The Darkest Night — Delivery Transcript

Luke 22:23–65 (CSB) · Wes Terry · Sunday, March 15, 2020 · *The Passion Of Jesus*

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If you have a Bible, open it up to the Gospel of Luke. We're going to be in Luke chapter 22 this morning. And I struggle with whether or not to do a special sermon for the coronavirus and, you know, have a special text for that. But the more I was thinking about this passage, the more I think it is absolutely relevant to the things that we're facing today as a country. And God in his sovereignty has a way of lining things up at certain places and certain times and I think this morning is another example of that.

And so we're going to continue our series on the passion of Jesus and the cross of Christ. And the passion of Jesus is like we said not just strong emotion about something, but a willingness to suffer for something that you love. It is a form of pain that has to be quenched, and you will do whatever it takes in order to quench that pain, even if it entails some form of suffering. And that's nowhere more evident than in the passage that we have today, as both Jesus and his disciples experience what you might call a crushing of life.

That sometimes life will be so difficult. Your circumstances become so overwhelming, they absolutely feel like they crush you. Can I get a witness? Has anybody had a moment in your life where life was so difficult, your circumstances were so overwhelming? Maybe it wasn't one thing. It was a hundred things all at once, one thing after another, and it just left you absolutely crushed. It could have been a marriage that all of a sudden ended, or probably not all of a sudden, but over a long period of time got weaker and weaker and weaker until it finally was beyond all hope and then the divorce papers finalized and everything was over and you felt crushed in that moment.

Might have been a boyfriend or a girlfriend. You thought they were the one and you were going to get married and you were engaged and all of a sudden some things happened and it broke off and it left you crushed and you didn't know how to trust people anymore. Didn't know if you'd ever find love again. You were absolutely crushed by that experience. It could

have been a job loss where you know you needed that job to put food on the table. You weren't going to be able to provide for your family any other way and then that job was pulled out from underneath you, or maybe you didn't get the promotion, or maybe you got some kind of pay cut and it left you squeezed and squeezed until ultimately you became crushed by the lack of financial stability.

It might have been the IRS. You know, it's getting close to tax season and they come visit you and say, you know what, we've noticed this little mistake that you've made for the past 27 years in a row. And it's time to pay the government what you owe them plus interest and all of that just sinks in on you and you feel this crushing weight of life. Life is hard. I had a pastor friend this week say life has two settings. There is good hard and there is bad hard. And I think that is absolutely true.

Even when life's hitting on all cylinders, when you're you know when you're nailing it, you're enjoying life, the marriage feels great, the family's good, you're enjoying your job, you're doing all the things that you need to be doing, but you don't have any trouble sleeping at night, right? Because you're exhausted. You've run yourself ragged, even though things are good. It's exhausting because life is difficult, exhausting because life is hard. And then sometimes life gets bad hard. And it seems like, and I'm sure this is where the saying comes from, when it rains, it pours.

One bad thing happens, it's like several bad things happen after that, and all of a sudden you just feel this crushing weight of what else can go wrong? What else can break? And in those moments, there is a dynamic that takes place in us spiritually. A spiritual dynamic when the crushing of life takes place. It's a dynamic that we're going to see in our passage today. And even though the crushing of life is a universal experience, I think Jesus is going to, through this passage this morning, give us a template for how to sustain ourselves, how to persevere through the crushings of life, come out on the other side without being undone.

To give you a little bit of context, this is Jesus. He's had the Passover meal with his disciples. He has basically redefined the Passover to say, I'm the thing, I'm the person that all the other Passovers have been pointing to. Joseph did a great job with that text last week. He said, my body's going to be broken for you, my blood will be shed for you. After that he has a little lesson about how the kingdom works and how his disciples should embrace a servant heart and that those who want to be great in the kingdom of heaven need to be those who serve the most.

Then he shifts. He leaves that little supper table. They go back to the Mount of Olives. And as they are making their way to the Mount of Olives, Jesus makes a prophetic statement. It's actually a prophetic warning about the upcoming crushing that the disciples are about to experience and their eventual falling away. Every single one of them, he says, every single

one of you are going to fall away as a result of the hardship that you're about to undergo as my followers. Up to this point, you know, I've been pretty popular.

I've been a miracle worker. I've been having massive crowds listen to my preaching. Your assumption was that we're going to carry that power and that political influence and we're going to overthrow Rome. But I need you to get ready, because instead of us overthrowing Rome, Rome's actually going to overthrow me. I'm going to be arrested. I'm going to be crucified. I'm going to be put to death. And they didn't have categories for it. And Jesus is basically prophesying that life's about to crush you and you're going to fall and you need to know it.

And what they do in response to their crushing and what Jesus does in response to his crushing. I think, gives us a template for how to survive the crushing in our own life. It's an interesting phrase in your notes. I call it the sifting of Satan. Because in Luke's gospel, the first verse that we're going to read this morning, Jesus actually prophesies to Peter. Peter, Satan has asked to sift you like wheat. I don't know if you guys know what sifting is. It's kind of an old school tool that they would use, so they'd sift out wheat.

You'd throw the wheat up in the air and you'd sift it out, and all the trash would fall to the bottom and leave only the good stuff, the core, the essential thing of the plant. And Jesus says that's going to happen in your life, Peter, through the suffering that you're about to undergo. And his response and Jesus' response to his own sifting gives us a template for how to experience the sifting of Satan in our own life. And that may sound a little bit provocative that Satan is trying to sift you like wheat, that the devil would attack us in those ways.

But I believe it's absolutely a hundred percent true, and I hope you'll see that in our passage. So Luke chapter 22, starting in verse 31, Jesus makes that prophetic statement. He says, Simon, Simon, look out, because Satan has asked to sift you like wheat, throw you up in the air and shake you and make you suffer. But I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail. And you, when you have turned back, I want you to strengthen your brothers. So you're going to fall, but I've prayed for you so that you're not going to shipwreck your faith.

And when you turn back, I want you to strengthen your brothers. Then Peter responds as he normally does, no Jesus, you're wrong, I'm right. I'm ready to go with you, both to prison and to death. And Jesus says, no, Peter, you're wrong, I'm right. I tell you, the rooster will not crow today until you deny three times that you know me. Now this is a fascinating contrast. You see, Jesus knows everything that's about to happen. It's one of the most fascinating things in the gospel accounts, I think. Jesus' own self-understanding.

He knew himself to be the Messiah. He knew what that meant. He knew he would go to the cross. He knew God would raise him from the dead three days later. He knew everything that was about to happen, him being denied by Peter, betrayed by Judas, arrested by the

Romans. He had perfect knowledge. But Peter has no idea. He has no idea what his own heart is like. He has no idea what's about to happen to him. Imagine if we today, let's say we're, well, we are worshiping right now. Let's imagine we're not living in a democratic republic.

Let's imagine we don't have religious freedoms. And all of a sudden, police officers bust in here, they arrest me, they arrest every single one of you, and they cart you off to jail, and they say you're never going to see your kids again, you're never going to have the life that you used to have because of your betrayal of the, you know, the government or whatever. You were worshiping God instead of worshiping the president. Imagine the crushing weight that you would feel if you experienced those things. That's exactly what's about to happen to these disciples and to Jesus.

And we don't have time to read all of it, but in verses 35 to 38, Jesus says that's about to happen, things are about to turn, it's about to get difficult. In verses 39 to 46, Jesus prays in the Garden of Gethsemane, Father, if it's possible, let this cup pass from me. But not what I will, but what you will be done. Judas comes in with a mob to betray Jesus in verses 47 to 53, and then in 54, let's pick it back up there in verse 54, it says that they seized Jesus and they led him away, and they brought him into the high priest's house.

Meanwhile, Peter was following at a distance. So they come and arrest Jesus. The disciples flee, but Peter kind of hangs out back behind, and he's following Jesus to see what it is that they're going to do to him. In verse 55, he's sitting outside the house of the high priest. There's a bunch of other people there surrounding this fire. They lit a fire in the middle of the courtyard and they sat down together, and Peter was sitting among them, kind of like a spy, incognito, while Jesus was being put on trial in the high priest's house.

This woman who was a servant saw him sitting in the light, looked closely at Peter and she said to him, this is the man who was with Jesus. This man was with him too. But Peter denied it. Woman, I don't know this man. And after a little while, somebody else saw him and said, no, you're one of them. And Peter says, man, I'm not. Actually, the other gospels say Peter cursed. No, I'm not. Verse 59, about an hour later, another kept insisting, no, this man was certainly with him, since he's also a Galilean.

I hear his accent. It sounds like he's from Roby. Peter said, man, I do not know what you're talking about. And immediately, while he was still speaking, a rooster crowed. And then the Lord turned, and he looked at Peter, and Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said to him before the rooster crows today, You will deny me three times. And he went outside, and he wept bitterly. Here's the first thing you need to know when it comes to the crushing of life. And I hope that we'll all be able to embrace this without much difficulty.

There will be times in your life as a Christian, if you are a believer, where your circumstances are so difficult the suffering is so overwhelming, that you will lose your faith in the Lord. Now, I'm not saying you lose your salvation. I don't believe that you actually lose your salvation. But there will be times, maybe there have been times, where you've lost your faith. You've lost your confidence. You've thought to yourself, I don't think I can trust God. You've maybe had times in your life where you thought everything I thought I believed about God, everything I thought God was like is wrong.

Maybe I don't know God. Maybe he's not who I thought he was. Maybe my childhood faith isn't true. Maybe what mom and dad taught me my whole life is not what's real. It might have been something you're reading in the scripture. It could have been some form of pain and suffering in your life. Maybe some event that you thought to yourself, if God is good, if God is in control, then why in the world would this happen to me? Why in the world would this happen to them? There will be times where your life and the sufferings of your life are so great, such extraordinary suffering.

It will cause you to lose your faith. And there's a difference, I think, between the loss of faith in Peter and the loss of faith in Judas. We didn't read it today, but last week in Joseph's message, you saw that Judas, during the Passover meal, before it begins, he goes and he betrays Jesus for thirty pieces of silver or something like that. And then in our passage today, Judas actually comes back to the Mount of Olives with a mob of people, and he betrays Jesus with a kiss. Now, I think that is a different kind of betrayal, a different kind of loss of faith than Peter, because Judas was very high-handed, it was intentional, it was bold-faced.

Whereas the denial of Peter, the loss of faith that Peter underwent, it might have been intentional or inevitable, but it was regrettable. It wasn't something that he necessarily wanted to do. And I think for many Christians, that's maybe where they find themselves. They want to trust God. They want to follow Jesus. They want to believe. But they're finding it very difficult because of their circumstances. They're so trying. They're so challenging. They're so overwhelming. They can't muster up the conviction and the faith that they need to continue trusting the Lord. They're like Peter.

Their sufferings of life overwhelmed their confidence in Christ. And the question we need to ask from this passage is, when that happens, when you give up on God, when you say, I don't think I can trust you anymore, I don't think I can believe, does he give up on us? Does he say, well, if you're not going to trust me, I'm not going to help you? And the answer to that question is no. He never gives up on you. In fact, Peter and Jesus have this conversation, and Jesus actually tells Peter, you're going to abandon me.

You're going to deny me. I know that. And I want you to know that I know that. And that I'm going to, after my resurrection, come and meet you where you are. I'm going to revisit you and I'm going to restore your faith. I don't think I have it up on the screen, but in your notes

I say, when we become faithless, Jesus is the good shepherd who remains faithful. Even when we deny him, he never denies us. And it's in Mark's gospel, I don't have it up on the screen, I don't think, but in Mark's gospel and in Matthew's gospel Jesus quotes a prophecy from Zechariah chapter 13, Zechariah 13:7.

And it says, all of you will fall away because it is written, I will strike the shepherd and the sheep will be scattered. But after I have risen, I will go ahead of you to Galilee. Now what that, I think, shows you is Jesus not only knew that they were going to deny him and fall away and he was going to be crucified, they were actually going to give up on the movement. They were going to give up on everything Jesus had been building up to that point for those three years.

They were going to go back to Galilee. They were going to go back to their normal everyday lives. They're going to go back to fishing. Back to life before Jesus. And some of you may have had that same kind of experience. You maybe grew up going to church as a kid. You thought you knew what God was like, and then boom, life happened. And your childhood faith couldn't handle your adult problems and so you gave up your childhood faith and you said God doesn't exist, Jesus isn't who people say he is and so I'm just going to go back to doing life my old way.

And you've been doing things your own way and you've been living life according to your own standards. And then maybe, just maybe, you experience what Jesus said Peter is going to experience. Jesus revisited you. He chased you down. He went to where you were, in your old way of life, doing your old sort of things. And he says, I haven't given up on you, even though you've given up on me. It's exactly what Jesus does with Peter. We don't have it in this gospel, but in John's Gospel, after the resurrection of Jesus, he goes back to Galilee.

He sees Peter and the disciples out there on the boat fishing. And he says, guys, come over here and let's eat. Let's have breakfast together. And three times he asked Peter, do you love me? And Peter, of course, says, Yes, you know I love you, Lord. Peter, do you love me? Yes, Lord, you know I love you. Peter, do you? Peter becomes sad. He knows I denied Christ three times. Three times Jesus says, do you love me? And then every time Jesus asks that question, and Peter responds, Yes, I do, Jesus recommissions him back into the mission.

If you love me, feed my sheep. If you love me, get back in action. If you love me, do what I said you needed to do. When you have turned, when I restore you, I want you to go and strengthen your brothers. And I think some of us need to be reminded that even in the moments of life where we fall off the wagon, when we fail, we shipwreck in our faith, the Lord is the kind of shepherd who will come to us in those moments. He will revisit us. He will chase us down.

He will find us where we are, and he will restore us. He'll restore the joy of our salvation. He will restore our confidence in the Lord. He will not only restore us, he will recommission us for his purposes. No one's ever too far gone for God to use. No one's sin has ever been so great that God's grace is not great enough to restore that person and recommission them back into kingdom significance. Jesus Christ is a good shepherd who when we fall away will come and find us, restore us, and recommission us to his glory.

Now, I don't know if you asked the question; I asked the question. If God knows that sifting us like wheat is going to shipwreck our faith, then why does he allow Satan to do it? Why would the Lord, who knows everything that's going to happen, allow such great suffering to enter into our life that it would cause us to shipwreck our faith with the result that he does have to come, revisit us, and restore us and recommission us into his glory. What's the answer to that question? And honestly, I don't know the exact answer.

I don't know all the reasons. But I know certainly one of the reasons why the Lord allows Satan to sift us like wheat. Just like in the book of Job, Satan comes to God and says, look at your servant Job,[1] he's so awesome, but does he really love you? And God says, I think he really loves me. Well, let me test him, Satan says, and God says, go test him. God gives Satan permission. He ruins his family, takes all of his wealth, everything away. He takes away his health. He's a shriveled-up nothing of a man.

But he maintains his faith and his confidence in the Lord. And the Lord does something through the suffering of Job that accomplishes something in his faith he wouldn't have been able to accomplish through any other means. There's certain kinds of impurities in gold that can only be removed when you heat the gold up in the fire. And there's certain kinds of things that need to be accomplished in our faith, certain kinds of convictions that need to be possessed in our heart that can only be accomplished and possessed when we go through sufferings and fire.

It's the testing of your faith that refines it and I don't think God wastes an ounce of pain. I don't think he enjoys afflicting his people, but he allows, number one, the enemy to have freedom to accomplish some of his purposes in our life, and sometimes even the Lord Himself will strike with a rod. It's the pain that comes from his hand. But in each of those cases, he never wastes an ounce of it. He never allows the enemy to step outside of God's sovereign plan. The devil can never do something God wouldn't allow him to do.

And he uses every ounce of pain in our life to accomplish his purposes. Which means there's really two purposes in your pain. And we need to remember that in our suffering in this coronavirus outbreak. There is a great deal of pain and anxiety and all sorts of things that are taking place all around the world and in our country and in our city. There are two purposes in that pain. There's the purpose of our Heavenly Father, and then there's the purpose of the enemy. And they're at odds and they're fighting with one another.

This week in the hospital I was talking with a gentleman who was asking the question about some of the things that were happening, not just necessarily to him, but some things around him. It raises the question, could it be the devil? And obviously God is sovereign, God's in control of everything, but could some of these things that are happening in my life or around me be the devil trying to resist and stop me? Absolutely. In all circumstances, you have purposes, not just of the Lord, but purposes of the evil one, who is trying to accomplish his goal.

His goal is to kill, steal, and destroy. But the Lord has come that you may have life and have it more abundantly. So knowing that there are two purposes in your pain, knowing there's two purposes in the things that are going on in our world today, the question is, whose purpose is going to prevail in my life? Am I going to be cognizant of the fact that this suffering that I'm going through isn't neutral? There's a war going on for my soul right in this moment. And will I be the kind of person who responds to my suffering in such a way so that God's purposes prevail and the enemy's purposes are thwarted.

If you see that going into your pain and your suffering, one, it kind of makes a little bit of sense out of your suffering. It infuses some meaning into the dark night of the soul and the crushings of life. It doesn't answer all of the questions, but it does answer some of the questions. But how do you persevere? How do you make it all the way through? I think that question is answered through the prayer of Jesus in the garden. When I was thinking about how to preach this passage, I thought to myself, this passage is way too long.

I'm going to have to break it up and preach it over three different weeks. I didn't see the cohesiveness of it. But the more I thought about it the more I began to understand that what you see in this passage is the betrayal of Judas and the denial of Peter on either side of the prayer of Jesus in the garden. You've got betrayals and denials on either side, and then you see Jesus in the garden steadfast showing a template for how to endure through difficult times. And I think that's intentional.

I think the author, Luke, put this in here, Jesus' prayer in the garden in this spot for this reason to remind us, even when we fail, even when we fall away, Jesus remains faithful and that's why we have the salvation that we have, not because we're good, but because he's good and faithful. But he also gives us a template, an example for how to endure the suffering of our own life. So I want you just to read that and then we'll move on. Or we'll close it up. Luke chapter 22, verse 39, Jesus made his way, as usual, out to the Mount of Olives.

The disciples followed him, and when he reached the place, he told them, pray so that you may not fall into temptation. Then he withdrew from them about a stone's throw, and he knelt down and he began to pray. Father, if you are willing, take this cup away from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done. And then an angel from heaven I think this is

fascinating. An angel from heaven appeared to Jesus, strengthening him. You've got to remember, Jesus was 100% human. His flesh was weak. He needed divine assistance.

So an angel from heaven comes and he strengthens him. Being in anguish, he prayed more fervently, and his sweat became like drops of blood falling to the ground. And when he got up from prayer and he came to the disciples, he found them asleep, exhausted from their grief. He asked the question, why are you sleeping? He asked them, get up and pray so that you won't fall into temptation. If you'll put your thumb there and turn over to Mark chapter 14, verse 38. Mark chapter 14, verse 38 expands this discussion between Jesus and the disciples.

And I think it'll be helpful for us as we kind of paint the full picture of what's going on in Jesus' life. So he tells the disciples, stay awake, pray so that you won't enter into temptation. He says the same thing in Mark chapter 14, verse 38, stay awake and pray so that you won't enter into temptation. And then there's this interesting little phrase. You need to know the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak. And then once again he went away and he prayed, saying the same thing, and again he came and he found them asleep, because they could not keep their eyes open.

So Jesus is praying, Father, if it's possible, let this cup pass from me, not what I will, but yours be done. He goes back to the disciples and they're asleep. Their grief had caused them to just give up. And again he said, keep your eyes open. And then he came a third time and he said, are you still sleeping and resting? Enough. The time has come. See, the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Get up, let's go. My betrayer is near. So you see the contrast, right?

Jesus in the garden praying steadfast, Father, if it's possible, let this cup pass from me, not what I will, but yours be done. And then you see the disciples falling asleep in the garden because they're overwhelmed by their grief. Matthew's Gospel[2] paints that picture. The reason they were sleeping is they were just so sad. Have you ever been maybe in a hospital room and somebody that you love is sick or maybe somebody that you love has died and you've stayed up late night after night after night and you're just so exhausted you can't even keep your eyes open because of the grief.

That's what they were going through. They knew what was about to take place. They knew Jesus was talking about going away and so they were overcome by their grief. So you see the contrast. Jesus, I think, gives us a template for how to stay spiritually awake, for how to endure extraordinarily difficult suffering in our life. And the overarching principle that Jesus shows us in this passage is that in order for us to persevere through extraordinary suffering, we've got to remember it requires supernatural intervention. Jesus' passion in the Garden of Gethsemane reminds us that extraordinary temptation requires supernatural intervention if you're going to persevere.

I think it again is fascinating that Jesus has an angel from heaven come alongside of him and strengthen him. He's God in the flesh. He's 100% God. Why doesn't he just tap into his divine nature and kind of recharge himself? Kind of like when you're playing those Nintendo games and you put the cheat in so you can have 100% full life. No matter who hits you. Why didn't Jesus just, you know, kind of throw the cheat on there and give himself full measure of heart so he could keep playing the Nintendo game?

He doesn't do that. He allows this angel from heaven to come to strengthen him. It's a reminder to us. He also tells the disciples you guys need to stay awake, the spirit is willing, but your flesh is weak. You need supernatural intervention if you're going to persevere through extraordinary suffering. So extraordinary suffering requires supernatural intervention. That's number one. You'll never persevere through your most difficult seasons of life by yourself, on your own, in your flesh. Doesn't matter how many friends you have, doesn't matter how strong you are, doesn't matter how much other suffering you may have persevered through, the greatest moments of suffering in our life require supernatural intervention.

That's number one. And because it requires supernatural intervention, your most valuable tool in deep suffering is prayer to the Father. Jesus says stay awake and pray. Stay awake and pray. But it wasn't just any kind of prayer. The prayer of Jesus in the garden is what I'm going to call prevailing prayer. Prayer that keeps on keeping on until it finally breaks through to the victory. These are not 10-second prayers, 20-second prayers. This isn't dutiful prayers because that's what I'm supposed to do. This isn't prayer over the dinner table. This isn't prayer at nighttime before you put the kids to bed.

This is a deep, agonizing, consistent, heartfelt, diligent, disciplined, prolonged, prevailing prayer. Praying your way into the victory. And if you've ever gone through deep suffering in your life, you know what I'm talking about. How you can have your head in your hands. Your heart is broken. You're praying to God. You feel like nobody's listening. Your words bounce off the ceiling, hit the ground. But you keep on praying and you keep on praying and you keep on praying. And then one day, eventually, something breaks through. That's what you see with Jesus.

He's praying and praying. He's so stressed. He's so agonizing. He's in such great agony. It says that he was sweating drops of blood. A nurse told me in the last service that's a medical condition called hematohidrosis. Hematohidrosis. It just means your body's under such pressure, such stress that your blood starts seeping out of your pores. So this is Jesus, not a 10-second, 20-second prayer. This is Jesus agonizing. And he prays his way through to, I think, three things. And I put them in your notes. The first is intimacy in the Father's love.

The second is confidence in the Father's power and submission to the Father's will. Intimacy in the Father's love, confidence in the Father's power submission to the Father's will. And

you don't see it in Luke's gospel, but if you turn over to Mark's gospel, Mark chapter 14, verse 36, you see all three things. He says, Abba, Father, all things are possible for you, therefore take this cup away from me. Nevertheless, not what I will, but what you will be done. So the first thing you see is intimacy in the Father's love.

He uses the word Abba, Father. And there's nothing like suffering to make you doubt whether or not God is actually a father. Some of you had poor earthly fathers. Some of you didn't have any fatherly figure in your life. And so for you to think of God as a father is probably very difficult. But I want to encourage you that your heavenly father is not a reflection of your earthly father, he's the perfection of fatherhood. So if you yourself are a father, if you're a mother, you know how diligent you are to have this unyielding love for your kids You would do whatever it takes to provide for them, to sacrifice yourself, to inconvenience yourself, to work for their good.

If that's how we love our earthly children and we're sinful and imperfect, how much more so does your heavenly father love you as his child? And what you're doing in prevailing prayer is you're praying your way into that mindset. I don't feel his love. I don't feel his protection, but I believe it by faith. I believe he's good. I know it because of what I know about other things in my life. I may not be able to see it because of the cloud of this suffering. But if I was able to get up above the clouds, if I could keep praying my way through, up through the clouds, then I could see the sun.

Then I could see the brightness of his love, then I could feel the warmth of his embrace. And so I'm going to believe by faith that God is Abba, He's dad. And I can trust him. I don't understand why he's doing this just like maybe you didn't understand your earthly dad's reasons for why he did some of the things that he did, but I'm going to trust that he's good because I know who he is. So you pray your way into intimacy with the Father, intimacy with the Father's love, then you pray your way into confidence in the Father's power.

And this is, I think, relevant for us as it comes to the coronavirus. The confidence is shown in verse 36, where he says, all things are possible for you. Nothing's impossible for God. Tiffany Lohse, our soon-to-be preschool minister, just wrote an email to parents this week about the corona update, and on the very end of the email she tagged that little song that kiddos sing: My God is so big, so strong and so mighty, there's nothing my God cannot do for you. You guys remember that song growing up? No, nobody grew up in church like me.

Last song we listened to growing up that's confidence in the Father's power. And so when it comes to the sufferings of your life, what this looks like is a settled conviction that nothing is impossible with God. As hopeless as things are, as hopeless as I feel, this seemingly insurmountable mountain can be overcome by the power of God. God can do what I can't do. He can do it in ways that I can't do it. He can do it faster than I can do it. He has resources that I don't have.

All things are possible with God. It's a confidence. And it's not just in his power, it's in his sovereignty. It's a confidence that this circumstance didn't take God by surprise. He's not up there wringing his hands saying, Oh dear, what are we going to do now? That's just not how he's wired. It's not how God is. If God is God, nothing takes him by surprise. He's not shaken by anything. He's steady, he's sure, he is a firm foundation. And prevailing prayer is prayer that gets your heart back to that place.

I'm going to get my heart back to a settled conviction that God is able. He is powerful. He is sovereign, and he is Father. Then the last thing prevailing prayer does, and again, you can't just do this overnight. This may take days, it may take weeks, some people may even take months of diligent praying, praying your way through the clouds. But the last thing is a submission to the Father's plan or submission to the Father's will. And I think you need to really pay attention to how Jesus gets there. Verse 36.

If it's possible, take this cup away from me. Nevertheless, not what I will, but what you will be done. There is absolutely nothing wrong with you praying to God that he would take away your pain. There's nothing wrong with that prayer. There's nothing wrong with praying that God would heal your spouse or heal your child. Nothing wrong with that prayer. Nothing wrong with praying, God, give me a job. Take away the pain. There's nothing wrong with that. Jesus prayed that way. But true faith, prevailing prayer, is a kind of prayer that says, even if you don't, even if you don't, I'll follow you.

I'm going to trust that you're going to stand with me through the fire. If you've called me to this, you're going to get me through this, and I'm going to submit myself in obedience to your plan for my life in this season. That's prevailing prayer. And you won't get there if you don't believe in his goodness. You won't get there if you're not experiencing his intimacy. You won't be able to get there if you're not confident in his power and in his sovereignty and his plan. But if you can pray your way through the clouds on those fronts, you'll be able to pray your way into submission to the Father's plan, even when your life is falling apart, even when it doesn't make sense, even when everything you thought to be true about God, there's a cognitive dissonance there now.

You can pray your way through into confidence and submission to the Father's plan, just like the Lord. What's crazy about Jesus is the Father doesn't take away the cup. Jesus says, take this cup away from me. He's talking about the cup of suffering. He's talking not just about the cup of physical suffering, but he's talking about the spiritual suffering of paying the penalty for sins, for your sins, for my sins. The cup of God's wrath is the cup that he was going to drink from. And the Father did not deliver Jesus from drinking the cup.

Jesus had to drink the cup. Because Jesus drank the cup, or I'm sorry, the Father made him drink the cup, but even though he didn't take the painful circumstance away from Jesus, he did give Jesus the power he needed, the spirit he needed to overcome the difficulty. He

actually faces death. He dies on the cross, he's buried in the grave, but three days later God raises him from the dead. And because Jesus drank the cup of suffering, and because Jesus three days later was raised from the dead, you and I can overcome the sufferings of our life.

The same spirit that raised Jesus Christ from the dead is a spirit that lives in you and me. Because his spirit is alive in us, that's why when we pray, we can pray our way through the clouds because we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. Because he died on the cross and was raised from the grave, we, when we have suffering that is so great that all we can do is utter groans, that the Spirit of God translates our groanings up into heaven and intercedes for us before the throne of God.

Because he drank the cup of suffering for us, we can overcome the difficulties of our life. And, you know, the coronavirus and all that stuff is a big deal, and it's created a lot of anxiety for a lot of people. But even if the worst thing happens, even if we face the penalty of death, we need to be reminded that in the face of the greatest enemy, Jesus has already conquered it, and because he has conquered death, we will conquer it as well. Because we can trust him with our eternal life and our eternal salvation.

How much more so should we trust him with an uncertain season in our nation as it relates to the spread of this virus. So as we close it down, maybe for you corona is not that big a deal, but maybe for you it's something else. Maybe it's a workplace issue, relationship issue; there's a different cup of suffering in your life. Here's what I want to encourage you to do as Claire comes up and leads us. Prevail in prayer. Pray your way through to intimacy with the Father. Return to that first love.

Remind yourself of how your heart first felt when you first got saved, when you first believed on Jesus to save you from sin, deliver you from your past. Return to that first love. Pray your way into confidence in the Father's power. Maybe you need someone to pray with you. Help me, God. I believe; help my unbelief. Help me to trust you for big things. I've kind of given up because you haven't delivered yet. Help me to trust you and continue to trust in your sovereignty and your power. And then lastly, for many of us in this room, I think a prayer that maybe we should pray this morning is prayer of submission to the Father's plan.

Even though we don't know what the plan is going to entail, even though we don't know, we don't have all our questions answered. To know he's my Father, he is good, he is able, and therefore I'm going to trust him even though, and even when he doesn't do what I think he should have done. And let's spend some time getting our heart to that place as we respond. And then I'll certainly be here to pray with anybody that wants to pray about anything else.

1. Transcript note: spoken as Satan saying "look at your servant Job"; in Job 1:8–11 it is the Lord who says, "Have you considered my servant Job?" and Satan who answers, "Does Job fear God for nothing?" Source: Job 1:8–11 (CSB). ↩
2. Transcript note: spoken as "Matthew's Gospel"; the detail that the disciples were sleeping because of grief is Luke's ("he found them sleeping, exhausted from their grief"). Source: Luke 22:45 (CSB); compare Matthew 26:43 ("they could not keep their eyes open"). ↩