

John 14:8-24

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[0:00] Let us pray. Father, may the words of my mouth and the many meditations of our hearts this morning be pleasing and acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our maker and our redeemer. Amen.

! May you be seated. It is the third Sunday after Epiphany and the fourth Sunday in our sermon series on the Upper Room Discourse.

We are in John chapter 14 and I would like to begin with a question. If you could ask Jesus for just one thing, what would it be?

So if Jesus were right in front of you or like the disciples on that night, you knew he was telling you you're sharing your last meal with him and you got an opportunity to ask him for anything, what would it be?

What is most important to you? What do you most want from Jesus? Verse 8, Philip, hearing that Jesus is going to be leaving his disciples soon has one request.

[1:14] He says, Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us. Enough. If only we could see the Father.

If only we could know the heart of the Father, Philip thinks, that will be enough to make things different. That will be enough to soothe our wandering minds and ease our troubled hearts. That would be enough to change our lives and give us peace in a very troubling world. Lord, show us the Father and it is enough for us.

Jesus makes a ton of promises in this passage, but it's astonishing when you read through it. In some 16 to 17 verses that were just read, he mentions the Father some 14 to 15 times.

The whole thing is about his relationship with the Father. And the whole thing is about how his relationship with the Father is a deep overflowing reservoir of grace.

[2:14] How every promise he makes to his disciples overflows from his relationship with his Father. In other words, the relationship that Jesus has with his Father is the solid ground and strength behind all the promises that he makes to us.

And so I just this morning want to spend a few moments looking at three of the promises that Jesus makes and how they rest on his relationship to the Father.

So the first promise is greater works. Verse 12. In the first promise, Jesus' relationship to the Father is the reason for the promise. Look at verse 12 with me.

Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do. He ups the ante. And greater works than these will he do.

Why? Because I am going to the Father. Now when we hear this promise, we might go, really, Jesus? I mean, you turned water into wine.

[3:17] You fed 5,000 people. You walked on the sea in a stormy night. You healed a man who was blind from birth. And you raised somebody from the grave. Greater works?

What do you mean? Do you mean more works? Do you mean better works? Or do you mean something altogether? And the key is that little word, because. Greater works than these he will do because I am going to the Father.

In John's Gospel, going to the Father is the whole movement of Jesus' return. Death, resurrection, and exaltation to the right hand of the Father.

So Jesus means by this that through his death, resurrection, and exaltation, something happens in the world that fundamentally changes reality.

He brings his disciples into a new reality. And something happens through his death, resurrection, and exaltation that fundamentally changes reality.

[4:15] Because Jesus does something to sin, and he does something to evil, and he does something to death. He takes the penalty for our sins so that he can forgive our sin.

So all of a sudden forgiveness becomes more powerful than our sin. He takes the worst that evil can inflict on any human being, and yet he defeats evil.

So he takes away the power that evil will ultimately have in the world. And he takes the death that we deserve so that he, in the resurrection, he can undo death from the inside.

So that though we die, we know there will be life on the other side of death. So he takes away the ultimate sting of death. On his way to the Father, Jesus does something to sin and evil and death that alters the world in which we live.

And he invites us to live in the world which he is making. So now as we do ministry in Jesus' name, we know that the sin and the evil and the death that we face are coming up against a power that has already defeated them.

[5:19] Yes, sin still sticks to us, doesn't it? And it still sucks the life out of us. And evil, my goodness, reading the news headlines yesterday, I was like, man, evil is still wreaking havoc in our world.

Still wrecking havoc. And yes, death still calls our names. But the writing is on the wall. The clock is ticking. Their time is coming. They have a shelf life. Jesus has already won the victory.

And that's why Jesus says to his disciples, you will do greater works. Because our works are going to take place on the other side of Jesus' death, resurrection, and exaltation.

Which means our works will have an effectiveness that are derived from what Jesus has already done. In other words, the works that Jesus did, he was doing on the way to the battle.

And the works that we do, we do after the battle has been won. So sin and evil and death may still fight, but they are now defeated foes and weak are enemies.

[6:22] And so Jesus tells us, greater works than these will you do because I am going to the Father. In other words, Jesus' relationship to the Father is the reason why this promise is true.

In the second promise, if the first was greater works, then the second promise Jesus gives us right in verse 13 is whatever you ask. It goes from crazy to crazy.

Whatever you ask. And here, Jesus' relationship to the Father is the motivation for the promise. So look in verse 13. Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.

If you ask anything in my name, I will do it. And once again, I think we're asking, really, Jesus? Whatever I ask? It seems like a bit of an overstatement, Jesus, because there's a lot of things I've asked for that I haven't experienced the fulfillment of.

A lot of prayers that I've asked that I'm still waiting for answers for. So what do we make of Jesus' promise here? I think, for one, it tells us that the power for the greater works that Jesus promises we are due does not come from the disciples.

[7:34] It comes from Jesus himself. But another thing is that it tells us that our prayers, these are prayers that are in Jesus' name. And in Jesus' name is not some magical formula or incantation, like you just pray whatever you want, and then you tack in Jesus' name onto the end, and it's sure to come true.

That's not what Jesus is talking about. In his name means prayers that are aligned with everything that his name stands for. Prayers that are aligned with his kingdom. Prayers that are aligned with his ministry.

Prayers that are aligned with his character and his nature. And most of all, we discover prayers that are aligned with his heart's desire to glorify his father. And this is the deep motivation of this promise.

It's the deep motivation behind the promise that Jesus will answer prayers. It's in verse 13.

Whatever you ask in my name, I will do. Why? So that the father may be glorified in the son.

There's something about when Jesus answers prayers that are aligned with his character and his ministry and his will in the world that brings glory to his father.

[8:41] And if we've learned anything about Jesus' ministry, it's that he has a burning passion and zeal to bring glory to his father. And so that was the purpose of his earthly ministry.

And it's now the purpose of his heavenly answering of our prayers. Is that he would bring glory to the father by answering prayers that are in alignment with his mission and his name in the world. Thinking about this this weekend, I was like, is there any greater encouragement to pray in the whole Bible? I mean, Jesus wants to answer your prayers because Jesus wants to glorify his father. So you can pray big, bold prayers in Jesus' name. Now, the obvious question that we can't ignore is, well, what about all the unanswered prayers? Like for the salvation of my child, wouldn't that glorify the father?

For the healing of my disease, wouldn't that glorify the father? For peace in Ukraine and justice in the Middle East and safety in Minneapolis and freedom from addiction in the downtown Eastside, wouldn't that glorify the father?

[9:57] Now, there's a lot of personal pain behind those questions, right? And to each of them, I think the answer is yes, that would glorify the father. And herein lies the mystery, the deep mystery of prayer, of unanswered prayer.

We know God's character. We know his purposes. We know his will for salvation. And yet we do not know his timing and his plans. It's like Mary weeping at the feet of Jesus with sadness and, I'm assuming, a tinge of anger.

Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. She didn't know yet how it would turn out. The promise in John 14 that Jesus will answer our prayers, I think, tests our faith as much as it encourages it, which is in part why Jesus needs to give us a third promise.

Not only greater works, not only whatever you ask, but the third promise is another helper. Another helper will come. And in this promise, it's Jesus' relationship to the father is the source of the promise.

So if you look at verse 16 with me. And I will ask the father. So Jesus is going to now ask the father. And he will give you another helper.

[11:10] The father will give us another helper. He'll be the source of the promise. To be with you forever. Verse 17. Even the spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him.

You know him. For he dwells with you and will be in you. In some sense, this may be the greatest of all Jesus' promises.

Do greater works than Jesus did while he was on earth. That's a pretty great promise. To have whatever we ask in Jesus' name, done by Jesus, that's an even greater promise.

But to have the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Holy Trinity, come from the father at the request and behest of the son. To dwell not only with us, but to dwell in us and forever.

Now that is the greatest promise. Jesus says, I will ask the father and he will give you another helper. And the word behind this word helper is what we say in English, paraclete or paracletos.

[12:18] It just means, para means to come alongside. And cleat is a noun form coming from a verb that means to call. So to call alongside. The paraclete is someone who is called to come alongside you, to help you, to comfort you, to strengthen you, to encourage you, to exhort you.

And when needed to advocate for you. So sometimes this language was used in ancient court of law as someone who would come and advocate for you in the legal court.

It's as if the spirit comes alongside us at the Jesus request because of the father's graciousness in order to advocate for us that the purposes of Jesus would be fulfilled in our lives.

Which is why Jesus says that the father will give you another helper. Did you notice that? Not just a helper, but another helper. The implication being that the spirit is not the first helper that we have been given.

Jesus is the first helper that we have been given. And now we have another helper, a second helper. And the word can mean like one more of something, as in just a series of things that are given to us.

[13:27] Or the word can mean of the same kind as something. In other words, the Holy Spirit is the same kind of helper that we have in the

Lord Jesus. In other words, the person and work of the Holy Spirit cannot be separated from the person and the work of Jesus.

Which I think is why Jesus can say, you already know him. I think it's because they have already been with Jesus, who is full of the Spirit.

They have already been with Jesus and seen the Holy Spirit at work in Jesus' life. And now Jesus is saying that presence of the Holy Spirit will be in them, as it was and is in him.

Which is why Jesus also says that the Father will give you not just another helper, but that this another helper is the Spirit of truth.

I think this is very important for us because it shows us that the Spirit helps us by telling us the truth. And helping us to live the truth. Do you guys remember J.I. Packer?

[14:36] He's a pretty great guy, huh? Isn't he having a lot of fun right now? Worshiping the Lord he loved and served. And he's got this brilliant definition. I remember J.I. Packer, for his last nine years of his life, he was like, I'm beating the drum for catechesis.

That was always what he was on about. And he defined catechesis this way. I heard him one time say, catechesis are the truths, teaches the truths to live by and how to live by them.

And I thought, that's pretty much what the Holy Spirit does. It's about teaching us the truths to live by and how to live by them. And the Holy Spirit is the great catechist. The Holy Spirit's ministry is a teaching ministry as well as a transforming ministry.

It's helping us to know the truth about Jesus Christ, but then taking the truth about Jesus and applying it to our hearts and minds. So that our minds not only know, but our hearts love.

And so that our hearts not only love, but our bodies live and do. And as he does this, the Holy Spirit brings comfort to some and he brings confrontation to others.

[15:37] And most often we need both in our lives. Comfort for those who need to be comforted with the truth of Jesus. Bring assurance and peace. But also confrontation for those who need to be confronted with the truth of Jesus.

Bringing conviction and conversion. And repentance and faith. See, the Spirit comforts and the Spirit confronts so that people may know about Jesus and people may turn to Jesus and people may become like Jesus.

And one day people may see the glory of God in the face of Jesus with unveiled faces. Jesus says, I will ask the Father and he will give you another helper, namely the Spirit of truth.

And each of these promises, the greater works and the whatever you ask and another helper, they flow to us, Jesus wants us to know, from the deep reservoir of grace that is his relationship with the Father.

He wants us to know that there's nothing stronger in the world than these promises. There's nothing more solid in the world than these promises. There's nothing that you can bank on more than these promises in the world.

[16:44] Because they depend on Jesus' relationship with the Father. And there's nothing more substantial and nothing more real and nothing more powerful and nothing more loving and nothing more joyful than that.

So brothers and sisters, it is our great joy this morning to simply receive the promises of God proclaimed over us. And say that is the reality of our lives.

And as we come to the table and as we receive the bread and the wine, to realize just how deep Jesus will go to fulfill his promises for us.

I speak these things to you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. Amen.