

Greater Works, Part 1

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[0 : 00] John chapter 14, just a few verses, 12 through 14. Jesus begins with those famous words of his. In the King James, it's amen, amen.

! He says, 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.

That is the glorious word of the Lord. You may be seated. Before I forget, because my mind gets fried after preaching, happy birthday to Wilma.

Mama Wilma. One of our mothers in Zion. Thank God for you, dear lady. Thank God for you.

[1 : 11] Have you ever been given a blank check? I mean, someone with a boatload of money hands you a check with no amount on it and says to you, fill in whatever you want.

And by the way, the check is made out to you. Just to be clear. Now I know about you, I wouldn't be greedy. I'd only ask for five million. I mean, I, I, you know, just a little pittance.

Our Lord says things in this passage I just read that sound like a blank check. And some have taken it that way. Just believe it and you will receive it.

Now that may be wrong, but the promise is still there. Disciples of Jesus can do greater works than Jesus. Do you believe it though?

Do you believe it? Whatever it means, do you believe it? We're back in chapter 14. Of course, when we're in the upper room, the night our Lord will be betrayed, arrested, and the next day he'll be crucified.

[2 : 32] He's giving his final teaching before he suffers to comfort his disciples concerning his leaving them. Keep in mind, all of this what we're studying, into chapter, and to the point where he's actually arrested.

Everything he says is to comfort his disciples who will miss his physical presence. Therefore, it's for us too. He's told them that he's going to prepare a place for them in the Father's house.

Heaven. He told them he is the way of God, the truth of God, and the life of God, and the only way to God. He revealed himself, as you saw last time, as part of the divine, holy trinity.

And all of that's controversial enough to the world. But what we're looking at this morning is some of the most controversial teachings he gave even to the church.

We disagree on how to understand this passage. And I'm so glad the Grahams are here because I think what you said to us about Bogota, I think you find some help here, and hope here.

[3 : 52] First of all, greater works come through faith in Jesus. Faith in Jesus. This is the main idea. But he also says, we will do what he did.

Then he says, greater. We will do what Jesus did, he said, and then we will do greater. Now, to understand these amazing promises, we have to ask something. What was Jesus' mission?

And it's very simple. We know this. It was to preach the gospel of the kingdom in order to seek and save the lost to his father's glory. That's it in a nutshell.

That was his mission. All of his miracles and good deeds are for this purpose, to authenticate the presence of the kingdom in the king among them and to give authority to his message.

Here's what we do. When we read this passage, we tend to focus on the miracles. But the miraculous works were not his focus.

[5 : 05] He came to save. Mark chapter 1, verses 14 and 15. Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee proclaiming the gospel of God and saying, the time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God is at hand.

Repent and believe in the gospel. Mission. He delivered people from the power of the fall to set them free to follow him through faith in his message and repentance.

When the disciples got excited one time, they came back, the 72, they came back and they were excited about the fact that they had performed miracles.

Well, I should say God performed miracles through them. They got excited about miraculous power and they came back and the Lord says something very profound to them in Luke chapter 10, verses 17 to 20.

Here it is. The 72 return with joy saying, Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name. miraculous power.

[6 : 15] And he said to them, I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. Behold, I have given you authority to tread on serpents and scorpions and over all the power of the enemy and nothing shall hurt you.

Nevertheless, do not rejoice in this, the miraculous power, that the Spirit is a subject to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.

Amen. Dr. Boyce comments on this, my pastor. He says, here Jesus explicitly weighed the value of physical miracles over against the value of having passed out of spiritual death into salvation and chose the spiritual miracle without hesitation.

In other words, the emphasis is not on having miraculous powers, but on the spiritual miracle of God saving people.

That's a spiritual miracle because no one can believe unless the Holy Spirit does a profound work of transformation in them.

[7 : 38] And then they can say, huh? That's what John told us through Jesus. Jesus told us through John, it should say, in chapter 3 when he's with Nicodemus.

He tells Nicodemus two things. He says, no one can see the kingdom of heaven unless they are born from above. Do you see what he's saying?

No one can see unless the Spirit makes them born again. In other words, you have to be born again first before you can see the kingdom. And then he said, no one can enter the kingdom unless they're born again.

again, what comes first? The miracle of the work of the Spirit has got to transform us, make us alive, so that we can, one, see a kingdom, and then enter the kingdom.

Jesus says, that's more important than any kind of miraculous power over demonic spirits or any other type of miracle.

[8 : 44] So first of all, the works of Jesus are setting people free from bondage to sin, Satan, and death. This we do as we in faith in him proclaim the gospel.

Faith in Jesus is in his power and that power being released in his message. Romans 1.16.

Where do we see the power of God? For I'm not ashamed of the gospel, for it is, it is the gospel, it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first, also to the Greek.

1 Corinthians 1.18. For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved, it is the power of God.

Paul points twice to the gospel as the revelation of God's power in us, not miracles. Because miracles can be counterfeited.

[10 : 03] Satan has power. Go into various places where darkness reigns. I remember in Miami it was Santeria, the voodoo mixed with woman Catholicism.

Go into Jamaica and you go Obia, more voodoo. Go into Africa, voodoo. Things happen in the dark. Power is revealed by darkness.

Satan is not impotent. He's just out in control. When you put your faith in miracles, if you misinterpret this passage as many have done and focus on the miracles, you set yourself up to be counterfeited.

But worse, Paul says in 1 Corinthians 12, he made it clear in that wonderful chapter that the Spirit has given a variety of spiritual gifts to the church.

But he says something about miraculous gifts that we need to hear. He's speaking rhetorically. This is a rhetorical questions that Paul is asking to drive home his point.

[11 : 23] 1 Corinthians 12, 29 and 30. This won't be on the screen. You have to listen, please. He says at the end of the chapter, are all apostles? Are all prophets?

Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? Do all possess gifts of healing? Do all speak with tongues?

Do all interpret? And the answer is no. That's what he's pointing out. But in the passage that Jesus is teaching us, he says everyone who believes will do my works and even greater works.

Everyone who believes. But everyone, if you focus on miracles, then some of us are in big trouble. Because all of us don't have miraculous gifts.

And what you find out, and what the gams were talking about, is that in some places, in some teaching, if you do not speak in tongues, you do not have the Spirit.

[12:40] If you do not speak in tongues, you might even be born again. If you do not have gifts of miraculous power, you are a lower class Christian rather than a maturing Christian.

And Paul and our Lord Jesus would say, no. See, if you focus on the miracles, you end up there. Are miracles still possible?

Sure they are, because God is real. But that is not our mission. He didn't send us to do miracles.

The works of Jesus primarily are the proclamation of his gospel through word and yes, of course, through deeds of mercy, love, and compassion that point people to him and not to us.

I mean, times I watch these, some of these miracle working pastors on TV and I, every single time, they get exalted more than Jesus.

all of the miracles that happen in his name should point to him and give him glory and give him the honor and the rest of us go amen.

[14:01] Amen. So Jesus, first of all, his works that he's talking about are not miracles but the gospel. But watch, no, then hold it now.

Then what are the greater works that we do? Everyone who believes will do greater works too. Not just his works but greater works. What does that mean?

Well, he can't mean we will do more spectacular or more powerful miracles than he did. He showed power over nature.

Speaking to the winds and waves, peace be still, boom. Walking on water, multiplying matter by touching it.

Fish, loaves, bread, just multiplying it like that. Speaking to those who are demonically possessed and saying, come out of him, boom, done.

[15:04] Spiritual forces of darkness at his feet. Raise two people from the dead. Widow of name, son, and of course the one you know most of all, Lazarus.

Two people he raised from the dead in front of folk. And then of course, last of all, he himself rises from the dead.

So let me guess, you're going to do greater miracles than that, huh? If that's what he's talking about, who can top that?

Listen, saints, the disciples would have said, no way to that interpretation. They would have said, how are we going to top that?

We saw you do these things and we still can't believe it. We're going to do better than that? No, we can't. So the greater works cannot mean bigger miracles. And since we see that his works are mostly preaching of the kingdom, it has to be related to that.

[16:05] The most respected commentators see this as a reference to the reality of the new covenant and extent of these works. When the spirit of God comes, you see, after the death and resurrection of Jesus, a new era has come into being.

He has poured out his spirit upon his church as he told his disciples in Acts 1, 8, you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you. Now, read the sentence.

Power to do what? And you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth.

We are all equipped by the spirit of God. All of us. I don't care how introverted you are. I don't care how extroverted you are. I don't care how much you think you know the Bible.

We are all equipped with his spirit. Every one of us who is a disciple of Jesus has been given the Holy Spirit so that we can bear witness to Jesus with our lips and lives of compassion, justice, and mercy.

[17:13] Listen, in places Jesus never went when he was physically present with us. Jesus, while physically present, never left Israel.

except that one time when he went to Egypt when he was a baby running for his life. He was an immigrant. He never physically.

But now we take this message of his reality and works to the end of the earth, to every tribe, nation, and tongue. That's the emphasis in the book of Acts.

When you read the book of Acts, those wonderful chapters, sure we see a few miracles authenticating the apostles as having been with Jesus, but it's not a book full of miracles.

There are only a few. But what you see exploding in the book of Acts, if you read it, you'll see how the mighty gospel spread throughout the Roman world, saving people dead in sin, trapped in darkness, and under the power of the evil one.

[18 : 28] thousands put their faith in Jesus in major cities, even the capital Rome itself, as the eternal kingdom of light broke out in the darkness of the Roman world and into our world.

When Peter preached on the day of Pentecost, and 3,000 people repented of their sins, and then later we see two more thousand people came to submit to King Jesus.

Peter reached more people than our Lord Jesus did in his physical life. Thousands. Thousands and thousands of people.

And then when the apostles spread the gospel throughout the Roman world, and then the gospel began to spread from life to life, from lip to lip, as people were being transformed and translated from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of light, the gospel spread like wildfire all throughout the Roman Empire, so much so that one group of people cried out, these men who have turned the world upside down have now come to our city.

And they were not happy about it. It wasn't because they were doing miracles, saints. It was because the reality and the presence and the power of Jesus had overwhelmed them, and they were full of the glory of God, and they gave their lives to proclaim him at whatever risk was necessary.

[20 : 04] And they paid the price. As many even today are still paying that price. there you see the works of Jesus exploding, the greater works of the gospel spreading throughout the world.

What greater work, what is a greater work than that? You tell me. What can be greater than that? Anybody got one?

You, Lenore goes out, and he starts running down the street healing folk. Maybe a hundred people get healed. That's greater, a hundred people get healed is greater than the thousands and millions that are being reached with the gospel throughout every year.

Oh, by the way, don't tell anybody I said this. Miracles don't save people. You know how I know? Because Jesus did a lot of them, and they still crucified him. I don't know.

[21 : 27] Years ago, there was a teaching elder, pastor, one of our presbyteries. I'm going to say where.

I was in that presbytery. And I'll never forget the dear brother decided to leave our denomination, which is not a sin. But what he said was striking.

He said, I'm leaving to the whole presbytery. He said, I'm leaving because I want to go spread the gospel with power, signs, and wonders. I'm not exaggerating.

I'm not making this up. He said he wanted to go spread the gospel with power, signs, and wonders. That's why he was leaving the Presbyterian church in America. And all I could do was almost weep for him.

The Presbyterian, you know, some guys get all, ugh. No, I was, my heart was broken for him.

Because that's not what Jesus is telling us to do. Right, right.

[22 : 30] Right. Just, just back up. Just a sec. Just a sec. Just a sec. And I do believe in the gifts of the Spirit, by the way. Just a sec. Freeman, Dr.

Freeman, he's a physician. Just a sec. He had the gift of healing. And he goes out and he heals people.

I should say, let me be clear. God uses him. Because remember, the apostles were not the power. Jesus was always the power. Okay. So the apostles didn't heal anybody. Jesus did healing through them.

So I want to be clear with my theology. Okay. So Dr. Freeman goes out and God uses him to start healing people. Does that guarantee they will believe in the gospel?

Let me back up. Now, how many times have people come into the church and benefited from all the kindness and love and grace of the people of God and still walk out the door unsaved?

[23 : 40] You see, only the work of the spirit can move and transform people. And he does that through the gospel. We're looking for people to be transformed, not just to be served. God and God.

If all we are doing is helping people feel better in their situation, helping people, you know, maybe even progress in some ways, if that's all we're doing, then we are a social service organization and not a church of the kingdom of God.

The gospel must go forth with great power so that people are transformed from the inside out, that they will then come and follow King Jesus. That is the power of God.

That is the miracle of the spirit. That is the great work of God. And the more it happens, the more we see the greater works of Jesus being manifest in the lives of people around the world and in the nations.

Hmm. And again, the beauty of all this, this kind of life is not for super Christians. He says again, whoever believes in me.

[24 : 56] Faith in Jesus is the key, saints. Faith in Jesus and in his promise to us as everyday Christians, living the everyday Christian life, to be at his use, to be at his disposal.

people. If we will let who Jesus is and his love and presence overwhelm our everyday existence, moving us from thinking only about ourselves and our little kingdoms, we will discover that we have everything we need to be used by him in his works and greater works.

if you're like me, it's so easy to just get caught up in doing life. I got bills to pay, just like you.

My car broke down, got to get it fixed, need an oil change, spending money, money going out the window, it's always going out the window. How come it don't stay in the house?

It's always going out the window. I'm sick, I'm hurt, my wife's, my dog's sick. I mean, life! People at your job don't like you.

[26 : 15] People do like you. You're going to birthday parties for your children, you're going to birthday parties for your co-workers, you're going to birthday parties for your classmates, you're going, we're doing life and it's easy to get caught up in just doing life.

Or if you're like me, you struggle with depression, you just like to sit in front of your TV and watch Netflix for about three, four, five hours. We just get caught up.

And it's very easy to forget that you've been sent, that you're not just here to exist.

I'm talking to Christians now, I'm talking to us. We're not just here, but Jesus has sent you to do his works and to do greater works.

Each one of you. Not just Kevin Smith. I've been blessed. I really, things, Jesus put me in places I dreamed about.

[27 : 26] The Grahams can tell you, we had the privilege of being with them in, I think, Valley, Crete, and the Dominican Republic, preaching to missionaries.

I've had the honor and privilege of standing before a few thousand people to proclaim the gospel on several occasions. Never. Never. Blows my mind.

And I am nobody. all I'm saying to you is that Jesus will use you as he sees fit if you will make yourself available.

If you will get up in the morning and say, Lord, what are we going to do today? Because he wants to use you. So you're part of the equation.

He's working through you. So you are important. You're just not the most important. how many of you want to be used by Jesus?

[28 : 29] Don't raise your hands because some of you might be lying. How many of you want to be used by Jesus to see that truth in this passage, these promises realized in you?

Or are you spending most of your days looking at yourself? got to fix me. And that's our culture today.

A lot of us, a lot of our cultures, teaching, and ideology is fixing self. that's not the kingdom.

Jesus does the fixing. He just wants you to be available to trust him and then let him in your messiness use you to exalt him as you tell people clearly who he is.

And yes, even in the Bible Belt. greater works. As you send your money and support missionaries who are reaching people you'll never see, greater works.

[29 : 47] As you are making yourself available to speak to people wherever you have opportunity, not being obnoxious, but looking for people will talk, people just talk.

You know what I've always said to you, I've said this many times, so forgive me for being redundant. When people say, what did you do this weekend? They're going to ask you when you go to work tomorrow, holiday weekend, people are going to ask you, what did y'all do?

What did y'all do? And what you're going to say? Oh, we had barbecue, man, I killed the brontosaurus and we burned it up, baby, yeah. And that's all we going to say. how about I was in worship and I heard a message that challenged me that God wants to use me to do the works of Jesus.

And then you've got to explain what that means. There goes the gospel. I used to have a license plate in Virginia.

[30 : 49] It said five tulip, the number five in T-U-L-I-P. Now, most of you know, tulip is an acrostic based an acronym for basically the five points of how God saves us.

You know? And so people will ask me, five tulip? What's that mean? Well, I could say I got four daughters and a wife.

My five tulips. But that wasn't, but that's not the gospel. Every time they ask me, let me tell you. You see, T stands for, you're messed up. You can't save yourself. T means that in thought, word, and deed, you are a mess, my friend.

Come on, you know it's right, don't you? Yeah, man, I feel you, man. you stand for, I can just go right down and talk about how Jesus saves sinners like me and him and her.

[31 : 57] Opportunities. What are you going to say? Because the work of Jesus is the proclamation of the king, of the kingdom who has come to save, to seek and save lost people to the glory of his father.

That's the good work. Listen, you got an opportunity. You can listen to you got an opportunity. Let Jesus use you to do his works.

And maybe even greater. As he uses you and your resources and your church, we are doing the greater works of Jesus through the grams.

As you're reaching people in Bogota. Think about it. There's more to say here in this passage. I just decided to focus on that one part.

Everything else I'm going to say next week reinforces what we just said today. Remember today, because everything else will build on it. Amen? Let's pray.

[33 : 01] Father, thank you. Jesus, Lord Jesus, that we could be used by you, that you could do work in us so that your works and greater works are manifest to us.

It's above our head. But thank you, Lord, that you can use even us. We're not the most influential people.

We don't travel on private jets and fly around the world, but thank you that even in our little reality, you can use us to do your works and bring great glory to your Father.

God so use us, oh Lord. Use us, use each one of us, make us, help us to see the greatness of the journey that we get to walk with you.

It's not about us, it's about you and your glory being manifest. Help us, Lord, use us. Deliver us, oh Lord, from ourselves and living in mediocrity when we can live in the adventure of knowing and walking with you each and every day.

[34 : 19] Help us to see it. Help us to see you. Amen. Amen.