

Unbelievable – John 14:12-14

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John 14:12-14. We're studying the book of John that we may believe and live. And we're in the midst of a long monologue by Jesus at the last supper.

And the next thing out his mouth in these verses are three of the most stunning statements he ever made. Almost unbelievable. But if we take them to heart and apply them in life, we'll never be the same. Truly. Our *lives* will be different, our families, our church; even our world. The things he said are that amazing.

John 14:12–14 – [12] “*Truly, truly, I say to you* [an expression of emphasis Jesus used when he wanted to drive something home; as if anticipating our unbelief on these things], *whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father.* [13] *Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.* [14] *If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it.* (ESV)

Whoever believes in me [v12] *will also do the works that I do.* That's the first of his unbelievable statements. And . . .

What a privilege! (v12a)

That's the first thing that comes to my mind when I read this. What an unbelievable privilege. That everyone who puts their faith and trust in Jesus, gets to do the works of Jesus. Not just the Apostles, or super-saints, or the early Christians; but *whoever* believes.

What a privilege! Think of it. We get . . .

• To do what Jesus did

Jesus! What he did and what he does. The very work of the Son of God. The Messiah. Our Lord and Savior. *His* works.

What a privilege! What an honor!

But what exactly does that mean? *What* works can we do?

Well, since he doesn't make any exceptions, and we find no caveats in the rest of Scripture, it must include everything from his ministry to his miracles. True.

Just like Jesus, we are privileged to . . .

- Work miracles

We are privileged to actually bring about supernatural phenomena. Most of the time through prayer and the work of ministry – asking God to heal, and protect, and provide – and sometimes through pronouncements and laying on of hands. Like the Apostles did. *Whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do.* (12a) And they did.

But does that mean *everybody* will do miracles? Or as the Apostle Paul asks in 1 Corinthians 12, “*Do all work miracles*”? And do them on demand? No. No and no.

Some in the course of church history have been given that gift. (1 Corinthians 12:7, 10) Especially in the *early* days of Christianity. When the Gospel was first spreading and the Bible was first written. To authenticate it and support it.

But as it took root, and become more and more accepted, miracles on demand and miracle-workers became less and less prevalent. Even in the book of Acts. Even among the Apostles. Like Paul, who healed some but couldn't heal Timothy. (1 Timothy 5:23)

But we can't say that miracles have ceased altogether. That would be contrary to the Bible, contrary to the words of Jesus, and contrary to our experience.

Like people right here in our *church* who have been healed; without a medical explanation. Or people who have been saved from the clutches of death when they should have died. Or those who have been guided by a strange convergence of unexpected circumstances. Or blessed with the perfect timing of unexpected opportunities.

Miracles abound. I put the very existence of our church in that category. Not to mention the miracle of salvation we see so often.

You say, “Come on pastor. I'm sure there's a perfectly *natural* explanation for “miracles,” we just don't know it.”

Maybe. But the simplest and most obvious explanation is that they're *super-natural*. The very thing Jesus *said* would happen. *Whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do.* What a privilege.

But that's not it. We're also privileged to . . .

- Proclaim the truth

To do *that* work just like Jesus. Proclaim the truth about God. The truth about salvation. The Gospel. The heart of man. Heaven. Hell. Eternity.

What a privilege. Because Jesus didn't *have* to include us. He could have put up billboards. Made podcasts. Selected a *few* to speak for him.

But he didn't. It's a privilege for all.

Third, we're privileged to . . .

- Lead people to God

Is *that* not one of the works Jesus did? Did he not draw people to the Father? Gather followers? Point them to heaven?

He did. And we're privileged to do the same. To lead people to God through Christ. And if you've ever done so, you know the joy. The exhilaration. The privilege.

And last, we're privileged to . . .

- Disciple the saints

Teach them the Bible. Show them how to live. How to love. How to walk. How to serve. What an unbelievable privilege. All of it.

So whatever you do . . .

• Don't squander it

Don't ignore it. Make the most of it. Instead of dismissing everything as somehow being natural, accept it for what it is. Supernatural works of God. His will being done on earth as it is in heaven.

And do the work of ministry to see and accomplish even more. Instead of squandering opportunities, speak up. Instead of ignoring people, lead them. Instead of leaving them to find their own way, disciple them. Do the things that Jesus did. What a privilege.

Second, as if that's not *enough*, he adds this in v12b – and *greater works than these will he do*. “Whoever believes in me will not only do the *same* works, but greater ones.”

You know what that is? A blessing.

What a blessing! (v12b)

An unbelievable blessing. Almost literally. In fact, if Jesus hadn't said it, I'd scoff.

But it raises a number of questions, doesn't it? Like how can that be?

Well, #1, Jesus said it. And what he says, goes. And #2, he left. He ascended back to the Father in heaven. “*Greater works than these will* [those who believe in me] *do, because I am going to the Father.*” (12) Because. Implying that there's something about that, something about his leaving, that leads us to do even *greater* things than he did.

And that something, or some-*one*, is the Holy Spirit. When Jesus left, he sent the Holy Spirit to help us and indwell us. That's how such a thing can be.

Jesus left us physically, so the Holy Spirit could fill us spiritually . . .

• **To do greater works than Jesus**

What a blessing.

But what exactly does that mean? How can we possibly do *greater* works than Jesus? It seems like a stretch to do the *same* works.

Does it mean *qualitatively* greater? Superior in essence, and value, and depth? Or how about *quantitatively* greater? Greater in breadth and scope.

I think both. Because once again, he makes no caveats and gives no exceptions.

I think *greater works* means **qualitatively** greater. Greater in quality. Not in every sense of course. How do you exceed the quality of raising someone from the dead? How do you exceed the value and depth of healing a paralytic? You don't.

But what about the Gospel we proclaim? Taking nothing away from what Jesus preached, and acknowledging that it's only by his design, we bear witness to his *completed* work of redemption, while he bore witness to his *anticipated* redemption.

We urge people to repent and believe on the basis of *present* grace, he urged them to believe on the basis of future grace. The grace of his *future* death and resurrection.

We urge people to believe and receive the Spirit *immediately*, he urged them to believe and wait.

So in that sense, the works we do in bearing witness to his salvation are *indeed* qualitatively greater. What a blessing! What an honor?

And the same is true **quantitatively**. The works we do are greater in *quantity* than his. Not that anyone has ever fed 5000 people with 5 loaves and two fish. That's quantitatively out of this world.

But thousands have been fed *spiritually*. Like when Peter preached at Pentecost and 3000 people were *saved* in one day. Far greater in quantity than what Jesus experienced.

Neither did he *venture* far from Israel. Geographically. But he sent *us* to the ends of the *earth*. And along the way we've reached a good part of it. Far more than *one* nation.

And let me be quick to say, none of this, none of the greater works we do are *apart* from him. It's all because of him and through him. Because he left and sent his Spirit. And ordained these greater works in the first place; that we should walk in them. (Eph 2:10)

But the fact remains. In some sense the works we do *are* greater. In both quality *and* quantity. Greater spiritually, numerically, ethnically, and geographically.

All of which fulfills what he said in v12 – *Whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father*. What a blessing. What an unbelievable, jaw-dropping blessing.

So whatever you do . . .

• **Don't miss it**

Don't pass go, don't collect \$200, and don't occupy yourself with lesser things and lesser works, when you could be doing greater works. Don't miss the blessing and don't miss out.

If God is calling you to something more, something greater – from the work of evangelism and leadership to the work of ministry or missions – get after it. Take hold of it. Don't miss it.

That's v12, and the first two statements.

Then, as if that's not stunning enough, he adds this in v13-14 – [13] *Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.* [14] *If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it.* Indicating first of all that we can pray to Jesus just like we pray to the Father. *If you ask me anything*, he said.

And second, don't separate these statements from the previous one; in v12. Because this is the other side of the coin. V12 speaks of what *we* will do, and v13-14 speak of what *Jesus* will do.

And while Jesus works completely separate from us at times, we never work separate from him. Everything we do, every good and pleasing work, is done in his presence, with his power. Two sides of the same coin.

And this particular side, in v13-14, is quite the promise.

What a promise! (v13-14)

Whatever you ask . . . this I will do. Whatever! And just in case we didn't get it or believe it the first time, he says it again. *If you ask me anything . . . I will do it.*

What an unbelievable promise.

• **To do anything we ask**

It's almost too good to be true. Too fantastic to accept. And if you've prayed for any length of time in your life, you doubt it. Don't you? Because some of your prayers have gone unanswered. Some of *my* prayers have gone unanswered.

So what do we make of that? What do we do with the disconnect between Jesus' promise and our experience? Call him a liar and throw in the towel? Deconstruct? Play the victim? Obviously not. We recognize that we failed to satisfy the caveat, or the purpose. Or both.

"Let's take the purpose for \$300." Thank you Jeopardy. Jesus made a promise to do . . .

- **Anything that glorifies God**

The goal, and purpose, and answer to our prayers *has* to be God-glorifying. Otherwise it won't be done. [13] *Whatever you ask in my name* [Jesus said], *this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son*. That God would be exalted and magnified, by what the Son does in answering. If that purpose is met in what we're asking, Jesus will do it. If it's not, he won't.

And second, is the caveat for \$500. That he will do anything we ask in his *name*.

- **Anything in Jesus' name**

[13] *Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do . . .* [14] *If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it*. He says it twice I think, for emphasis. Indicating that it's vital. A vital caveat. Fail to ask in Jesus' name, and you'll fail to receive.

So if Jesus is going to answer our prayers, both the purpose and the caveat have to be satisfied. God's glory and Jesus' name.

But what does it *mean* to ask Jesus' name? Is it just a convenient phrase we tack on the end of our prayer to ensure the result? "In Jesus' name we pray, amen." And poof, the genie does our bidding.

Or maybe it's a magic incantation for miracles on demand. "In the name of Jesus, I command thee to be healed!" Plenty of that going around. And plenty ridiculous.

To pray and ask "in Jesus' name" means four things:

1. According to his will

To pray in Jesus' name means to pray according to his will. His desires. His plan. (1 John 5:14-15)

And how do you *that*? Well, you listen to the Spirit, you get wise counsel, and you pray the Bible. "Oh God, enable us to do the works of Jesus; just like he said. Use us to work miracles, proclaim the truth, lead people to you, and disciple the saints. Help us to be salt and light. Give us great love for our neighbors."

To pray in Jesus' name, is to pray according to his will. Especially as found in the Bible.

Second, it means . . .

2. Consistent with his character

To pray in Jesus' name means you're asking for things consistent with his character and attributes. Like his holiness. And righteousness. His love, and justice. Mercy, and grace.

When I was in high school, I forgot to hand in a particular assignment at the *beginning* of shop class instead of the end, and therefore received an F. Sufficient to knock my overall grade down to a B+, and forever ruin my perfect grade point average. Sacrilege.

So I asked the teacher if he would show grace and give me half credit for the assignment. And if you knew Mr. Zanhle, you'd know that he emphatically said no; God rest his soul. Because it wasn't consistent with his character. Mercy and grace weren't to be found in the man.

Thankfully, they are in Jesus. Along with a whole bunch more. And if we ask accordingly, consistent with his character, he'll answer.

Third, it means to ask . . .

3. Submissive to his authority

If you're not humble in your prayer, you just as well not ask. If you don't acknowledge his Lordship, you're wasting your time. If you demand something, you're wasting words.

To ask in *Jesus'* name means asking in submission to his authority. Submission to his power. Submission to his way and his answer. Whatever it is.

And fourth, it means to ask . . .

4. With his support

Like an ambassador of the United States asks the Prime Minister of another country for something. Does he ask of his own accord? Obviously not. The ambassador asks with the support of the President. And by the same token, we should ask for things that *Jesus* supports.

Four aspects of praying in Jesus' name. The caveat, necessary to receive whatever we ask. Along with the purpose. All of which makes for an unbelievable promise.

So whatever you do . . .

• **Don't waste it**

Get on your knees and pray. Get on your knees to today. And every day. Lean into it with all your heart. Make Jesus the constant companion of your thoughts. Pray without ceasing.

And see, just see, if your God-glorifying, Christ-centered prayers aren't answered, and your work accomplished. Let's do that.

Prayer – God, to say these things are unbelievable is an understatement. Increase our awe at your promise. Increase our wonder at your blessing. Increase our astonishment at the privilege we have. And spur us to take advantage of it. Spur us to do the work of your Son, in the unbelievable power of prayer. We pray, in Jesus' name, amen.

You Are Loved