

August 2, 2015  
Sunday Morning Service  
Series: John  
Community Baptist Church  
643 S. Suber Road  
Greer, SC 29650  
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*To Ponder . . .*

Questions to ponder as you prepare to hear from John 14:8-14.

1. Describe how Jesus revealed the character of God.
2. How does the word “in” describe your relationship with God the Son and God the Father?
3. What work do you do that is greater than the works Jesus did?
4. What does Jesus going to the Father have to do with us doing greater works?
5. What have you asked for in Jesus’ name that God did not grant?
6. What didn’t God answer that request?

### **MIRACLES AND FAITH** **John 14:8-14**

The reason you don’t have a better job is because you don’t have enough faith. The reason you don’t make more money, or live in a nicer house, or drive a nicer car, or go on longer vacations is because you don’t have enough faith. The reason you have poor health is because you are not exercising enough faith when you ask God to grant the desires of your heart. Apparently, you just need to believe more or better or harder.

Or maybe not. These random errors of thought are doctrine for a lot of people who claim to be Christians. These people truly believe

that if a Christian names it and claims it, God is obligated to come through for them and grant their three wishes. And that includes miracles of healing, tongues, and other weird stuff. How did they arrive at this point of heretical teaching? They claim this is what Jesus taught in our text.

One of the advantages of preaching expositionally through entire books or sections of the Bible is that we are able to balance truth as one truth explains another truth. According to the text before us, Jesus did offer the disciples some amazing privileges. But those promises came on the heels of Jesus upbraiding those same disciples a bit for not really grasping who He is.

This is the critical point for Christians today. If we really do not know the character of God the Son, God the Father, and God the Holy Spirit, we are going to misunderstand the promises God has given us. We practice this same principle in life quite regularly. For example, if an irresponsible drifter promises us that he will come to church with us next Sunday, we have learned from experience that it is doubtful he will keep his promise. Or if we go to work for a wealthy and generous Christian who promises to take care of us, we generally expect that we will be happy on pay day. Or if we know that our father is a wise, God-fearing man who knows the Bible well, we expect him to respond in a way that will glorify God when we ask him to take care of the bully at school.

We expect God to fulfill His promises based on what we know about God. The more we know God, the more we comprehend His character, the more our requests will be conformed to His will. That is the essential principle Jesus taught in this text.

### **Jesus Proved He Was God by Miracles (vv.8-11).**

Can we identify with Philip’s request for Jesus to “show us the Father” (vv.8-9)? We should be like the disciples who longed to see God. *Philip said to him, “Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us” (v.8).* People who are at odds with God the Father are not interested in seeing Him. Oh, there might be some curiosity seekers who wonder who and what He is. But sinners who outwardly deny God typically believe in their conscience that God does exist. They know their sins are an offense to Him. Therefore, their response is to

deny that He is or that He cares. All of that means that such people are not looking for Him, nor do they care to visit with Him.

Philip and the other ten disciples were not like unbelievers. They feared God. Fear is a good term that describes people in Philip's day who had been taught by the Old Testament. They believed in God, they tried to please God, and they trusted God to keep His promise. That is what awesome respect for God is like. That is why Philip and the other disciples were looking for the promised Messiah when they found Jesus.

Likewise, if we truly believe God, love God, and are made right with God through faith in Christ's sacrifice for our sins, we look forward to seeing Him and being with Him. That does not mean that we have a warm, "good buddy" feeling toward our Creator. Rather, we fear God, having an awesome respect for Him while at the same time, knowing that He loves us. Therefore, we, like Philip, long to see Him in order to worship Him more directly.

Philip's request might have been based on his experience with the Old Testament. He learned that Moses had requested to see the presence of God. In response, God allowed Moses to catch a small glimpse of His glory. Isaiah and Ezekiel experienced some pretty impressive views of God. Jesus had just told Thomas and the disciples that He is the way, the only way to God. You can almost see the wheels turning in Philip's head as he asked for more than an indirect association with God. He requested on behalf of himself and the other disciples a direct, face-to-face meeting with the Creator God who sits in His throne room in heaven.

Jesus responded to Philip's request with a certain amount of chastening. Did they not understand that God was with them? Jesus said to him, "*Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'?*" (v.9)? We can see that there was a bit of rebuke in Jesus' response to Philip's request. Let's look at the request in detail to understand Jesus' response.

Phillip asked, "Show **us** the Father." Jesus replied, "Have I been with **you** so long . . ." The pronoun Jesus chose is a second person plural form that means in our vernacular, "you guys." Then Jesus said directly to Philip "and **you** still do not know me?" Here the pronoun "you" is a second person singular form, that is translated, "you

personally Philip." Jesus said, "Still do not know **Me**" using the perfect tense verb that means Philip had not yet come to know Jesus. And in case there was any doubt who Jesus was talking to, He ended the statement with the name "**Philip.**"

Philip asked the question and Jesus directed the response to Philip. But in the larger scope, it is obvious that both Philip and the other disciples still did not fully comprehend who Jesus was. That lack of knowledge became even more obvious throughout the crucifixion, burial, and resurrection. It is obvious that important questions flooded the disciples' minds. "How could the man Jesus rise from the dead?" But, "If He was God, how could God **not** rise from the dead?" And yet, "How could God die for sins?"

Jesus was pointing out to the disciples in this conversation that they needed to learn that Jesus manifested God completely. If they had seen Jesus, they had seen God. Surely this confusion expressed by Philip also troubled Jesus' spirit. He had spent three years with these guys and still they did not grasp who He was. One would expect the Pharisees, the members of the Sanhedrin, the opponents not to understand. But for men to live with Jesus for three years and still not figure out who He was had to be discouraging.

Religious people throughout history and all over the world today also talk about Jesus, claim that to some extent He is one of their spiritual leaders, and yet deny that He is God. Most religions freely acknowledge that Jesus was a good man, or a chief prophet. But those millions of people cannot fathom for a moment that Jesus is God. Only true faith can grasp that reality.

The good news is that the disciples figured it out. They figured it all out after Jesus rose from the dead, after He ascended to the Father in heaven, and after He sent God the Holy Spirit to dwell within them. Finally the eleven disciples were so convinced that they all died rather than deny that Jesus is God. John surely got it figured out as he wrote near the end of the first century, *And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth (John 1:14).*

In Jesus' rebuke, He pointed out that the disciples should have already come to know who He was. How? Jesus said that words and works should be sufficient to reveal His character (vv.10-11). Jesus'

teaching proved His equality with the Father. Therefore, it is as if He asked, “Why wouldn’t a person believe that Jesus is equal with God?” That would be especially so if someone had the privilege these men had.

So Jesus asked, “*Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me?*” (v.10a). Such “in” statements speak of deepest intimacy. John used the idea frequently in this Gospel. He recorded Jesus’ statement that the intimacy of feeding on His flesh and drinking His blood is a picture of **abiding in** Him (John 6:56). As we know from the rest of the story, that requirement of intimacy drove away the masses. Here in this context, we learn that in the last day we followers of Christ will fully comprehend Jesus being **in** the Father and us being in Him (John 14:26). In the vine and branches picture, branches bear fruit only because they are intricately, intimately attached to the vine (John 15:4-6) which is the same as **Christ’s words abiding in us** (v.7). In the “Lord’s Prayer” for His disciples, He prays that we will grasp the reality of Him being **in** us like He is **in** the Father (John 17:21).

God the Son and God the Father are so much one that the one resides within the other. Is that not God’s plan for all of us who are indwelt by God the Holy Spirit? When God is **in** us, it is evident and convicting to a sinful world. God the Father **in** God the Son also convicted of sin and that was the chief problem. Because the disciples were expecting a human Messiah, they really struggled with the idea that their master, teacher, and friend was actually God.

Listen to what Jesus said and be convinced! *The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority* (v.10b). The masses realized that Jesus’ teaching was unique. When Jesus finished the Sermon on the Mount, everyone who heard concluded that He, unlike their teachers, taught with authority (Matthew 7:29). Even the temple police who the Sanhedrin sent to arrest Jesus came back and reported that His teaching was uniquely authoritative (John 7:46). Everyone agreed that Jesus taught with authority, but almost no one understood by what authority He spoke.

The masses today still acknowledge that Jesus’ words are unique. Most false religions hold Jesus in high esteem as a great teacher or special prophet. Anyone who knows something about Jesus will typically confess that He was a good teacher. Unregenerate

rhetoricians even study Jesus’ words in an effort to learn how to speak more effectively. How is it that most people historically have not been able to conclude that the man Jesus spoke with the very authority of God our Creator because He is one with the Creator?

There should be no doubt about this because Jesus frequently explained that He spoke with authority because He spoke God’s words. He taught, “*For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me*” (John 6:38). When religious folks tried to argue that Jesus was just a man, *Jesus answered them, “My teaching is not mine, but his who sent me”* (John 7:16). The people continued to minimize Jesus’ character, *So Jesus said to them, “When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am he, and that I do nothing on my own authority, but speak just as the Father taught me”* (John 8:28). In the end He reminded the disciples, “*For I have not spoken on my own authority, but the Father who sent me has himself given me a commandment – what to say and what to speak*” (John 12:49).

No wonder John calls Him “the Word of God.” John began this Gospel with this introduction to Jesus: *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made* (John 1:1-3).

Based on His teaching, we should know that God the Son is equal with God the Father. But, if Jesus’ words are not enough to convince us that He is one with God the Father, His works also proved His equality with the Father. He told the disciples that God the Father actually empowered the Son’s works. Not only did Jesus speak the words of the Father, but He also taught that “*the Father who dwells in Me does His works*” (v.10c).

Jesus’ miracles were more astonishing than His authoritative teaching. While the religious leaders could not debunk Jesus’ teaching, they could at least ignore it. But they couldn’t ignore healed people, fed people, and once dead people who walked in their midst. The very same unbelievers in our day who acknowledge that Jesus was a good teacher, generally dismiss His miracles as legend or myth. They must because Jesus’ works proved beyond doubt that He is who He claims to be – God in the flesh!

Jesus' response to the doubters in His day is still a valid rebuke for doubters today. He told them, "*If I am not doing the works of my Father, then do not believe me; but if I do them, even though you do not believe me, believe the works, that you may know and understand that the Father is in me and I am in the Father*" (John 10:37-38).

The purpose of Jesus' miracles was to stir up faith. He challenged the disciples, "*Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me, or else believe on account of the works themselves*" (v.11). The point of all the Gospel accounts is to generate faith. Under direction of the Holy Spirit, John chose certain teaching and eight out of hundreds (or thousands) of miracles to stir the sinner's heart to belief. He argued, *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* (John 20:31). The point is not for a person to simply believe that Jesus existed and that He was a good man, a great teacher, and a doer of hard-to-explain works. The works and words of Jesus loudly proclaim that He is the Christ the Son of God!

Therefore, fully trusting that Jesus proved His divinity by His words and His works to the point of complete dependance on this truth is the difference between eternal life and eternal punishment in hell. According to John's argument, Jesus' works and words prove that He is the Christ – the anointed, chosen, planned for Savior who shed His blood to be the one acceptable sacrifice for sin. His works and words prove that He is the Son of God, equal with God, and, therefore, that God Himself paid the price to cover the offense of our sins. Because Jesus is who He taught He is, all of eternity rests on this very narrow point. You must believe that He alone is the way for sinners to be reconciled with their Creator who they naturally rebel against by sinning. Either we rest wholly in this truth, or we willfully run into eternal perdition.

Based on that knowledge of Jesus, Jesus promised amazing blessings to people who trust Him.

### **What Do God's People Prove by Doing Miracles (vv.12-14)?**

According to verse twelve, if we trust Jesus, we should do miracles, right (v.12)? It appears that people who really trust Jesus will do miracles like He did – and greater. After all Jesus said,

*"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"* (v.12a). These are all future tense verbs. Therefore, the "whoever believes in Me . . ." refers to all Christians, not just the disciples. What an astonishing promise that we do the works that Jesus did and even greater.

It is wise for us to stop for a moment and try to imagine all the works we do that are like healing the blind, the lame, the lepers, or like casting out demons, or walking on water, and commanding storms to cease. What do we do that is like the miracle of feeding thousands with a couple of fish and loaves of bread or like raising Lazarus from the dead? So how is your miracle ministry doing? Is it as this promise says, greater than Jesus' ministry was? Obviously, it appears that 1 apple +1 apple does not equal 2 apples. Or maybe we are adding apples and oranges to arrive at fruit in a general sense.

The key is in the next phrase of the verse. Believers will do greater miracles because Jesus went to heaven. Having given the amazing promise about doing works like His own and doing even greater works, Jesus immediately added, *because I am going to the Father* (v.12b). This simple statement gives the reason behind the greater works. The works and the greater works that disciples did and we do hinge completely on the fact that Jesus went to heaven. Jesus' entrance into heaven proves a few important points. First, it reveals that He completed the work of redemption on the cross. Second, that Jesus went to heaven proves that He rose from the dead, validating His work. Third, He entered heaven and sat down in the seat of authority at the right hand of the Father where He intercedes with His blood in behalf of sinners. All of that has significant bearing on the meaning of this promise.

Jesus' ministry was all about pointing sinners to this amazing work He came to do. And yet, we see evidence all through the Gospel accounts that it was difficult (if not impossible) for the people to grasp the work of redemption. Why? Here are a few more facts to consider. The people struggled to believe in Jesus as Savior because they saw Him as a mere man. They expected a human Messiah who would restore the nation of Israel. They were not looking for a Savior from sin. Therefore, none of the suffering Savior and redemption stuff made sense until after Jesus went to heaven.

When Jesus entered heaven, God the Father sent God the Holy Spirit who Jesus promised is “*the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you*” (John 14:26). Jesus also promised that “*when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment*” (John 16:8). Now the Holy Spirit compels people to believe in Jesus the Savior.

Therefore, the works we do is the continuation of Jesus’ work of telling the good news of redemption. The miracles that some people like to pretend they do were only attention grabbers and illustrations of Jesus’ work of restoring sinners spiritually. The disciples did indeed expand the work of Jesus magnificently. When Jesus ascended to heaven, there might have been a few hundred believers. On the first day of the Holy Spirit’s work there were 3,000 new ones added. Jesus never preached outside Palestine. We take the Good News to every corner of the world, focusing primarily on Gentiles. Sinners hearing the good news of salvation and responding with faith in Jesus Christ is His work.

Now consider the second promise Jesus gave. His promise causes some people to wonder if God is not glorified by granting our wishes (vv.13-14)? What did Jesus mean by telling us to ask “whatever” that God may be glorified? He promised, “*Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son*” (v13). Some people lower this amazing request to the sinful world of passing things. They claim that Jesus gives us, His followers, the prerogative of naming and claiming anything we covet or are envious for. Others claim that this is a license for us to ask for miraculous powers that result in us looking better than powerless people who cannot do miracles.

There are two important keys to help us understand this promise. First, we ask in Jesus’ name. This is not simply a matter of tacking Jesus’ name on our prayer requests. To ask in Jesus’ name requires that whatever we ask Jesus to do must be in keeping with His character. God the Son’s character does not condone lust, covetousness, vengeance, or greed. The general scope of prayers that are in keeping with Jesus’ name are requests for people to conform to His character. Therefore, we pray that we might represent Him well

as we become more like Him. Or we pray in Jesus’ name that God will empower us to help others become more like Jesus.

In our prayers, our desire is for God the Father to be glorified. The one thing that brings God greatest glory is when sinners are redeemed and in the process of being restored to our original condition. Our original condition was a perfect reflection of God’s glory. That is what all redeemed people will do for eternity. God is glorified as we take on the character of His Son in this world. With few exceptions then, the prayers we ask in Jesus’ name that glorify God are prayers about people becoming more like Him, us being used to that end, and God arranging circumstances to achieve that end.

A second promise in this same vein reveals that your wish is really not God the Son’s command. Jesus promised, “*If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it*” (v.14). Again the parameter is Christ’s name. Most of the time this promise is invoked to ask for things that are outside the character of Christ. This is much like the promise David gave us. *Delight yourself in the LORD, and he will give you the desires of your heart* (Psalm 37:4). When our delight is found within God’s character, we will desire what pleases Him. When our desire is finally shaped according to God’s will, He gives what we desire. The disciples learned this truth and practiced it as the subsequent story in Acts and the Epistles prove.

The Lord has given us great promises in this text. He promised to give what we ask for in His name. He promised that we will do greater works than He did. But the promises are built on the challenge to know God the Father by knowing God the Son. Most people, including those who claim Jesus as their Savior, know little about God. Therefore, most people do not ask for things that fit with Christ’s character. Therefore, God does not answer the requests. Therefore, the professors do not do greater works than Jesus. The good news is that there are believers who have learned these lessons and God is using them to help others be conformed to the image of Christ for the glory of God.