

Because of the Works Themselves

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[0 : 00] If you have your Bible with you, feel free to open it up to John chapter 14. John chapter 14. The words will be on the screen so you can follow along there as well.

We're continuing the story of Jesus. He's in the upper room with his disciples on the evening of his betrayal. And he's giving his last words of comfort and encouragement and instruction to his friends, his followers.

He's told them that he's going away, but he's given them assurance that he's coming back. And that when he does, they will be with him forever. He told them that he is the way to the Father and the truth and the life.

And last Sunday, we heard Philip, one of the disciples, express his own heartfelt desire. He said to Jesus, Lord, show us the Father.

And that will be enough for us. Would you give us the chance to see God? And we heard Jesus say, if you've seen me, you have seen the Father.

[1 : 14] I am in the Father and the Father is in me. Believe me, said Jesus. We ended off on verse 11. Jesus is talking here.

Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me. Or at least believe on the evidence of the works themselves. You know, it may be a struggle, don't you think, for these men sitting around the table with Jesus to accept what Jesus has been saying.

If you have seen me, you have seen the Father? God? What do the men around the table see when they look at Jesus?

Well, their basic human senses tell them that Jesus is a human being, just like us. He's got skin and bones and flesh. Eyes, mouth, ears.

He sleeps. He eats. He walks. He talks. Just like we do. It's obvious to them that Jesus was truly human. And so I imagine it would have been quite something for them to hear Jesus say this.

[2 : 25] If you have seen me, you have seen the Father. I am in him. He is in me. This goes beyond all the categories that the disciples would have had in their minds.

They knew about Moses, the man who saw God up on the mountain. They knew about Samson, the man in whom God's spirit worked so powerfully that he had supernatural strength.

They knew about Samuel, the man who heard God's voice and spoke the very words of God. They knew about Solomon, the man whose wisdom came from God's spirit.

But this, what Jesus is claiming here, goes beyond all of that. Jesus, the man, claims to be one with God, the Father.

He claims to be a living, breathing, flesh and bones, human being, manifestation of God. Is this not a tough pill to swallow?

[3 : 35] Would doubts not be rising in your mind if you heard him say these things there in the room? Does God expect you to just take Jesus' word for it?

What if somebody else was to come along and claim the same thing for himself? Should we believe just anyone who makes these kinds of claims?

No. God has provided evidence. He's given us things that can be seen to verify, to authenticate the things which are unseen about Jesus' true nature.

And so Jesus says, believe me when I say that I am in the Father and that the Father is in me. But if not, or at least, believe because of the works themselves.

Believe because of the works themselves. What is Jesus saying here? He's saying, if my words are too difficult for you to accept on their own, think back to all the works that I have done, which you have witnessed.

[4 : 51] What is Jesus talking about? He's talking about his miracles. And it kind of makes sense, doesn't it? I mean, the things Jesus is calling them to believe, these are pretty lofty things.

That God is in him, that he is in God. He's asking them to believe that when he opens his mouth, it's really God's words that are coming out. What could prove that this is true?

Well, if Jesus can do things that only God can do, well, that's a good proof. That would be solid evidence, wouldn't it?

And so he's asking the disciples, think back over all the works that I've been doing. What works have we seen Jesus do in this gospel so far? Well, back at the beginning, we saw him turn six large stone jars worth of water into the best, the finest of wines at the wedding in Cana.

We heard about the many signs that Jesus performed in Jerusalem after that at the Passover festival, signs which the likes of Nicodemus and his colleagues could scarcely deny.

[6 : 04] We've seen Jesus knowing things about people that he's never met before, like Nathaniel and the Samaritan woman at the well. She even acknowledged that somehow he had knowledge from God.

Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet. We saw Jesus heal a certain royal official's son from miles away while he was in a totally different town. We watched as Jesus healed a man who had been paralyzed and unable to walk for 38 years.

Jesus, and in an instant, he got up and walked. We heard about how a great crowd began to follow Jesus all through the Galilean territory because, John says, they saw the signs that he had performed and how he was healing sick people again and again, repeatedly.

We watched as Jesus miraculously multiplied five loaves of bread and two fish into enough food to feed a whole multitude out in the middle of nowhere.

We saw Jesus walk across the water of the Sea of Galilee in the middle of the storm and then get into the boat where the disciples were rowing. We heard about how Jesus gave sight to a man who had never seen before in his life, who was born blind.

[7 : 26] And then finally we saw how Jesus raised Lazarus back to life from the dead, a man who had already been dead for four days. And these are just the works that Jesus did that John has in his gospel.

I mean, we aren't even getting into the ones in Matthew, Mark, and Luke. These are amazing things. These are things that only God can do. It's only the power and working of God that can explain these things.

Now you might be sitting there and thinking, well, how do we know that these testimonies in the Bible are accurate? Well, first of all, I would encourage you to read them for yourself.

See if they bear the marks of authenticity. There's a man named J. Warner Wallace. He's a famous and very successful cold case detective.

His job for years has been to pour over the testimonies and the evidence that's been left behind from unsolved homicide cases. Having done so for many years, he's been very successful.

[8 : 33] He's come to solve many of them. He's come to see quite clearly what are the marks of authenticity in people's testimonies, in their statements that they gave. Even many years after the events took place.

I'm not going to go into his whole story. If you're interested, you can buy and read his book. It's called Cold Case Christianity. But the gist of his story is that in his effort to disprove the accounts of the New Testament about Jesus, he applied the same rigorous discipline that he applied to all of these cold cases, these homicide cases.

He applied that to the accounts in the New Testament in order to disprove them. And at the end of his analysis, he gave his life to Jesus because he couldn't discount these testimonies.

In fact, the opposite. They seemed to bear all the marks of authenticity that he was so familiar with from all these other eyewitness accounts and testimonies that he's studied over the years.

You don't even have to read his book to see that. Let me point out just two things here in John's Gospel that lead us that way.

[9 : 43] Back in chapter 6, Why was it that there was this huge crowd of thousands of people following Jesus around, even out into the wilderness, out into the place where nobody lives?

John says, So it wasn't just John and his buddies, the twelve disciples, who saw these miracles, these works of Jesus.

There were literally thousands of witnesses all over Israel. who had been healed, who had seen Jesus heal, or who at the very least knew of someone.

They could verify, yeah, that person, they had this persistent disability, disease, condition, and after they went and saw Jesus, they were healed. I mean, think about this.

With thousands of witnesses who saw the miracles that Jesus did, if John is just making all this up, I mean, there's no way he could get away with saying this. I mean, probably many of these people are still alive, even as John writes this.

[11 : 05] They would have been willing to confirm or discredit, give their own testimony of what really happened. The second thing I want to point you to is the testimony of Jesus' enemies.

They would have loved to expose Jesus as a fraud, or as a clever magician. They would have loved to be able to show how Jesus did all these miracles.

But even by their own admission, they could not deny the miracles of Jesus. You'll remember when Jesus talked with Nicodemus, Nicodemus kind of spoke on behalf of the Jewish leaders.

He said, Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God. Why? For no one could perform the signs that you are doing if God were not with him.

He admitted it. Real miracles. Real signs. And again, later on, John chapter 11, the Jewish council met together.

[12 : 14] The chief priests and the Pharisees called a meeting of the Sanhedrin. What are we accomplishing? They asked. Here is this man performing many signs. If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him.

And then the Romans will come and take away both our temple and our nation. We'll forget the bleak forecast for a moment. Notice that even they acknowledged, yes, he's performing signs.

He's doing amazing things. And they tried to discredit him. It's not as though they didn't try.

We saw that as they grilled the man who had been blind from birth. Do you remember that? They conducted an official investigation. They brought in the man's parents to confirm.

Was he indeed born blind? They brought in people who knew the man and friends. Was he actually blind from birth? Yes, yes, yes, yes. They all said. And it was plain as day in front of them that he could now see.

[13 : 20] Who did this so that now you can see? What happened? Jesus did it. He said. So if even the opponents of Jesus had to acknowledge his miracles as genuine, perhaps we should give a second thought to just writing off all these accounts as historical fiction.

I mean, think about this. 5,000 plus people out in the middle of nowhere with Jesus on the other side of Galilee. What was it that they were chewing on?

What did they have in their mouths? Where did it come from? They didn't even dispute with Jesus over the fact that he had made all that bread and all that fish seemingly out of nowhere. They ate it.

No, their argument was, what does this sign point to? What does it really mean? Well, now Jesus is telling his disciples what the signs, the miracles, and all the things that he's been doing mean.

They mean that the father is in him and that he is in the father. They mean that Jesus is indeed one with the father, the divine son.

[14 : 40] God here among us walking in human flesh. As crazy as it sounds, it's true. Believe me, says Jesus, because of the works that I've been doing.

Think back over those things. Only God can do such things. God's not going to work miracles through some shady imposter who's just putting on a world-class act to make himself famous.

Or rich on the backs of his followers. God's not going to work miracles through a liar, through a deceiver. If the miracles are happening, and they're being undeniably witnessed by thousands, even undeniably acknowledged by Jesus' enemies, then God is truly at work.

And Jesus, the man doing these things, speaks the truth. There's just no way around it. We should also remember that this is not the first time that Jesus has called the people to believe in him because of the works that he's doing.

Remember back to John chapter 10. This was a more public moment. Jesus made that astonishing statement in John chapter 10, verse 30.

[16 : 02] It's just above the black words there. He said, I and the Father are one. Amazing. And his Jewish opponents picked up stones to stone him.

But Jesus said to them, I have shown you many good works from the Father. For which of these do you stone me? We're not stoning you for any good work, they replied, but for blasphemy, because

you, a mere man, claim to be God.

And a little further down, what does Jesus say to them? He says, do not believe me unless I do the works of my Father. But if I do them, even though you don't believe me, believe the works that you may know and understand that I, that the Father is in me and I in the Father.

So Jesus has said this before. Remember, are you having a hard time swallowing this truth that Jesus is the God-man, both divine and human, truly God, truly man, at the same time, one with God.

Twice Jesus has said it, believe me, I am. And if you can't take my word for it, look at the things I've been doing.

[17 : 31] It's the testimony. It's the evidence. Here's where I want to go with this this morning.

This really applies in two ways. First of all, if you are not yet a believer in Jesus, can I challenge you? Can I challenge you to give the eyewitness accounts of Jesus' life a fair hearing?

We call them the Gospels. It's Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Four men who wrote about what happened with Jesus. Can I challenge you to read through each of them once? And I'm not going to tell you before you do it to just believe them.

But I will encourage you to have an open heart and simply to pray and say, God, if you're real, if this is true, would you make that clear to me?

Would you show me as I read through these accounts? Maybe you're thinking, well, I would do that, but what if I find out at the end of it all that they are true?

[18 : 46] Because I don't really like to think about the change that might be required in my life if it's all true. What if I have to give up some stuff that I really love in order to be a follower of Jesus?

Well, let me put your mind at ease. Two things. I'll say it. Don't worry about the change that is required to become a follower of Jesus.

First of all, if it's true, it's true. I mean, you can't escape the consequences of the truth.

You can run from them, but if this is all true, you're going to have a day of reckoning eventually, whether you want it or not. And so it's best to acknowledge this.

It's best to have that moment now rather than later on the final day when you find yourself with deep regret and it's too late.

[19 : 56] second, another reason why we don't need to worry about this change that's required.

Jesus was very clear.

There is change required in your life if you become a follower of his. Absolutely there is. He said it in a number of different ways and not just a little change, not just a little adjustment, but a big change. But Jesus also said that he is the one that works that change in us. we wouldn't be left to ourselves to bring it about, he said.

God's power comes to work in us. God gives us his Holy Spirit who works in us and he enables us to be and to do what we never could before.

More than that, he doesn't just enable us to do the good things, he actually changes our hearts so that we desire the good and the beautiful and the right.

[21 : 05] It's a wonderful thing so if you do not believe, if you have not yet done that, I want to challenge you this morning to have an open heart and to simply pray and ask God, if this is all true, if you're real and this is all true, would you make that clear to me as I read through these accounts one by one and then do it?

I promise you, it'll turn your life upside down. But what if upside down is really right side up? And all this time you've been living upside down all along, maybe that's why things aren't going so well.

So that's my challenge for you this morning. If you have not yet believed in Jesus yet, many of us in this room, of course, we have. We believe in Jesus.

What's there here for us this morning? Most of us have already heard all this in past sermons or we've heard it from reading our Bible.

We're already familiar with the many miracles that Jesus did and we're familiar with the fact of who Jesus is. So what do we do with all this? Well, I really do believe there is something special here for us in just this one verse for us this morning.

[22 : 25] You know, we all know that God wants us to share our faith with others, with people who don't believe, people who've never heard. We know that he wants us to do that in hopes that they will come to share in our faith, to believe, to be saved, to find life in Jesus just like we have.

We know that's our mission. Go and make disciples of all nations, said Jesus. That's our mission. Of course, to make a disciple of Jesus requires first that we tell people about him.

I mean, how can you begin to follow someone if you've never even heard of them? Or, the way Paul said it in his letter to the church at Rome, he said, everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.

But how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And so, our job, we all know, as followers of Jesus, is to tell people about him.

And we all know that. If you're a believer, I know that you know that. But sometimes we don't do it. We choose to stay quiet.

[23 : 41] And one of the reasons we might stay quiet is because we're just not worried about, we're worried about not knowing what to say.

We imagine ourselves having these kinds of conversations with people and I tell them about Jesus and I tell them that they need to believe in him, that he is the son of God, that he is God.

But what if they're skeptical when I tell them? What if they say, ah, those are pretty lofty claims for a man who lived 2,000 years ago? Why should I believe that?

Good question. Why should they believe that? Why should they believe these things Jesus is saying about himself? And depending on what you've been taught since you came to believe, you might be thinking, oh man, now is the time to pull out that book on evangelism that I read one time. What am I supposed to say next? Or now is the time to pull out that apologetics book. What was the ontological argument again? Or was it the cosmological argument?

[24 : 55] I forget. You know what? I'm not very good at answering these kinds of questions. I'm just going to leave the sharing of my faith up to Pastor Josh church on Sunday mornings.

Maybe I'll get the book Case for Christ or Cold Case Christianity and I'll pass it out to them and maybe they'll read it. Now there's nothing wrong with these books and I hope you do invite people to come to church.

I hope you do read these kind of books and learn what you can from them. There's so much value in them. But what if there was a simpler and easier way to answer that question?

Why should I believe in Jesus? Jesus shows us that there is an easier answer to that question. How did Jesus answer the question?

Why should we believe in you, Jesus? Why should we believe the things that you're saying? Jesus said, if you can't take my own word for it, believe because of the works themselves.

[26 : 03] the works that I have been doing. Think about this. How did he handle the doubts rising in people's minds? He called them to think about, to look at, to consider the things that he'd been doing, the signs, the miracles.

Why? Because they are the best argument. They are the best evidence that what Jesus said is true.

Isn't that wonderful? You don't have to memorize the ontological argument, whatever that is. If people have doubts, if they raise objections, if they question, why should I believe in Jesus?

We just have to do what Jesus did. Read it for yourself. Look at the things that he did. What explains these things?

Isn't it obvious that God was at work in all of these moments and all these eyewitnesses who saw these things? These works of Jesus, they are the evidence.

[27 : 12] They are the argument. They are the testimony being given by God the Father about his son, that Jesus really is who he says he is.

Just tell them the story of Jesus or some of it. tell them about that time he turned water into wine. Tell them about that time he fed the multitude out in the middle of nowhere.

Tell them about that time that he raised Lazarus from the dead four days later. Encourage them to dig out their own Bible, read it for themselves. The works themselves, the things he did, the signs, the miracles, all of it recorded here in our Bibles about what Jesus did.

This is the ultimate apologetics book written by God himself. But what if they simply refuse to believe in the supernatural, Josh?

What if they say, well, that's impossible for Jesus to have done these things. I don't believe any of that. Push back. Ask them. What about the thousands of people who were following him around and witnessed these things?

[28 : 28] Ask them, why were his opponents so frustrated? Why did they go so far as to kill him when they could have just exposed him as a fraud? And what of the disciples?

Why would they give up their lives if it was all a sham? All a big hoax? What did they stand to gain? let the Bible, let God's testimony work on their hearts.

There's power in it. The works themselves, believe because of the works themselves, said Jesus. So let's be a church.

Let's be Christians that tell the story of Jesus, the whole thing. Let's make it our mission to tell this community about both the words that Jesus spoke and the works that Jesus did.

And by God's grace, may many more come to believe in his name. Let's pray. Let's pray. Father in heaven, thank you so much for your word and that you speak from heaven to our hearts through these pages.

[29 : 50] I pray that each one of us in this room here today would be deeply stirred and transformed and changed by your word. I pray that we would act on the things that we hear.

I pray and ask that you would give us courage and boldness in conversations with people. Help us to remember that our lives are short, our days are numbered, and eternity is coming.

And it matters so much that we know your son. Put that on our hearts. I pray. And lead us in sharing the good news of Jesus with this community.

We ask for creativity. We ask for wisdom. And we ask for true love in our hearts for the people here in Davidson. To your name be the glory.

Amen. Yep. We ask for everyone.

[31 : 09] Hyah. Truly.