

BETTER THAN AMAZON?

6th in a Series on Difficult Sayings of Jesus called, “What Did He Say?”
Matthew 21:18-22

Two women came to wise King Solomon asking him to use his great wisdom to resolve a dispute between them. They dragged along with them a young man wearing a very nice suit. The first woman, Mrs. Levy, told the king, “This young accountant asked my daughter to marry him and he’s engaged to her.” The second woman, Mrs. Avram, shouted, “That’s not true! The young man asked my daughter to marry him and he’s engaged to her.” They proceeded to have a loud argument, each insisting that the accountant should marry her daughter. Finally, King Solomon said, “Silence!” When the women stopped their shouting he said, “I have reached a decision. Bring me my sword. I will use it to cut the young man in two and each daughter will have half of him to marry.”

Mrs. Levy said, “Fine. That sounds like a good plan to me.” But Mrs. Avram said, “Oh, no, your Majesty. Please do not kill the young man. I’d rather have him marry the other woman’s daughter than for him to die.” The wise king did not hesitate for a moment. He said, “I decree that the accountant shall marry Mrs. Levy’s daughter.” Mrs. Avram was shocked. She said, “But she doesn’t care about him. She was willing to let you cut him in two!” King Solomon wisely said, “Precisely. That clearly shows that she is the real mother-in-law.”

You can look it up. It’s in the book of First Hezekiah. Okay, maybe not. But that apocryphal story does raise the question of who is truly wise enough to decide what should happen in our lives. Today we are going to look at an unusual incident from the life of Jesus. It is an incident that speaks to that very question. If we learn the lessons this strange story has for us we will find it to be a source of great peace and strength. Let’s look at Matthew 21:18-22.

JESUS HAD A STRANGE ENCOUNTER WITH A TREE

In the opening verses of this chapter we see Jesus entering the city of Jerusalem to a tumultuous welcome as he began the last week of his earthly life. The number of people in and around the city swelled considerably due to the coming Passover as pilgrims streamed into town for the Feast. As Jesus arrived in a now familiar scene, people were cutting palm branches off trees and laying them on the road in front of him, while others laid their own cloaks down in the road before him. These actions symbolized welcoming Jesus as a great hero, in effect paving and softening the road for him to enter the city.

Many were crying out, “Hosanna to the Son of David.” Hosanna means, “Lord, save us.” It was a term associated with the plea for Messiah to come and rescue Israel. Used here in conjunction with the title “Son of David,” this made an expressed claim that Jesus was, in fact, the long-awaited Messiah.

Once inside the city Jesus followed up that raucous scene with something even more controversial. He went to the temple and kicked out all the business people who had set up shop there. Some of them were selling officially certified animals people could use for sacrifices. Animals that were to be offered for sacrifice had to be without defect, and these animals were guaranteed to pass inspection by the

priests because they had already been approved by one of them. Other vendors were doing currency exchanges so people from outside Judea could obtain the currency that was required for paying their annual Jewish temple tax. These were highly profitable businesses. Think of the prices you pay for food at a movie theater, for example. A little \$2 box of Junior Mints will suddenly set you back \$6 because they have you at their mercy. Something akin to that happened at the temple. It should be noted that the religious establishment had some ties to these businesses as they were the ones who had to approve the sacrificial animals and who demanded the correct coin for the tax. It's a sure bet that they got a cut of the profits, so they did not receive Jesus' actions here well.

Following those events Jesus left to go to his lodgings in the suburbs for the evening. The next morning, he and his disciples walked back into town on their way to the temple. Jesus was hungry. As he walked into town he came upon a fig tree, but there were no figs on it, just leaves. Apparently disappointed, Jesus said to the tree, "May you never bear fruit again!" The tree, Matthew tells us, immediately withered and died. As you can imagine, Jesus' disciples were dumbstruck when they saw this. Matthew says they were amazed and asked Jesus, "How did that tree die so fast after you cursed it?"

I have several reactions to this incident. First, it doesn't seem like such a big deal to me. I don't even have to curse a fruit tree to kill it. All I have to do is plant it in our yard. We've so far killed off an avocado tree, a tangerine tree and a lemon tree. Right now we have a peach tree, an orange tree and another tangerine tree on death row awaiting their turn. We have a couple of plumeria trees that I personally think are looking a little scared, though Laurie insists they're fine.

Okay, I'm just kidding. Obviously there is a big difference between trees dying of natural causes over a period of time because the people who own them don't have green thumbs, and a healthy tree suddenly curling up and dying on the spot because Jesus said something to it. This was a truly astounding event. Had we witnessed it in person, it would have left us all standing there with our mouths hanging open, wondering if what we had just seen, really had happened. How do you explain such a thing? Who has the power to essentially tell a tree to die and then it happens in moments?

My next reactions to the story are to see problems with it. Doesn't it seem kind of legendary? Isn't this the kind of thing that sounds like a fairy tale? It's sort of the reverse of the fairy godmother turning a pumpkin into a carriage for Cinderella. Yet both Matthew and Mark record the incident and insist it happened. It is not told as a fairy tale, but as an actual historical event that Matthew saw first hand as did Mark's source, reportedly Peter. As we will see, Jesus had a point in this incident. This was not merely a trick, or a legendary story intended to say, "See how powerful Jesus was?" Jesus used this incident as a vivid teaching tool.

But doesn't this seem super out of character for Jesus? He's hungry, but the tree doesn't have any figs so he gets upset with the tree, curses it and it dies? Um, does that sound like a person you'd like to be around? On the spur of the moment because he got hangry he kills a tree with a word? Man, don't give him whatever is his latest whim and you, too, could be instant toast. I'd seriously tiptoe around that guy, maybe avoid him altogether. Apparently he had a big time need to keep his blood sugar levels up. Maybe if one of the disciples had given him a Snickers bar this whole thing could have been avoided.

In Mark's account of this incident he records a detail that makes this story look even worse. Mark 11:13 says, "Seeing in the distance a fig tree in leaf, he went to find out if it had any fruit. When he reached it, he found nothing but leaves, because it was not the season for figs." Wait, it wasn't the season for figs? He got mad at a fig tree because it didn't have any fruit when it wasn't fig season? That's terrible! It makes him sound irrational.

I got really upset with ESPN this past week. On Thursday at the end of the day I was really tired and what I really wanted to do was relax and watch the Thursday night college football game. So I turned to ESPN and they had some basketball game on. I was really annoyed. I didn't want to watch a basketball game. I wanted to watch football. Say, Rick, did you happen to notice that it's March? It's not college football season. There won't be any college football games for almost six months. You would have to be an idiot to be upset at ESPN for not airing college football games when it's not college football season. Right, and wouldn't Jesus be ridiculous for being upset at a fig tree for not having figs when it's not fig season?

All of this suggests that there is more here than Jesus being hangry, short-tempered and irrationally demanding. This wasn't about Jesus being hungry and wanting figs at all. It turns out that in fact Jesus was making a statement. This incident is kind of like a visual parable. It was intended to teach something important, and it happened at this time because of what was going on.

Look at verse 15. Jesus had been doing miracles and the children were shouting "Hosanna to the Son of David." Verse 15 says, "When the chief priests and the teachers of the law saw the wonderful things he did and the children shouting in the temple courts, 'Hosanna to the Son of David,' they were indignant." They were indignant because the children were calling Jesus Messiah, and the religious leaders were vehemently opposed to that idea. Verse 16 tells us they said to Jesus, "Do you hear what these children are saying?" In other words, make them stop. They were upset because at that moment, they were plotting and maneuvering to have this person the crowds were calling Messiah, killed! Mark 11:18 says unequivocally that the religious leaders were looking for a way to kill Jesus at this point.

Jesus responded by quoting the Greek translation of Psalm 8:2, "From the lips of children and infants you, Lord, have called forth your praise." In other words, these children are saying what God wants said, which is that I am Messiah. Luke 19:40 adds another exchange that happened between Jesus and the Pharisees. Some of the Pharisees told Jesus he should tell people to stop saying these things to him. He answered, "If they keep quiet the stones will cry out." Now that would have been a rock concert.

Jesus has just made a profound claim to be Messiah. He said the people were correct in proclaiming him to be the Son of David, the Messiah. He made this claim by the way he entered the city and by accepting and approving of the proclamations of the people in the crowd. He made that even more overt when he cleaned the money makers out of the temple, thus asserting authority even over what happened in the temple.

But the leaders of Israel had made their decision about Jesus. They rejected him as thoroughly as it is possible to do. Furthermore, down the road the majority of the people of Israel would ultimately follow their lead and Jesus knew it. Now comes the crucial point. The fig tree was a common symbol for Israel in the Old Testament. It was one well known to all Jews. This fig tree is symbolic. It depicted Israel failing to bear fruit, the fruit of faith. They were not believing in their own Messiah. Jesus was hungry, but his hunger was not for physical fruit to eat. It was to see his people breaking out in the fruit of faith, believing in their Messiah, but they had no fruit. In less than a week they would succeed in their efforts to kill him. It is always the season for the fruit of believing, trusting, and obeying God, and they weren't producing it. *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible* says, "The falling or destruction of figs is used in the Bible to indicate the Lord's judgment."

After this incident some of the leaders of Israel came to Jesus and said, "By what authority are you doing these things?" They were upset because Jesus had tossed the businesses out of the temple and in so doing did damage to the cozy profit they were making from them. So they demanded, "Who gave you the right to do that?" In this chapter the theme of the whole thing is the challenge, "By what authority are you doing these things?" This chapter and pretty much everything in it is about Jesus' identity and authority. The leaders of Israel, and later the majority of the nation, were rejecting Jesus' authority.

Jesus proceeded to tell two parables. The first one pictured a man who had two sons. The dad told the first son to do some tasks, but he didn't want to. So the first son said he wouldn't do what his father told him to do, but then changed he his mind and did it. The other said he would do what Dad ordered, but then did not do it. In verses 31-32 Jesus said to the religious leaders of Israel, "Truly I tell you, the tax collectors and the prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God ahead of you. For John came to show you the way of righteousness and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and prostitutes did. And even after you saw this, you did not repent and believe him." Yikes. Tax collectors and prostitutes, the lowest of low lifes in that society, the scum, the untouchables, the rejects, were the first son who said he wouldn't do what the Dad said, but then did. They were going into the kingdom of God. But not so the religious establishment. The religious leaders were the second son, who claimed they would do what Dad said, but then didn't, so they wouldn't be in God's kingdom. Yeah, that went over with the leaders real well.

Then he told another story about some people who leased land from a landlord, but when he sent his representatives to collect the rent they refused to pay and even began abusing them. Finally, the landlord sent his own son, and this time the rebelling tenants didn't just abuse him, they killed him. Verse 45 says, "When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard Jesus' parables they knew he was talking about them." They were the fig tree that had no fruit.

The cursing and withering of the fig tree was not Jesus flying off the handle at an innocent tree. It was a picture of what awaited the people of Judea because they did not bear the fruit of faith. It was a picture of a judgment to come.

JESUS SEEMED TO THREATEN A MOUNTAIN

That brings us to another somewhat puzzling statement by Jesus after the incident of the fig tree. The disciples are standing there with their mouths open, astonished, at a loss for words. “How...what...who?” Jesus says, “If you have faith and do not doubt, not only can you do what was done to the fig tree, but also you can say to this mountain, ‘Go throw yourself into the sea,’ and it will be done. If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer.”

That last statement is where we get hung up. If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer. Can that really be true? All I need to do is believe, have faith, and God will give me whatever I ask for in prayer. That is a totally open-ended promise. Whatever I ask. This is not, whatever you ask for I’ll consider it and let you know. That’s kind of how I sometimes responded when my kids were young. “Hey Dad, can I have a new BMW?” That one was easy. A snow ball has a better chance of surviving in the place of eternal punishment than that question had of receiving a yes answer. But there were times when my kids would ask for something and my answer was “Let me think about it.” That sometimes meant, “No, but I need to come up with a good reason why not,” but most of the time it meant, “I’m not sure. I need to talk to Laurie and I need to think about the ramifications of this first.”

But Jesus didn’t say whatever you ask, God will consider it. He said you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer. Whatever you ask for. It could be anything. It could be everything. You ask, and God will do it, end of sentence. That is the promise most of us think we want from God. Prayer is like ordering from Amazon. All you have to do is put in your order and in a couple of days, what you’ve asked for lands on your doorstep, guaranteed. So God is better than Amazon because you have to be able to afford what you order from Amazon and you have to pay for it, but God just gives it to you for free if you will just ask! Yahoo! Let us pray! Life is about to get really good because I’m going to ask God to make it so.

Yes, we think we want that promise, and at some point in our lives most of us who are believers in God have believed that’s how it works. That’s certainly what it sounds like in this verses, and there are others that seem to say the same thing. As a result, there is a world of disappointment among those who believe. God has let us down because we asked, and he didn’t come through. We didn’t get what we asked for. In fact, that has happened more often than we did get what we asked. After a while, praying seems to us a lot more like the lottery than it is like Amazon. With Amazon you know you’re going to get what you order, and if you don’t you have a legitimate beef with the company. But with God we get so used to disappointment that we start seeing prayer as being kind of like buying lottery tickets. I know it’s highly unlikely that I’ll win, but who knows? Maybe I’ll win. It could happen, People do win lotteries. And if I did win that would be super cool. But I almost certainly won’t win, so I’m prepared for that.

I have told you before that my mother owns mineral rights to land in Oklahoma, and that deep under that land there is gas and oil. Do you know how many times I have prayed that God would see to it that some energy company would finally put wells on that land and the oil and gas would start flowing? No, you don’t know how many times I’ve prayed that, and I don’t either, because it is too many to count. Multiply that by all the family members who have also been praying the same thing. This would not take a miracle like withering a fruitless tree or throwing a mountain into the ocean. It’s just a

business deal, no miracles needed. To date, not one well on that land. Um what happened to whatever you ask? We've asked. A lot. At best, God seems to have said, "Let me think about it. Um no."

Every follower of Jesus Christ has multiple things in their lives like that. That's a lot of disappointment. It would be understandable if Jesus had said, "Whatever you ask, I'll think about it." But he said, "Whatever you ask *you will receive.*" You'll get it! That leaves us with only two possibilities. One is that what Jesus said in this passage is just not true. Maybe he believed it and he was just wrong, but in real life that promise is not kept. Maybe God doesn't answer prayer. Maybe God isn't there at all. I don't know what the story is, but I do know that you can't rely on this promise because it just doesn't work. At least not always.

But wait, there is another possibility. Maybe this promise is true, but we haven't paid attention to the qualifier. In verse 21 Jesus said, "If you have faith and do not doubt." Aha! The problem isn't with God and his promise, the problem is me. I don't have enough faith. Years ago I ran across an article by a pastor who expressed exactly this idea. It seemed his family badly needed a new, larger dining room table but they could not afford one. He prayed, believing, knowing that God could and would give them the new table. He had to go away on a trip and every day while he was gone he talked to his family on the phone and asked, "Did anything special happen today?" He was expecting to hear that a new table had miraculously shown up. But he was disappointed. The table never came. Here was his conclusion. "The fact that no big dining room table (is) there at my house forces me to conclude that *I didn't really believe.*" He concludes he didn't have enough faith. He doubted.

Well great. Now in addition to being disappointed about not getting what I prayed for, I get to deal with the guilt that my prayer wasn't answered because I don't have enough faith. When I think about the number of prayers I have made through the years that have fallen totally flat I can only conclude that if this is true, then I must be tragically lacking in faith. Thinking this is the correct understanding of this passage is certain to end up with us fearing that maybe God wants nothing to do with us because we apparently have almost no faith at all. It is going to kill our souls and our faith in God.

Here's my problem with this idea that the problem is our lack of faith. I have believed that God could and would answer my prayers about the oil wells. I didn't struggle to believe it at all. I knew he could do that, and I was almost certain that he would. I have for years had faith. Lots of it. Remember the story of the pastor and his need for a dining room table? He concluded the problem was he didn't have faith. Was that true? I don't think it was. He did believe. He had faith and he showed it. While he was away he called his family repeatedly expecting to hear that his prayer had been answered. He expected the table to come. In other words, he wasn't doubting. He was sure it would happen. He did have faith, but still it didn't happen. Uh oh.

We should pay attention to that statement, "I didn't have *enough* faith." How much is enough? That idea turns faith into a measurable commodity. It is the purchase price for an answer to prayer. If you order from Amazon you know that the purchase price of this item is \$150. If you have the \$150 you can get the item. Fortunately you have Amazon Prime so shipping is free. Order from God and the item you have asked for requires x amount of faith. Fortunately you have God Prime so there are no shipping

charges. If you have that amount of faith, then you have purchased the item and you will receive it. Do you see the problems with this idea? How do you measure how much faith is required for a particular request? Wow, I'm asking for a loved one to be healed of a terminal disease. That's millionaire level faith. Oh, in this case I'm just praying that traffic won't be bad so I won't be late for this meeting. That's just in the \$10 to \$20 range of faith. Unless it's rush hour, then we're back at millionaire levels of faith.

But here's the bigger problem, the real problem. That idea is directly contrary to the new covenant. It essentially turns having faith into a work, and you have to do enough of it to earn the answer that you have requested. That is not the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Actually even that monumental problem is just the tip of the iceberg. There are a couple of other major problems with this interpretation, one logical and the other theological. The logical problem is that inevitably in this world of billions of people there are going to be followers of Jesus asking things of God in faith, that are the exact opposite of each other. The first time I met Laurie she was with several of her friends, one of whom was her boyfriend, Rob. I never really got to know Rob. He seemed like a nice enough guy, but as I see it he had to have been clueless. Here's why I say that. He had Laurie as his girlfriend, but in our ministry there was a blonde named Debbie who caught his eye. He ditched Laurie to pursue Debbie. Debbie was a great gal, and she was cute, but she was no Laurie. I have been grateful for decades to Clueless Rob because he opened a door for me. But here's where the story of Clueless Rob enters into this discussion. It turned out that there was another guy in that ministry who also became interested in Debbie. His name was Eric. Now I'm quite sure there was a point where both Eric and Clueless Rob were asking God to give them Debbie. How could God keep this promise to both of them? The answer is there is no way he could. One of them was not going to get what he requested, because God was not going to suggest that Debbie become a bigamist and marry them both. Someone was going to get what they prayed for and someone wasn't. Poor Clueless Rob. He ended up 0 for 2.

The biggest flaw with understanding this passage to promise that we will get whatever we ask for in prayer is theological. It reduces Almighty, Sovereign God to a waiter. He waits for our order and then delivers whatever we have asked for. It essentially means that we know more what we need than God does. It means that we are smarter than God, and he needs to listen to what we tell him to do. In John 8:28 Jesus said, "I do nothing on my own but speak just what the Father has taught me." Jesus did only what the Father told him to do. Does it make sense that he would then reverse that with his followers, so that the Father would do whatever they told him to do? For all of these reasons we should conclude that Jesus clearly did not mean this to be a blanket, unerring promise that at every moment if we have faith we will receive every single thing we ask in prayer. But if that's not the case, what does it mean? Because that's sure what it sounds like.

We need to not remove this one statement and interpret it apart from its context. There are some important things to note in the context. Notice the example that Jesus gave of what we could ask. He said we could say to a mountain, "Go, throw yourself in the sea" and it will be done. We need to ask, "Why would anyone ever do that?" Can you envision any circumstance where you would say to Mount

Palomar, “Go throw yourself in the ocean”? Man, the environmentalists would go ape. The key question here is this: is Jesus being literal? Clearly not. He is using a figure of speech. He is exaggerating, using an absurd extreme to make a point in a powerful and vivid way.

In fact, this statement is more extreme than it appears at first. It is very easy to fail to notice a little word in this verse. Jesus actually did not say, “You can say to a mountain, go throw yourself in the sea.” Pay attention to the words. He said, “You can say to *this* mountain, go throw yourself in the sea.” The word “this” is very specific and very important. He was not talking about just any mountain. Rather he was referring to one specific mountain. Which mountain did he mean? It must have been one close to his location, so where did this happen? It happened as Jesus and his men were walking into Jerusalem. Listen to Psalm 48:1. “Great is the Lord and most worthy of praise, in the city of our God, his holy mountain.” Jerusalem is the city of God, his holy mountain. It is called Mount Zion. That is the mountain that Jesus was referring to!

So what is the likelihood that any Jewish person would ever say to Jerusalem, to the mountain of God, throw yourself in the ocean? To quote Vizzini in *The Princess Bride*, “That’s inconceivable.” The great hope of Israel was that someday, Messiah would rule the whole world from the mountain of God. To have that mountain destroyed would be abhorrent. It would be an attack on that which is most holy. No Jewish person would ever want such a thing. It is also an impossibility. Is any human ever going to be able to order the mountain of God, his dwelling place on earth, to destroy itself? If so, then God Almighty is not, in fact, almighty.

Jesus was not being literal. He was speaking figuratively, using a rhetorical device to drive home a point. What was that point? It was that nothing you can think of is too great for God. Come up with the most extreme, inconceivable, impossible thing you can ever think of, and it is not too great for God. Nothing is beyond him. In Ephesians 3:20-21 Paul wrote, “Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we can ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever!” That is the point Paul was making.

Remember that this part of Matthew is focused on the authority of Jesus. He has authority and power over all things. Nothing is too great for him. Did Jesus mean literally that you can order anything you want from God and if you have faith you will get it? We’ve seen that he could not have meant that. And that’s good. Laurie and I went on line and ordered a table for our house. It was great that it arrived within a couple of days. But when we got it we quickly both realized that it was not going to work for us. We had been sure it was just what we needed, and it was at a good price, too. We thought it was what we wanted, but we were wrong. We sent it back. Do you think that never happens in our prayers? We ask for something that we are sure we want. But we are wrong. And when we realize it, we thank God for not granting our prayer. God is better than Amazon because he doesn’t give us whatever we think we want. He gives us what is best, what will bring us the most life.

What Jesus was saying was that we need never doubt, that no matter what we might be concerned about, what we might face, what we might ask from God, he is greater than all of it. In this final week

of his earthly life Jesus was teaching his followers both through the visible lesson of the fig tree and through his instruction about faith, about what we can believe him for and trust him with, that he is indeed Lord of Lords. He is the King of Kings. He has authority and power over all of it. So believe, trust, ask God, then submit to his decision about what is best.

IMPLICATIONS

BELIEVE THAT JESUS IS LORD

It is easy to get so hung up on that one statement about receiving whatever we ask in prayer that we make this whole thing about getting what we want through prayer. It isn't so much about prayer as it is about faith. It is about knowing in our heart that Jesus Christ is Lord of all and that nothing is too great for him. Make a fruitless tree wither on the spot, do the impossible and inconceivable like throw Mount Zion into the sea, whatever it is, we need to believe there are no limits to Jesus.

That means there is nothing too big or too small for him to deal with. Because he is the Lord of all that exists, all of it is within his power. What is huge and what is tiny to us is all pretty much the same to him. He can handle it, whatever it is, so we should ask him about it no matter how seemingly impossible, no matter how large or tiny.

Years ago I read a book called *Risking Faith* that was written by a man with the uncreative name Steve Stephens. In it he told a story of a time he was camping in the woods with his family and they went on a hike. As they were heading back to their campsite some branches of a bush swept his face and popped a contact lens out of his eye. They searched for that lens for a long time to no avail. He didn't have a spare which meant he was going to have to go the rest of their trip with a very annoying problem with his vision, only being able to see out of one eye. He asked the Lord, who is Lord even of vision, to give him some solution for the problem. That night he had a vivid dream, and at one point he actually saw the place where he had lost the lens, and he saw a particular rock by the side of the trail. The lens was sitting on the rock. When he woke up he thought that was just a dream, that it couldn't be real. But he figured there was no harm in checking it out. He went back to the place where he'd lost the lens, and sure enough, there was the rock he'd seen in his dream. And sitting on the rock was his contact lens.

I shared that story in a sermon years ago. At the time Carissa was single and living in an apartment. She was in church that morning. That evening she was doing her laundry in the laundry room at her apartment. Her clothes had gone through the wash, but she needed to dry them and she had run out of quarters for the dryer. Her clothes were wet, but she was stuck. What could she do? She remembered that story from the sermon and thought, "Okay, why not?" She prayed and said, "I know this is a silly little thing, Lord. But I need to dry my clothes tonight and I'm out of quarters. Could you help me and somehow give me some quarters?" She thought that was kind of dumb to ask, but almost immediately after she prayed a thought just popped into her head. "Look in the couch." Surely that couldn't be, could it? She went to her apartment, lifted up the cushions on her couch, and found 5 quarters! Enough to dry her clothes! A small thing, a tiny thing, but a reminder our God is not limited by anything.

SUBMIT TO JESUS AS LORD

This is often where we go off track. We can get so fixed on that idea that God will give us whatever we ask, and we want that to be God's promise, that we forget that would only make sense if we were smarter than God. If God is smarter than we are, and he is infinitely smarter, then it only makes sense for us to eagerly talk to God and ask him for answers in everything, but always with a submissive spirit. Always telling him that what we really want is what he knows is best. Let him be God Almighty, let him be Lord, meaning let him decide.

TRUST JESUS AS LORD

Jesus has all authority. Ephesians 1:22 says of Jesus, "God placed all things under his feet and appointed him head over everything for the church." He is head over everything, so let's trust him with everything.

One morning a few months ago early on Laurie said, "Rick, our sprinklers have been running a long time and they're still on." I looked outside and not only were our sprinklers on, but the yard was starting to bear a resemblance to one of the Great Lakes. I quickly went to the garage and turned off the sprinkler controller. It didn't help. The sprinklers kept running. Eventually I had to shut off the main water valve to our property, but that meant we had no water in the house. We had to get it fixed. The average human male could solve that problem quickly, but I'm not average. I'm way less than average, and I didn't know what to do. Laurie did. She called Jesus. Well, actually we have a Hispanic man who mows our lawns whose name is Jesus, spelled just like the Lord's name. He showed up within 15 minutes and within minutes fixed the problem. He saved us! Here's the great thing. Jesus solved the problem. I don't keep checking to make sure the sprinklers aren't running. I don't suddenly start doubting, "maybe they're not really fixed. Maybe he didn't do it right." It's done. They're fixed, and I don't have to worry.

Jesus is Lord of everything. We don't have to worry. We don't have to doubt. Just trust. When there's a problem, call Jesus. Then trust him to deal with it.