God's grace and His mercy in our lives, and because Scripture says that when I ask for repentance of my sins, it says that I am justified before God, which literally means it's just as if I did not sin. So when God looks at me, He sees me as holy, He sees me as pure, as

righteous, as perfect. I am completely forgiven of that act. But what that doesn't mean is that I am excluded from dealing with the consequences here on earth.

Just because I'm justified before God doesn't mean I don't have to pay justice here and now. Scripture does not teach that. Let me just give you some examples of where that takes place. When Jesus is on the cross and the person next to him, the thief that is being crucified, there's one on each side and one is hurling insults at him. And the other one says, "Why are you doing that? This man has done nothing wrong, but we deserve to be here." There's a repentance that takes place there because Jesus looks at that thief on the side and says, "Listen, today you will be with me in paradise." There is a healing that takes place.

He is justified before God so that God now sees him as perfect. But do you see what doesn't happen in Scripture? Jesus doesn't then say, "Okay, you can get off the cross now. You don't have to pay the price for your sin." No, that man still dies on the cross, doesn't he? There are still consequences for his actions, and the same is true for us. So when you think about forgiveness, and we're going to look at a bunch of scripture that says forgiveness is necessary, it's a commandment for us that we are to forgive others.

That when we are talking about forgiveness, it does not mean that there are not consequences for their actions. So let's look at some biblical truths about forgiveness. Romans 3:23 says, "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." I share this verse because it is true in my own life, and I know it is true of you as well. It is easier to extend forgiveness to others when you consider the grace you have been shown.

When I struggle to forgive somebody because of something that has been done to me or to those that I love or those around me, one of the ways that I can get over that hurdle is to remember that I am totally undeserving of God's grace and his mercy. And because he has chosen to forgive me, even though I don't deserve it, that I should offer the same to others. In Matthew chapter 6 verses 14 and 15, Jesus says, "For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, then your Heavenly Father will also forgive you." And the opposite is true.

But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins. Scripture teaches that forgiving others is a prerequisite for your own forgiveness. If we want to receive the forgiveness of God, we should be willing to offer forgiveness to others. Matthew chapter 5 verses 23 and 24 says, "Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar.

It is more important that you first go and be reconciled to them and then come and offer your gift." A lack of forgiveness Jesus teaches us breaks our fellowship with God, and it allows bitterness to harbor in our hearts. One of the things that is true of forgiveness, I'll never forget the saying. I don't know if it was a pastor or in a book I read, but they made the statement, "Unforgiveness is like drinking poison and expecting the other person to die." If we forgive, forgiveness is as much for us, if not more, than for the person we're forgiving.

There's something that can take root in our heart if we allow unforgiveness to remain there. And so we are commanded by Jesus to forgive others. And we should even be willing to forgive others when they don't deserve it. Take it a step further. Even if they don't ask for forgiveness, we should offer forgiveness. That's scripturally what we are to do. Here's a couple of examples. In Acts chapter 7 verses 59 through 60, we have Stephen, who is being stoned, being killed because of his belief in Jesus. And this is what we read.

While they were stoning him, in the midst of the process of him being killed, Stephen prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." And then look what he says. He fell to his knees and he cried out, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." And when he had said this, he fell asleep, meaning he died. In the very act of people that are murdering him, he offers forgiveness. Why? Because he has received the forgiveness of Jesus. And of course, we have the example of Jesus on the cross, right?

As those are hurling insults at Him and are literally nailing Him to the cross, He says, "Father, do not hold these sins against them, for they do not know what they are doing." Even if somebody doesn't ask for it, we should

offer forgiveness. And finally, Ephesians 4:32, the apostle Paul says, "Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ, God forgave you." If we are truly grateful and thankful for our own forgiveness, we should not have that hesitancy in granting forgiveness to a repented offender, even if the wrong is repeated.

Now, let me give one final truth before we move on to the next question. Just because we offer forgiveness, even to those that don't ask for it or deserve it, doesn't mean that as a follower of Jesus, you have to intentionally put yourself in places where you will need to offer forgiveness. If somebody punches me in the face, I'm not going to stand there and say, "Please do it again so I can forgive you." It is not unchristian for me to walk away and to try to get myself out of that situation. You don't keep yourself in a hurtful situation because you say, "Well, I'm offering forgiveness.

Well, I'm offering forgiveness." No, remember I shared, there are consequences for your actions. If you do something to hurt me, it is totally appropriate for me to take a step back and say, "Okay, I'm not going to keep myself in that situation. I'm going to forgive you." But there's consequences. Our relationship is broken now because of what has happened. And so there is this idea, again, that forgiveness can be difficult because it means forgetting or condoning their behavior or that you have to keep allowing yourself to get hurt.

I don't see anywhere in Scripture where I have to leave myself in a hurtful situation over and over and over again, just so that I can forgive. Now, of course, Jesus says, "If somebody hits you on the right cheek, turn to the other also. You can do that, but I'm glad I only have two so I can walk away after that, right?" And just say, "Okay, I don't need to do that. I'm going to forgive you. I'm offering forgiveness. That's what Jesus was teaching. But I don't need to intentionally keep myself in a difficult situation. But I am to offer forgiveness, even for those who don't ask. Question. We're totally changing gears on this one, all right?

How am I supposed to understand the timeline of Jesus' death and resurrection? So this was asked, of course, around Easter time. Was he crucified on a Wednesday, Thursday, or Friday? And how should we understand three days and three nights in the tomb? This is actually a fun question to do some research on if you never have. So I'm going to give you some options here and then just give you the data that backs up these beliefs. The most commonly held date by theologians and historians, this is not everybody. It's just the most common.

It's Friday, April 3rd, 33 AD, right down to the day. There is evidence for this date, and so let me just give you some of this evidence. First, we can narrow it down certainly to a time period of 10 years, because Pontius Pilate, according to history, was governor of Judea from 26 to 36 AD. So we only have those 10 years, for sure. The gospels specify that Jesus was crucified on a preparation day, the day of preparation before a Sabbath. And it was during the Passover festival.

So we know, of course, that it is spring. You guys remember as we talked about those different festivals and feasts. So we're certainly in the springtime, so we're narrowing it down. Astronomical calculations show that between 29 and 36 AD, there are only two years that align with a Friday with the Passover date, which has to be Nissan 14 or 15, according to the Jewish calendar. And those two dates that fall in that time period are April 7th, AD 30, or April 3rd, AD 33. So there's two options.

We've now narrowed it down to two based on this information. And the Gospel of John mentions three separate Passovers during Jesus' ministry. So we know His ministry lasted at least three years. And so AD 30 seems too early as a crucifixion date for Jesus based on when he was born and when he started his ministry. And one final note, which is interesting to say the least, NASA records confirm that a partial lunar eclipse was visible from Jerusalem on Friday, April 3rd, AD 33.

So you guys know that obviously when he died, darkness covered the land. And so there's just an interesting fact that on that specific date, which aligns with everything else, there was a lunar eclipse that took part on that day. So here's the problem that people struggle with April 3rd, AD 33. How does that equal three days? If he was crucified on a Friday and he rose on a Sunday, how do we get to three days that he is going to be in the tomb?

For those of you that were here when I talked about the Jewish calendar, you understand that their days start and end on sunset.

And so for three days, you would have Friday. He was crucified before sunset, so that's part of Friday. He's in the tomb all day Saturday, starting Friday sunset till Saturday sunset. And he isn't raised until Sunday, so you have the beginning of Sunday, which started Saturday night. It's a little confusing, right? But you can get those three days, but it's only part of those three days. And so some struggle, and they want a full three days and three nights. So they hypothesize that Jesus was crucified on a Thursday, the Thursday before.

They believe there's some evidence for this, that in the year of the crucifixion, the Passover, remember we are celebrating the Passover feast, that that year, the Passover fell on a Friday, meaning preparation day for the Passover was a Thursday. This would officially allow for two Sabbaths in one week, and that did happen in the Jewish calendar. You had the special Passover Sabbath on Friday, and then you had the regular weekly Sabbath, which was every Saturday, meaning that preparation day didn't need to be a Friday.

It could have been a Thursday. This also allows for a literal translation of the prophecy in the Book of Jonah, if you want a literal translation, that says, "Three nights and three days, he was in the belly of the fish," and that Jesus was in the earth. John's account also says that the next day, after Jesus was crucified, was a special Sabbath. You will see that in John 19:31, and the Passover was considered a special Sabbath, not an ordinary Sabbath.

And in Matthew chapter 28, verse 1, the original Greek says that Jesus was resurrected after the Sabbath's plural, not singular. So there's some evidence there for a Thursday as well. Advocates for a Thursday crucifixion also consider the preparation day to be the day before the Passover, the High Sabbath for another particular reason, and that it gives us some theological significance. John chapter 19:14 says, "It was the day of preparation of the Passover." Notice it says of the Passover, maybe not the Sabbath.

It was about noon, and Pilate says, "Here is your king on that particular day." Preparation Day, then, that Thursday, would have been the day that the Passover lamb would have been killed prior to Passover meal that evening, which according to Jewish reckoning, was the beginning of the next day. And so it's clear from the Old Testament instruction that for this Passover lamb that was to be slaughtered on that day, the 14th day of the Hebrew month of Nissan, which was on a Thursday afternoon in AD 32.

So we're the year before the AD 33. Thursday advocates point out this neat theological thing that God could have been doing, that at the same time, Israel was slaughtering their Passover lambs on Nissan 14, Jesus, the Lamb of God, was dying on a cross. It would have been the exact moment that they would have been slaughtering those Passover lambs in preparation for the day of Passover. And this would have fulfilled the prophetic symbolism of the Passover if we look at an AD 32 date.

Now, because of time and I want to answer this last question, I'm not even going to get into the Wednesday theories. But as you can tell, there is considerable evidence for both of these dates. And I know that you will always ask me the question, "Okay, that's great, Pastor, but what do you believe?" Here is my answer. I have no idea, okay? I have no idea. I don't know. I honestly don't know, but I do just for sake of ease. I celebrate Passion Week with the tradition of Friday. Just because it's easier and that's what everybody does. We call it Good Friday and everything else. And so I just follow that.

I honestly don't have any idea, and it doesn't change my faith. There's some neat things on both sides of the argument. AD 32, AD 33, somewhere in that time frame. Let me get to this last question, and I'm going to go over just by a little bit, but I need to get to this one. If God already has plans for our lives, why bother to pray for miracles or change? If we don't see healing, is it because I did not have enough faith, or did I pray wrong? Did I fail my sick family member because I didn't have enough faith?

It's a heavy question to end on, but I need to get to this because I want to answer this question for the person that asked it. Most of these questions that we have been dealing with have been cerebral, theological, logical, or just kind of fun to look at. This question comes from a hurting heart, and so I have to address it a little differently. It is a great question. It's a question that all of us have asked. And since I know it comes from somebody that is experiencing hurt and pain right now, before I even begin to try to answer this question from a theological, a biblical, or even a cerebral viewpoint, let me first address this question from my heart.

Amid our pain and our hurt, I want you and all of us to know that these questions are fair. They're common. You're not alone. Many people ask these types of questions, and God can handle them. By you asking this question is not a sin. It does not show a lack of faith on your part. It shows truly a moment of honesty. I want you to know that your emotion, your pain, and your hurt are very real.

And that if you were to ask me this question while I was sitting at your house amid the pain, you need to know that I would not even try to answer this question while I was sitting there because no matter what answer I gave, it would seem trivial and unhelpful in relieving the pain. So if I was sitting in your living room and you're asking me this question, here's what I would do. I would simply acknowledge the question as appropriate, and I would let you know that I have asked similar questions in my seasons of pain because I have. I have asked these same questions.

I do believe the Bible gives us some answers to help with these questions. Those answers, though, do come from a logical, a theological perspective. And unfortunately, when these types of questions are asked, they don't want a logical or theological response. Anytime I've asked these questions, I have not wanted a theological or logical response because these types of questions are asked from a broken and hurting heart. Therefore, here is my disclaimer.

If you are currently hurting or broken, I give you every right to ignore my answer right now. I just do. You're hurting. You may not want to even listen to what I have to say, and I am okay with that. But for the rest of you that maybe are here right now, and you're not in one of those seasons of brokenness or hurting, I do believe in a service like this is the best time for you to hear the answer to these questions, so that when you are in one of these seasons of hurting or brokenness, you can be equipped with the answers from Scripture to help your faith in that moment.

Does that make sense? So if you're hurting, just ignore everything I'm going to say for the next couple of minutes, because this is going to come from a logical, let's look at the Scripture answer. And when we're hurting, sometimes we don't want that or need that. In the Bible, it is clear that we are commanded to pray for the purpose of building a personal relationship with God. When we pray, one of the reasons we pray is to align our wills with His will and to express a dependence on Him.

We do not see anywhere in Scripture this idea of praying as a means to change God's will or to get Him to do what we want. Praying instead, when we see it in Scripture, is a means to receive grace. It's to find strength against temptation. It's to participate in God's work on earth. That is why we pray your will be done here on earth as it is in heaven. We are praying for His will to be done, not our own.

And so prayer then becomes an act of obedience. It is about a relationship with God. You can see why in a moment of hurt and pain, that answer is completely unhelpful because you're hurting. I want some relief now. I want some peace. Now, I want some understanding now because every single one of us have prayed for somebody that we loved or we cared about or prayed for a situation where we just wanted the hurting and the pain to stop. And God did not answer that prayer how we wanted.

And it is very human and very normal for us to just go, "That doesn't make any sense." Why would you not answer that prayer? Why would you allow the pain to continue? In Philippians chapter 4, verses 6 and 7, the apostle Paul says, "Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with

thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

1 Thessalonians 5:17 says, "Pray continually." You see, we come to God with these specific requests, and we have God's promise that our prayers are not in vain, even if we do not receive specifically what we asked for. I know this has to be true in your lives. It's true in mine. If you're over the age of 20, where you have prayed for something in your life and God did not grant your request, and years later, you looked back and said, "Thank you, God, for not giving me what I thought I wanted." As I get older, I have more and more of those times in my life where I can look back and say, "Man, I am so glad you did not give me that." And the more that happens, I will say the easier.

It doesn't make it easy. It is easier then in those moments when I pray for something that seems great in the moment and God doesn't respond how I would want him to respond, that I can in those moments say, "Okay, God, you are bigger and greater than I am. And even though this is what I desire now, I desire your will even more than that." It's a difficult place to be when you're in a moment of pain and struggle. Matthew 6:6, Jesus says, "But when you pray, go into your room, close the door, and pray to your Father who is unseen, then your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you." But notice he didn't say He will answer your prayers exactly how you want.

He'll reward you with a relationship, with fellowship with Him. And sometimes His delays or His answers that don't come in the way we want according to His wisdom are for our benefit. And so in these situations, we are to be diligent and persistent in prayer. But again, prayer should not be seen as a means of getting God to do our will on earth, but rather as a means of getting God's will done on earth, for God's wisdom far exceeds our own. And yet in Scripture, there are two truths that seem to converge, which are difficult to believe at the same time.

And that's this idea of God's sovereignty versus human responsibility. We have to wrestle with this in Scripture. Scripture is very clear about God's sovereignty. He is all-knowing. Hebrews 4:13 tells us that nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of Him to whom we must give account. He knows everything that has happened, is happening, and is going to happen. Scripture also says that God is all-powerful. Daniel chapter 4:35, "All the peoples of the earth, you and I are regarded as nothing.

He does as he pleases with the powers of heaven and the peoples of the earth." No one can hold back his hand or say to him, "What have you done?" He is all-powerful, all-knowing, and yet he is also good. Psalm 100, verse 5, "For the Lord is good and His love endures forever. His faithfulness continues through all generations." We also could say God is just, God is fair, God is righteous. These are all things that we know about God. And it shows His sovereignty. But what about human responsibility and free will?

These truths don't interfere with that unnecessary idea that we shouldn't pray because we can't change his mind. God wants us to pray. He wants us to ask. That is very clear. Matthew 7: 7, Jesus says, "Ask and it will be given to you. Seek and you will find. Knock and the door will be opened." Mark 11:24 says, "Therefore, I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours." Mark 9:29, he replied, "This kind of faith, speaking of a demon that could only come out by prayer." Prayer was necessary.

Luke 22:46. In the garden of Gethsemane, when he's looking at his disciples there, he says, "Why are you sleeping? Get up and pray so that you will not fall into temptation." And again, Matthew 21: 22, "If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer." In Luke 18:1, then Jesus told His disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up. So which is it? Do you get what you ask for, or is God sovereign? How does this work itself out?

Somehow, these two things mesh together so that we are called to pray, and we are called to ask for things, and we are called to pray for His will to happen here on earth just as it happens in heaven. And yet God is in charge. The inescapable conclusion from these passages and many others is that the sovereign God has ordered His

creation, you and I and all of the world in such a way as to allow prayer to play a vital part in the outworking of His purposes, even if we don't always get what we want. So let me answer some of these questions very practically.

If I don't see healing in my loved one, is it because I didn't have enough faith or I prayed wrong? No, not at all. Did I fail my sick family member because I didn't have enough faith? The answer is also no. That is not true. We pray for those we love. We pray for those we care about. We ask for healing. And God in His sovereignty decides what He's going to do. And we don't always know why. And we may never know. I guess that's what faith is. It's hard. It hurts. It's difficult.

Jesus said, "If you and I had faith as small as a mustard seed, we could say to this mountain, go throw yourself into the sea and it would be done." I don't know all of you perfectly well, but I don't think any of us can do that. So I think our level of faith is a lot smaller than maybe what we would imagine it to be. And so I think one of our prayers should be, "Father, help my unbelief. Give me faith." That would be a good prayer for us, especially during these moments. Heavenly Father, thank you for loving us. Thank you for your grace and your mercy.

Pray that you would be with us as we leave this place, that we would experience that peace that surpasses understanding. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.