

## **LIFE IN HIS NAME**

### **GREATER WORKS**

**John 14:12-14**

“Truly, truly, I say to you, 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. Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it.

This passage of scripture has a stunning promise. Jesus promises that if you believe in him you will do greater miracles, greater works than he did. I don't know about you, but I personally find that hard to believe. It's stunning. We look at this and we say, “Okay, this must mean something other than what it looks like it means.” I'm confident that it does not mean we will do works that are more supernatural, more spectacular, right? Jesus walked on water -- we will run on water and do backflips. I'm pretty sure that is not how this will be carried out. Jesus fed 5000 -- we are going to feed 20,000. He raised Lazarus from the dead after three days -- I think we understand we are not going to get more supernatural than the raising of the dead.

Some have said, “No, no, no. That's exactly what it means. Peter walked down the streets of Jerusalem and people brought out the sick and his shadow healed people. They took strips of cloth from the Apostle Paul a long distance and laid them on sick people and people were healed. So, greater miracles were done.” Yeah, but the promise is in two parts. It is: “You will do greater works.” But there is this universal aspect: “Whoever believes.” This is not just for one or two Super Apostles. This is a promise for you, if you are a believer, a follower of Jesus Christ.

Another way that this has been applied (I don't think it's a correct interpretation) is this way. People have said, “Well, all of the Christians that have existed throughout history for over 2000 years in all the various places do more works than Jesus was able to do in one place for one lifetime. It's the miracle of scope. There's just so much more that the Church accomplishes.” That just is not it. It cannot be it, because that's stating the obvious. There's nothing really miraculous or supernatural about that. So, we have to stop and say, “Okay, Lord. What are you talking about?”

Your word is always true. It's not mostly true or partially true -- it's always true, and you are giving us this very clear universal promise. What are you saying?"

We want to answer those questions: What? What are the works? And how do we do them? That's our sermon. That's our main outline. What are the works and how do we do them? In order to do that, we are going to ask one more question, and that's: When? When do we do them?

I. When?

Though we really want to get to What and How, the answer to the first question of When unlocks our understanding for questions II and III - What and How. So, the first question: When? Here is the answer: We will do greater miracles when Jesus goes to the Father, because Jesus goes to the Father. In fact, he tells us in verse 12: "Truly, truly, I say to you, 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." There is a time stamp on the promise. Jesus is saying that after the cross, after the resurrection, after the ascension, "I will pour out my Spirit, and the work of the Spirit in you and in the world will be the fulfillment of what I'm promising."

Jesus is telling us that things are about to change. This is the night before the cross. This is the moment before Jesus' crucifixion, and he is saying to all of his followers: "I am now bringing in a completion in God's plan and you are going to experience a whole new realm of the supernatural, in you and through you."

We saw a similar reference earlier in the chapter when we looked at the first part of Chapter 14, in verse 7. There is that same sense, that same tone, where Jesus says, "If you had known me, you would have known my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him." He is talking there about the Holy Spirit living in believers, all of which will be made possible because of the cross, the resurrection, the ascension, and then the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Now, you will know the Father in a personal, intimate way as a follower of Jesus Christ, in a way that wasn't possible before. So When is an important part of the discussion. Now let's get on to What.

II. What?

Here's the answer to the What question: These greater miracles are the same works that Jesus did. What are they? They are the same works that Jesus did. Here is the first clue in the text. We've already seen that "greater miracles" does not mean more supernatural, and it means more than just

a larger scope. Here is the first clue. He tells us: "...whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; he will even do greater works." The way Jesus graduates there tells you that we are not doing a different work than he came to do or that he did in his ministry. "Disciples, believers in me: You will do the works that I do, even greater." That's the sense of the text.

So, if we want to know what it is that we'll do that Jesus did, even greater than Jesus did, well then now we have an understanding to unlocking the passage. And John tells us the purpose of Jesus' miracles. The purpose of Jesus' miracles is the purpose of the book of John. He gives us his purpose, you remember, I'm sure, from our study, in John 20:30-31. Let's look at those verses. Here's what John says. Notice, the text is talking about the many supernatural things that Jesus did. "Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name."

What did Jesus come to do? He came to give you salvation. He came to give you life in his name. By seeing the signs and seeing the miracles, they all point to one reality: Jesus is the life. He is the resurrection and the life. By believing in Jesus you receive life and are saved from death, from judgment, from hell, from everything that is represented by our brokenness in relationship with God. Jesus comes to restore that. He comes to save you, to save me. That's the purpose of his work. And these are the works, if you are a believer in Jesus Christ, God has called you to. The What is very simple. The What is sharing Christ and the message of his life with others so that they might come to life in Jesus' name.

Think about this for a moment. The promise is what? You will do this even greater than Jesus himself did it. Think of that! That's saying something, isn't it? You are going to tell people about Jesus better than Jesus told people about Jesus. Hmmm. You are going to lead people to Jesus even better than Jesus led people to Jesus. It's true, when you look at it -- the difference the cross makes, the difference the empty tomb makes, the difference the giving of the Holy Spirit makes.

You see, right now this is supernatural. Here's a guy -- average intellect, speaking a little bit better than average, good looks but average intellect -- standing up, proclaiming the mysteries of God, and people believe and get saved. That's supernatural! You guys agreed a little too quickly with that.

Think about it, okay? In John Chapter 6 Jesus feeds thousands supernaturally, gets up and preaches, preaches a message that is central to the faith: "There is no other way. You must eat my flesh and drink my blood. Your life is found in consuming me." And what are the results? Everyone leaves. "He's crazy."

Remember, there was that moment when the apostles come to Jesus and say, "Jesus, we had a moment here. This could have worked really well! You had them at feeding them supernaturally. And they're gone!" Now, compare that with Jesus presenting Jesus to thousands after a miracle of feeding them. I mean, that would work at this church. If we feed you, you're happy. We should do a meal right before the offering every Sunday. Compare that to the Apostle Peter on the Day of Pentecost. First sermon - The Spirit of God is poured out, people are mocking him: "They're drunk; they don't know what they're doing." He gets up, unprepared, preaches, and thousands get saved. Before he finishes, they are saying, "Stop! What must we do to be saved?!" That's impressive. That's greater than even what we saw Jesus himself doing.

Now, it's Jesus doing it in Peter. We get that. That's part of the point of the passage. "You will do greater works so that the Father will be glorified in the Son." This is not about us. That's part of the message here. This central truth brings balance to your Christian life. When you understand that God intends to work supernaturally in you, to flow through you, to bless others, then it brings balance. But when that flow is not there and we shut it off, then we lose balance.

It happens a lot when we start to talk about the supernatural, when we talk about the gifts of the Spirit and the powerful things that God desires to do in and through us. They are brought into balance with this idea that it's not just for me. It's for the kingdom of God to go forward. It's for others to know life. From the very beginning of Jesus' ministry, Satan tried to get him to misuse his power. The temptation experience is all about tempting Jesus to take the supernatural, to take his divine power, and to use it illegitimately and for his own selfish or inappropriate purposes.

The What here has a lot of applications for us. When we get this into our thinking -- that I want to go deep with God so that that river can flow to others -- it keeps us spiritually healthy. We could compare other passages. Do you remember Nicodemus? Nicodemus comes to Jesus at night in John Chapter 3. This is Christianity 101: You must be born again. Nicodemus - this is a smart guy; this is a teacher of the law; this is a leader of the people of God -- "Hey, I want to know: What do I do to have eternal life, to go to heaven?" The most famous verse in all the bible is in this chapter:

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son.” This is the guy with the rainbow hair at the Super Bowl holding a sign up: John 3:16. Right? Nicodemus: “I don’t get it. What are you talking about? Does a man enter his mother’s womb again to be born?”

Now, Nicodemus is not that slow. He is saying, “I know that’s not what you’re talking about, but I don’t get the reality that you are talking about. The difference is that when sin is paid for at the cross and death is conquered and the Spirit of God is working in the hearts of people, there is a conviction of sin. “There is a need in my life. I was made to know God and that relationship is broken.” The Spirit of God is bringing a revelation, an understanding of who Jesus is and what he has done. Hearts are made new. Hearts are open. And now God does what really didn’t happen in large measure before the giving of the Holy Spirit. So, the What is very simple, but supernatural. It’s the giving of new life to others.

Let’s go to the How.

### III. How?

We will do greater works by asking in Jesus’ name. That is the trigger point of the passage. “Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it.” Surprisingly, Jesus tells us that the answer to the How question begins with prayer. We do all of this by believing in Jesus. He does it in us. He does it through us. He does it as we just simply go to him in prayer.

Let me expand this How for a minute. I’m going to give you a four point synopsis of what this passage contains. So, here it is: How.

1. Believe. The promise is to everyone who believes in Jesus. Let me generate some appetite here for a second. Do you want to see God supernaturally work in your life? Do you want to know joy? The joy of, “Wow, God is here! God did this!” Then what you want is to see people in your life come to Jesus and to see God supernaturally working to do that. That is all on a platform of you being absolutely convinced that Jesus wants to do it, that Jesus will do it, that Jesus has promised to do it, and he will do it through you. Believe.
2. Purpose. The purpose is for the glory of God. He wants to do this so that the Father will be glorified in the Son. This is not for you to be a big deal, right? “Did you see who I saved this week?” Nobody, right? You died for no one. You’ve not been raised from the dead. Jesus

saves. He does it. And the miracle is that he does it through us, for his glory.

3. Prayer. We ask.
4. Just do it. Just begin to have those Jesus conversations with people, inviting them to church, telling them about the Lord, telling them about their need for Christ.

That's a fuller look at How, but the emphasis, the trigger point, is prayer. I think some of that is because we have obstacles to overcome. We get hung up. We have fears. We don't know what to say. We don't know how to do it. Our faith is weak, and that is overcome through prayer, through asking.

Let me give you three prayers. Let me give you an easy prayer, a hard prayer, and a practical prayer. Okay? Let's start with the easy prayer.

- Here is the easy prayer: Make a list of five people that are in your life that need Jesus and begin to pray for those five people. This is an easy prayer. You don't have to do anything but pray for those five people. So make a list. If you want, you can put a couple as one. I give you freedom to pray for as many people as you want. But, wait! I have six people! No, pray for people. That's the point, right? That was supposed to be a little funny.
- The hard prayer is this: "Use me. Use me to reach those people."
- The practical prayer: "Lord, give me the words to say and the opportunity to say them." Paul prayed this. Even the great Apostle Paul, who wrote half of the books of the New Testament, told people, "Pray that I'll have the words to clearly share and the opportunity, the open door to share them." This is a very biblical prayer. So pray the practical.

I've given you the easy prayer, the hard prayer, and the practical prayer. Let me add one more, and that is the faith prayer. Let's bring it all down to a point where you are expecting God and asking God to move in your life right now.

- The faith prayer is this: "Lord, let me have one Jesus conversation with someone this week and every week until it becomes just second nature." I'm looking for a point of fulfillment. I am saying, "Lord, I want to do this. I want to be faithful and I want you to use me. I want to know the joy of experiencing your supernatural presence. It's not about me, not just for the sake of the supernatural, but living and seeing your kingdom go forth to touch other

people.”

Alright, so here’s the interesting thing. You know, we just did this church survey. Hundreds of you filled out a survey. It’s been fascinating. We just got the report this week -- an 80 page summary with graphs and all kinds of stuff. It’s telling us amazing things about you -- who likes Cheerios and who doesn’t, and all kinds of fun facts. It doesn’t tell us about your breakfast habits, which is okay. A number of you wrote in a surprising thing. You said this: “We want the services to be longer.” That’s right. I was shocked by how many people said that. “We want the services to be longer and we want the singing to be longer.” A lot of people said that. Listen, I’m going to confess my sin. You know what I thought? “Well, some of you just have to come on time and then you’ll get more!” There’s a whole bunch of you who would get 20 minutes more if you just showed up!

Okay, I’m sorry. That was an unguarded moment. There is something so awesome about that, right? There’s this: “I want God. I want more of God.” I think that’s what people are really saying. And I want to tell you, I suspect for many of us, the way to have more of God is to live this message and not get longer sermons. When it clicks for you, “Oh, it flows through me,” there will be a whole lot more flowing through you.

Please, keep wanting longer. That’s great. But we are not dying on this hill. It’s not about how long the service is, but for those of you that care, our target is one hour and 15 minutes. If a person who doesn’t know Jesus will give me an hour and 15 minutes, I think that’s a lot for them to give. I think the truth is that there are a lot of Christians who are thinking, “Yeah, an hour and 15 minutes is good for me. I’m full.” Right?

We could debate that, but let’s admit that it’s somewhat subjective – whatever we have capacity for. But this is not subjective. I believe that this brings not only balance, but it brings growth. You are going to see that unlocked in the verses that follow, so if you come back next week you’ll see how Jesus says, “Listen, you follow me and I’ll make my home in you, and my Father and I will abide in you, and my Spirit will be in you.” You will experience God in a way that will be dynamic and a dynamic increase. So, I do believe that it’s going to lead to growth for us.

Adam said earlier in the announcement time that we hold up four connections: Gather, Connect, Serve, Grow. We want you to know that God has certain things for you.

1. God wants you to know him, to know God. He wants a love relationship with you.

2. He wants you to experience love in community - to love other people and to learn to grow in that love.
3. He wants you to serve, to give away his blessing in your life, to build the Church, to desire people to get saved and to be a part of that, to minister and serve your community and the world beyond. And then:
4. He wants you to grow in Christ. Spend time personally with God in prayer and bible study in your own walk with the Lord that flows out into your life so that you are growing with him.

Know God, love others, change your world, grow in Christ - those are represented in these four connections of Gather, Connect, Serve, and Grow.

Some of us, some of you -- you are here and you are at Gather. You're right there. This is what we mean by Gather: It means to get saved, get baptized, and gather with the people of God. It's that simple. I know that I'm just laying it out there, but I don't know what else to do. If heaven is a reality and hell is a reality, as Jesus tells us and as the bible clearly tells us and as I believe is true, then the best thing I can do for you is to say to you: "You need to get saved. You need Jesus." We trust in Jesus, we turn from doing our own thing, we turn from our sin, we turn to Jesus, we trust in him - then the first thing Jesus tells us to do is to get baptized.

Some of you are here saying, "Yeah, I'm a Christian, but I've never been baptized." Imagine that. The Creator of the universe says, "Come and follow me. Leave everything, follow me, and be saved. Be forgiven." Then the first thing he tells you to do, you say, "No, no. I'm not doing that." You are setting yourself up for your entire Christian life to view following Christ as, really, optional.

Listen, maybe you have a fear of the water. Maybe you don't want to be up in front of people. Come see us. We'll talk to you about it. But take that step. And then gather with the people of God, enthusiastically. Gather! We come to worship the Lord. We receive his love. This is what happens: We receive his love, and then we return it to him in worship. That's what's going on. It's like date night. Let's say that I go to my wife: "Every Friday night is date night." No: "Are you available?" Imagine this. Wouldn't this be great? Every Friday night I show up 20 minutes late. You are like, "Oh no. He's going back to that. Can you believe it?"

Listen, I don't know if you know my wife, but if I show up every Friday night 20 minutes late, I'm going to show up Friday night and she's not going to be there. Right? Now, you may not know my

wife, but what am I communicating to her? Friends, Sunday morning is date night. We come to receive from the Lord and return it back to him in worship. You are missing out! You are! You're going to be here on time next week, aren't you? Or not at all! That's alright. We're building. Gather, okay?

Connect. In verse after verse after verse, Jesus tells us to love one another, to live in community. It's maybe the hardest part about what it is to follow Jesus, because Jesus is easy to love, but people are difficult. But God brings a transformation in our lives where we learn to connect even through all the mess and the abuse, and then we are changing our world. We are serving. It's not about us. That's really what this message is: We are changing the world.

I'm going to end with this. You are here. You are at Gather, but the message is on changing the world. The message is on serving. You say, "So, wow, what do I do?" And that's okay. Think about this: The first time Jesus called his disciples, what did he say to them? "Follow me and I'll make you fishers of men." Right from the beginning, Jesus wants you to know this is about you and your relationship with God, but not just about you. He wants to use you to bless other people, so this is a great message for you to respond to.

But some of you are like the runner at the starting block. You know how runners get there and they have their special outfits on, their special shoes. They get right on the line and they get their hands right on the line -- they are ready to go. I don't know if you know this, but in top level races, you only get one false start. If the gun goes off and someone leaves early before the gun goes off, then everyone comes back. Then the second time if anyone goes early, not just the bad man or woman that did it the first time, but anyone the second time - they are disqualified. I don't know about you, but if I'm there the second time, I'm like, "I'm not going, I'm not going, I'm not going." And that's a picture of where some of you are. You're just afraid to step out and say, "Okay, I'm in the race. I'm going with God. I'm saying, 'yes' to Jesus Christ. He is my savior. I'm trusting in him. I need the forgiveness of sin, and I'm going to follow him in baptism. He is the Lord of my life and the hope of my life."

So, I'm going to ask you to bow your head. Our worship team is going to come up here in a minute. They are going to lead us in a final song. I want to give you an opportunity to respond.