

We look around today and we see the vast number of people in our nation and around the world who have turned their back on God. And God has left them to their own devices. And we watch how that plays out every day in ungodly behavior. Lost people confused, people convinced that they're sick, in need of medicines, and just lost. I'm convinced that the Orthodox, faithful Christian church is becoming a remnant in the world. And the United States is one of the last fold-outs of Orthodox Christianity. But we are no doubt becoming a remnant as well. Everything that we do here, I pray it strengthens us in our faith, that it challenges us in our faith. That we may go deeply into the Word of God and that you may be anchored, absolutely anchored, in the face of all of the anti-Christ behavior and teaching that is out there. We're teaching that through the sovereignty of God. He alone is worthy when we talk about Jesus Christ. One of the twists and turns in the Christian church is called deism or the open theism. Yeah, I believe in God. I believe in God. And I believe that if I'm a decent person, everything will be okay. Part of the exclusivity of what we preach in here is the truth. Truth by its very nature is exclusive as we know. That Jesus Christ is the Word of God incarnate. That he is the Christ of God and our Messiah, our Savior. That the plan of salvation was for the Word of God to become flesh, teach and preach throughout the land where he did, creating many disciples and particularly apostles of which we read, that become apostles upon his resurrection. That he sacrificed himself for the sin of all humankind. These are the things that when I say Orthodox Christian churches, these are the things that are preached, not just taught. There's a difference between teaching. If I'm teaching, you know when I'm in teaching mode and it can be more interactive where I'm providing a ton of context or I'm framing what we're about to say. Going out of teaching mode. But God also, God made me primarily a preacher, a proclaimer of the truth. I'm not apologizing for anything that I believe. I'm not here to defend the authenticity of scripture. I believe that it is true. And I preach what is in here. And I don't never, I never, never want to be afraid to do that. I never, never want to, I don't want to be in a position where I would be persecuted for doing such. But I would like to have faith, as we're going to read about today, that I would, regardless. And my prayer is that we all would. So we've looked at the sovereignty of Jesus Christ and the big umbrella statement that He alone is worthy. And we've looked at reasons why. And He is sovereign over the physical. He created the laws of physics. He created all the different ideas and mechanical engineering and electrical engineering and every fell over the laws of physics that we use to help operate on our everyday lives. And we understand even as the big picture of gravity and all of that, He created all of that. Over the physical, He can speak or He could think or He could touch. And that physical changes at His whim because He is sovereign over it. It's like when you have a toy that you've created, it's in their rector's head. Is it in his domain? And so you build something and you change it. You reach down and you change it because you can. You build it, you own it, you're sovereign over it, you change it. Now it looks differently. It functions differently. God can do that with the universe. That's pretty cool. We looked at how Jesus alone is worthy because He is sovereign over the spiritual. And we read last week of Him casting out demons in God's image bearers. These are people that are not presented necessarily as being, as we are, in dwell with the Holy Spirit of God. They are God's image bearers and they are possessed by a demon. He touches, He speaks. The demons know exactly who He is and exactly what's going to happen. And just like the laws of the universe, when He says, "Go," they go. There isn't any argument. They can't put up any fight. There's no fight to be had. He is sovereign over them. Just like the rector said, when you go to change it, it doesn't suddenly rise up and say, "No, I like this. You can't do this to me." Demons have no choice. And we also saw the power last week of the written Word of God. And God gives us this to take with us as we have the written Word of God, when He is facing the opposer of God's will Himself, the Prince of Demons, the Prince of Darkness. In His physically weakened state, 48 days in the desert without food, He confronts Satan himself. And He confronts him with the Word of God, the Scripture said. The Satan catches on and says, "Well, the Scriptures say," and then Jesus comes back and says, "Now you need to understand all of the Word of God. The Scriptures also say this." And that's given for our benefit because today there are no Old Testament

prophets. There is not the office of prophet. People are not speaking directly the Word of God. But we have the written Word of God and Jesus speaks of its power. When He takes down, casts away, I should say, sends out of the wilderness, puts back in His place the Satan. And I said all along, "Find me another human being," because Jesus was fully human, fully divine, "who can do those things and will close the church." Because there isn't really any worth in being a Christian, a Christian, a follower of Christ if He's not worthy, if there's a whole cast of people who are able to do these sorts of things. There isn't. There was and is one. Today we're going to look over sovereignty over the breath of life itself as we progress through this. Now, you thought all the other stuff was really important. Well, this is particularly important to you. Why? Because you are all alive and I'm assuming that you enjoy being alive. And so here we are. In His special creation in Genesis 2, God breathed the breath of life into the human. This is important because as we are created, we're not created and then we gasped for air like a baby born today in the physical, gasps for its first breath of air out of the womb. God breathes into the human and gives Him life. In Ezekiel 37, valley of dry bones, God breathes life into the bones come, the sinews come, the tissue comes, and then He breathes life into the humans to make them alive. The Ruach, remember that word? The Spirit, the breath of God. And so there is something very unique and special about this. All throughout the creation accounts, we don't hear that He created beasts of the field and the reptiles and the insects and then He breathed life, He created them and they began living. For human beings, He breathed life into them. He is sovereign over your living being. He is sovereign over your consciousness. And this is very important because this is perhaps the largest stumbling block to the Christian faith. No, you're not sovereign over me. I'm sovereign over me. And we're taught that and to a certain degree that's a very healthy teaching. To know who you are, know what you believe, know why you believe it, and you know that you are in charge of your behavior, your actions, your words, all of that. But that is only healthy to the point where you also understand that in that, you are also walking with God, the divine. And so that's when that line is crossed and it is just me and I am sovereign over me and I am king of my castle and I, I, I, and me, me, me. And then that transfers over into any faith that people might have. I'll have faith as long as it's about me. I'll have faith as long as it honors me. I'll have faith as long as it's good for me. As long as God is serving me, I'll have faith. And we take that and that's our natural, right? That's our natural, you want to say original sin of pride and arrogance? So yes, there's a lot of good preaching and teaching that needs to go on in the church and in the home because it ain't going on in the schools other than some schools. That need to ground our children in who they are both as human beings and people made in the image of God and how desperately important it is to be a holy child of God. I didn't intend to open with the sermon, I intended to open with the reading. I'm sorry, Valerie. Let's read this and then we will move on. But as we read these, they're pericopes, right? They're stories in scripture. As we read these stories, these events, you're listening for how Jesus behaves as he demonstrates his sovereignty. He speaks, we know that. He touches, we know that. He thinks, we know that. That alone demonstrates his sovereignty. If I can stand here and think, Stephanie, be healed of this whatever and you are healed, that's pretty significant. That alone demonstrates his sovereignty. Be listening for that. The first one especially, as Jesus, or the second one really, oh, as Jesus was saying this, the leader of a synagogue came and knelt before him. "My daughter has just died," he said, "but you can bring her back to life again if you just come and lay your hand on her." That's what they read in the Old Testament. The laying on of hands, Elijah laying over top of the young man, all of those things and life would come through them. So Jesus and his disciples got up and went with him. Just then a woman who had suffered for 12 years with constant bleeding came up behind him. She touched the fringe of his robe, for she thought, "If I can just touch his robe, I will be healed." Jesus turned around and when he saw her and said, "Daughter, be encouraged. Your faith has made you well." And the woman was healed at that moment. Very interesting in between the beginning of this when he's called to go and raise a person from the dead, that as he is walking there, an individual, he does not speak to the individual. The individual thinks and speaks to him, touches him. When Jesus arrived in the official's home, he saw the noisy crowd and heard the funeral music. "Get out!" he told them. "The girl isn't dead,

she's only asleep." But the crowd laughed at him. After the crowd was put outside, however, Jesus went in and took the girl by the hand and she stood up. The report of this miracle swept through the entire countryside. We have him thinking, we have him touching, we have him rebuking the religious crowd again because it was very much tradition upon an individual's death that you would literally hire people to come and mourn. You would hire musicians to come and play funeral dirges and you would hire mourners to weep and to wail in order to signify the death of the individual. And he said, "Get out! Be done with that. You're about to witness something that you will be in disbelief about." They laughed at him. Keep that in mind, I'll say. Would you please? We are always saying in here that the scripture and good teaching and preaching from the scripture gives you all the information that you need to make the right decision. But you need to be free to make that decision. That's what it's all about. You need to be free to make that decision. The faith of the Roman officer is in Luke 7 and we're going to see how now Jesus heals by faith alone, by thought alone, by the transference of his holy sovereignty in ways that we do not understand. I'm going to begin just a little bit before that, Ryan, because it says here, when Jesus heard this. Now you're probably very familiar with the scripture, but he said, "So Jesus went with them just before they arrived at the house. The officer sent some friends to say, 'Lord, don't trouble yourself by coming to my home, for I am not worthy of such an honor. I'm not even worthy to come and meet you. Just say the word from where you are and my servant will be healed. I know this because I am under the authority of my superior officers and I have authority over my soldiers. I only need to say, 'Go,' and they go, or 'Come,' and they come. If I say to my slaves, 'Do this,' they do it." When Jesus heard this, he was amazed. Turning to the crowd that was following him, he said, "I tell you, I haven't seen faith like this in all Israel." And when the officer's friends returned to his house, they found the slave completely healed. Now that is significant before we get to the next part of this, um, I think you call them stories of this telling, this pericope, right? Because that is prayer, is it not? When you pray for intervention and intervention is experienced, how do you think that happens? Jesus does not become incarnate again and come down and rebuke an individual or rebuke a demonic spirit. Jesus does not become incarnate again and come and touch an individual and heal them or speak directly to that individual and heal them. It is the spiritual power that he is sovereign over that can take care of all of those things, and that's demonstrated here with the Roman officer. And it's a very kind of an object lesson that Jesus provides, if you will, when he has the Roman officer say, "Look, I am under the authority of my commanding officers. They say, 'Jump, I say, 'How high?' I have soldiers under me, and when I say, 'Jump,' they say, 'How high?' And that's the way I know that, you know, again, you only need to speak because you are king over all. So simply say it and it will occur." So in the spiritual realm, as we pray, intercessory prayer, as we pray for intervention, intercession, this is the way God intercedes on our behalf in the answering of prayers. So I thought that that was important to bring up today because it demonstrates yet another aspect of the absolute sovereignty of Jesus Christ. You pray in Jesus' name. Jesus answers your prayer. Yes, no, not yet. Our faith allows us to accept the answer to that prayer. Some, easy to accept. Some, extremely difficult to accept. And some, very frustrating because the answer was, "Not yet." And then, as we grow older and all of you have your testimonies, you look back and you go, "Whoa, okay." So there we go, verse 11. "Soon afterward, Jesus went with his disciples to the village of Nain and a large crowd followed him. A funeral procession was coming out as he approached the village gate. The young man who had died was a widow's only son and a large crowd from the village was with her. When the Lord saw her, his heart overflowed with compassion. 'Don't cry,' he said. Then he walked over to the coffin and touched it and the bearer stuck. 'Young man,' he said. 'He touched and he spoke.' 'I tell you, get up.' Then the dead boy sat up and began to talk and Jesus gave him back to his mother. Great fear swept the crowd and they praised God." Okay, there's a lot here and I want to stop with that one sentence. Great fear swept the crowd and they praised God. You're going to have to put those two together yourself when you talk about seeing a sight. Witnessing an event that you just witnessed. Touching the coffin and speaking to the dead boy and the boy sits up and begins to speak. Would that cause great fear? Probably. Especially if you're not much of a believer, you

would probably be very fearful of this. If you are a devout believer in Yahweh, you may have that fear, awe and reverence of holy God who has done this. Either way, the word fear is very appropriate here. Whether you're fearing this individual because they wield some kind of crazy power or whether you're fearing this individual because, oh my goodness, truly He is the Messiah. He is God. We are witnessing miracles. Bow down. Praise God. A mighty prophet has risen among us. God has visited His people today and the news about Jesus spread throughout Judea and the surrounding countryside. So we're going deeply into the behaviors of Jesus Christ that demonstrate His sovereignty and I want to stay focused on that even though we're moving through a lot of scripture Jesus is sovereign in every aspect, in every way that you can possibly think, that you can demonstrate power over, name it, He does it. Thinking, touching, speaking. He responds to situations and of course this is done for the benefit of our scriptures so that we can learn all of this. But this should be of great comfort to us. I absolutely would love to see Jesus incarnate and witness miracles of touch, witness the casting out of demons by His voice, witness the calming of a storm by simply rebuking the wind. That would be incredible. What we have are the 40 days in the wilderness. We are in the wilderness right now as Jesus was alone, not alone, not alone. We are in the wilderness now as Jesus was with the sword of the Spirit and the Gospel, the Word of God. And we experience His sovereignty in prayer, in the way that He possesses our Spirit, guides, directs, moves, motivates, rebukes, stops, opens doors, closes doors, expands our understanding of right and wrong and good and evil and demonstrates through His wisdom, because God is wisdom, truth. The truth about life, the truth about men and women, the truth about marriage, the truth about the world, the truth about humanity. God's sovereignty doesn't begin and end with just His actions here. It is constant, it is permeated, it is throughout, it is a part of your everyday life. And we'll experience that next. Would you please stand as you're able? The God of our fathers before our last scripture reading. So I think you're picking up what I'm putting down today. I think you're gathering from scripture what we are bringing out from scripture today. God's total sovereignty, not just in the stories that are told in the Bible, not just in certain circumstances, not just in certain ways, but in all ways over all things at all times. You are not the master of the universe, the creator, the redeemer and the sustainer of the universe of all humankind by working a part-time job. Does it go that way? God is simply not at our beck and call according to our prayers and what we need. He is, right? And that is His title that He gives for Himself. "I AM." He doesn't say that "I AM" and then give us, you know, sits on the throne like Zeus and waits to be appeased or He's going to whack us with a lightning bolt. "I AM." We read through Genesis, we read through the prophets, we read how God's Spirit works in the Old Testament through the Psalms and in the wisdom literature we've done that. We read now about the word incarnate, demonstrating the great "I AM." He is any time, day or night, any circumstance that you may be experiencing, any prayer that you may feel compelled to pray, even when you're angry and you're like, "I'm not gonna pray because I'm angry." He still is. And if we are going to be followers, we must understand that we are followers of the Christ Jesus all the time. Not just when we need a prayer, not just when we need something, not just when we need strength, Lord, for this or that, not just when we can't pay our bills and we need money, not just when, all the time. Our faith is invested in Him because it is strengthened and given to us by Him. It is a true relationship of abundance, and I don't mean the storehouses of heaven, it is life and life abundantly. And life includes all of the joys and all of the highs and all of the tragedies and all of the lows. That is life abundantly. A lot of folks only want to think of life abundantly as in all of the joyful, happy, prosperous, this is abundance. Life abundantly means the whole picture, man. And you get it and you embrace it and you live it. You live through the joy, you live through the grief, you live through the questions. All of it is life abundantly. And the Christian realizes this and embraces it. The lost do not realize this and desperately fight against it. The lost simply define life by this, that, or the other thing, or perhaps the accumulation of wealth or position or whatever political power, name it. But the Christian understands the much larger picture and embraces it. It is the reason why at Christian funerals, I say I'm not afraid to talk about Christian funerals. Yes, celebrations of life and all of those things are wonderful, but a good Christian funeral means that we come together both in grief and in joy. That is extremely

unique and that is an object lesson of the sovereignty of God and the way we follow Him and embrace life because He is life. And we're about to read that. I hope that that is an encouragement to you today because again, you can come in and I can tell you how great you are and if you just do these three things that Jesus says, you're going to be even greater and it's all about you and you command the power of God. You command the power of God and you speak it and it'll happen. Human beings have a really hard time realizing that the exact opposite is true. That's how we know it's a lie straight from hell because the exact opposite is true. And embracing that is the abundance of our life. The right, the wrong, the good, the bad, the joy, the grief, the tragedy, the triumph, all of it is the abundance of life and our faith that carries us through it all and into life eternally. That's what it's all about. So we're in John 11. Again, you should know the context of this. It's the raising of Lazarus from the dead. And I'm going to begin with 23 instead of reading the whole chapter. Well, I'm going to begin at 70. I'm sorry again, Ryan. I'm just going to have another, just let it sit where it is. And so when Jesus arrived at Bethany, he heard Lazarus was dead, buried. When Jesus arrived at Bethany, he was told that Lazarus had already been in his grave for four days. Bethany was only a few miles down the road from Jerusalem and many of the people had come to consult Martha and Mary in their loss. When Martha got word that Jesus was coming, she went to meet him. But Mary stayed in the house. Martha said to Jesus, Lord, if only you had been here, my brother would not have died. But even now I know that God will give you whatever you ask. Jesus told her, your brother will rise again. I want you to pay attention to something very, very interesting, very powerful in the passage that we're about to read. See if you can pick it out because I'll use some inflection in my voice. The end, the cry, okay. Yes, Martha said, he will rise when everyone else rises at the last day. Jesus told her, I am the resurrection and the life. Anyone who believes in me will live even after dying. Everyone who lives in me and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this, Martha? I love that. Yes, Lord, she told him, I have always believed you are the Messiah, the son of God, the one who has come into the world from God. Then she returned to Mary. She called Mary aside from the mourners, we talked about them earlier, and told her the teacher is here and wants to see you. So Mary immediately went to him. Jesus had stayed outside the village, the place where Martha met him. When the people who were at the house consoling Mary saw her leave so hastily, they assumed she was going to Lazarus' grave to weep. So they followed her there. When Mary arrived and saw Jesus, she fell at his feet and said, Lord, if only you had been here, my brother would not have died. That's two times now. When Jesus saw her weeping and saw the other people wailing with her, a deep anger welled up within him. So the question is not, did Jesus get angry during this situation? The real question to be answered is why? Why? So let's work on that. And he was deeply troubled. Why? Where did he put him? He asked them. They told him, Lord, come and see. Then Jesus wept. Why? The people who were standing nearby said, see how much he loved him. But some said, this man healed a blind man. Couldn't he have kept Lazarus from dying? Third time. Jesus was still angry. Why? As he arrived at the tomb, a cave with a stone rolled across its entrance. Roll the stone aside, Jesus told them. But Martha, the dead man's sister protested, Lord, he has been dead for four days. The smell will be terrible. Jesus responded, didn't I tell you that you would see God's glory if you believe? So they rolled the stone aside. Jesus looked up to heaven and said, Father, thank you for hearing me. You always hear me. But I said it out loud for the sake of all of these people standing here so that they will believe. There's a theme running through this. Are you seeing it at all? They believe you sent me. Then Jesus shouted Lazarus, come out. And the dead man came out, his hands and feet bound in gray clothes, his face wrapped in a head plop. Jesus told them, unwrap them and let him go. That's a powerful passage. Not just because of the scene, roll the stone away, Lazarus, come out. That in and of itself is a piece of power, sovereignty over life itself, simply by speaking. And the Lord spoke and it was so. Genesis, nothing changes. Why was our Lord Jesus Christ angry and troubled? There are clues everywhere as to what was making him angry and troubled. I am literally asking if you haven't answered. They didn't believe. After everything, after all of the time, after all of the teaching, after all of the miracles, after gathering and disciples following him, teaching in the synagogues and preaching and all of the things that he

has done. If only you had been here, you could have saved him. Didn't I tell you that I am life? Didn't I tell you that if you only believe, why won't you believe? His anger is for the fact that human beings won't just break down their own barriers and have faith. How many times in the gospels does Jesus say, Oh, you who have so little faith. Oh, you faithless generation. How long must I endure you? He says that. He gives us powerful instances and opportunities to demonstrate not only his sovereignty and give us every reason to have total faith in his sovereignty. He shows us that it's going to be more difficult than you might think to do. He's done all of this and that the people, and this is probably another reason why he was angry and troubled. These two people, especially Martha and Mary, are two of the people that are closest to him along with Lazarus. They don't believe. Why won't you help me? You help the blind man. Why don't you help me if you would have been here? Because they made a point to say Jerusalem's only a couple of hours up the road. He stayed there on purpose, knowing that this would happen, but ostensibly so people could have faith that he is who he says he is and he will do what he promises to do. And if we look at that and you ask yourself, "Okay, if what Pastor Brian is preaching today is true, how many times did I make God angry last week?" It's kind of convicting. It's kind of one of those look in the mirror moments like, "Oh, I needed something so I prayed really hard and then I went a few days and I... not so much. I don't really care." Or something bad happened and I'm like, "I'm mad at you now." Whatever the case may be. The people closest to him, as an individual who is indwelt by God's Holy Spirit, who has been saved and is being sanctified and has been adopted as a son or a daughter of the Most High God, don't you think that you are close to him? Don't you think that you matter to him? He knows. He knows that metaphorically or perhaps literally your Lazarus has died. He knows that. He is sovereign. He knows it. Whatever is going on in your lives, he knows. He knows that your Lazarus has died. Have faith. Understanding that these scriptures are given to us so that we may know God and his character, that he is sovereign, and knowing simultaneously that the answer to our prayers are his. We do not command the power of God. God is sovereign over all. And if we are to experience real life, the good, the bad, the ugly, then we lay our lives at the feet of the altar. And we say, "Come where Jesus come." And we walk through it. We walk through it with him and we walk through it together as brothers and sisters. You're never alone, ever, because of God's sovereignty. Amen.