

Sermon Series Four: Believe and Live
(The Gospel of John: *The Preparation and Passion of the Messiah
Birthing the New Testament Church - John 13-21*)
John 14:7-14
Prescriptions for Troubled Hearts (Part Three)
Greater Things than Jesus Things

For greater things have yet to come and greater things are still to be done in this city, says the songwriter. We know that it is true because Christ promised it in John 14:12. 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, because I am going to the Father.*” Jesus promised that those who have saving faith will do greater works than even Jesus did. They will be greater not in power but in extent. In essence, Jesus is referring to the works of the church. Primarily, he is referring to the evangelization of people from all over the world. Far more came to Christ at Pentecost than during Christ’s ministry. But he is also referring to Spirit empowered teaching, the working of miracles, and deeds of mercy and compassion. Such marvelous works have been done a million times more than in Christ’s three year ministry.

Christ has been giving the disciples prescriptions for troubled hearts. The first prescription that he gave them, was the hope of a heavenly home. The second, was the way to the heavenly home – through Christ alone! And now he will give them three more prescriptions for troubled hearts. We will look at two of them this morning:

I. We have intimate knowledge of God through knowing Christ (John 14:7-11).

⁷ *If you had known me, you would have known my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him.*” ⁸ *Philip said to him, “Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us.”* ⁹ *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’?”* ¹⁰ *Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own*

authority, but the Father who dwells in me does his works. ¹¹ *Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me, or else believe on account of the works themselves.*

Jesus gives comfort to the disciples by telling them that in knowing him, they know God.

1. What does it mean to see God?

Many times each of us have wished that God would possess a tangible form that we could see and hear directly. At times, God seems so remote, so untouchable. We would like to gaze upon God and hear his voice with words that actually strike our ear drums. “It would make living for God so much easier,” we say. “He could answer our questions and give us directions immediately and clearly. Isn’t God holding out on us and making it so much more difficult by denying us this experience?”

Have you ever asked to see God’s glory like Moses did? Indeed the Scriptures are clear that we will never actually see God himself. God told Moses, “You cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live” (Exodus 33:20). So what does Jesus mean by “seeing God.” What kind of seeing leads to knowing God?

The answer to that question is found in the resurrection story. In that story we find three different Greek words that are used for “seeing.” We will say more about that later, but let me illustrate in this way. If you walk into the room and *see* a person who is obviously of Middle Eastern descent, you may immediately assume that he is a Muslim. You see him, but do not necessarily understand him. That is the first Greek word used. The second Greek word has the idea of scrutinizing or something that is puzzling to your sight. You may look at this man and study him carefully to see if he is packing a gun or hiding a bomb in some way. You are studying him with the assumption that he is an Islamic terrorist. But as you begin to talk to him and listen to what he has to say and hear what he has done, you come to understand that he is an ambassador from Saudi Arabia, one of our allies. You also come to see him as a friend of America. That is the meaning of the third Greek word which means to see one with proper understanding. That is the word in John 14.

It is important to understand that Jesus equates this kind of seeing with believing in our passage. We cannot see Christ physically as the

disciples did. But we can come to understand him just as the disciples understood him later. We can come to a proper perception of who he is and what he has done for us. Jesus goes on to talk about belief on two levels. The first level is belief in his words (his teachings) and the second is belief in his works (his miracles, acts of compassion, and death and resurrection for our salvation).

2. Seeing Jesus is the way to knowing God.

The passage is quite clear that the disciples had seen Jesus physically, but had not come to the place of a proper understanding or perception of his messianic role. They had not grasped the full significance of his person. Nor would they understand, until later, that he was very God in the flesh and so if one would come to an understanding of who Jesus was, they would also come to an understanding of who God is. Jesus provides first-hand revelation of God.

Jesus goes on to say that there is a perfect oneness or unity of being between him and the Father. They share the same nature and attributes. And there is also a perfect unity functionally between God and Christ. Jesus only says and does what the Father wants him to say and do. *So to know Christ is to know God!* ** But, although it is a mystery, this mutual indwelling of Father and Son does not obliterate their uniqueness. They are two distinct persons.

Interestingly, Jesus knew that it would be difficult to come to an understanding or belief in the abstract concept of the absolute unity between the Father and the Son. So he adds, if you feel that your faith is too small and that you will never come to understand God adequately in this way, then at least believe on the evidence of the miracles themselves. Jesus's miracles were signs that signified his divine identity. To believe on the basis of the miracles is not the best kind of faith, but it is true faith regardless. It is better than no faith at all. Better than obsessing about your faith, you should focus on faith's object – Christ.

II. You will have the power of prayer in Jesus name

¹³ *Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.* ¹⁴ *If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it.*

1. Jesus will always grant your requests.

Prayer bridges the gap between our needs and God's abundant, limitless, un-depleted resources. The straightforward meaning of this promise is that there are *certain people* who can pray in a certain way and they will get not merely some good thing, or something just as good as what they ask, or something even better than what they ask, but they will get the very thing that they ask for. *The certain way is that they pray in Jesus name and for God's glory.*

2. What does it mean to pray in Jesus's name?

We must note that it does not mean to simply tack the phrase "in Jesus name" onto the end of our prayers. It is not some magical formula that obligates God to answer us in the way that we choose. To pray in Jesus name means:

1) *That we come to Jesus having identified ourselves as Christians, as followers of Christ.* God is not obligated in any way to answer the prayer of an unbeliever unless it is a prayer of repentance and faith in Christ. That prayer for salvation he will always answer in the affirmative. But God longs to hear the prayers of his followers.

2) *That we come to God acknowledging our spiritual poverty, complete lack of self-sufficiency and understanding that we can make no demands of God based on our own merits.* We come to God based on the merits of Jesus Christ and with complete dependence on Christ providing our every need. Many Christians come to God praying in their own name. That is, they imagine that because they have done certain things for God they therefore have a claim upon God. They think that praying in the name of Jesus is like waving a magic wand over their own desires in order to cause them to be granted. Praying the name of Christ is not an incantation to get our own desires. It is our praying with a passionate desire for what Christ would desire. *** Certainly this does not exclude asking for our needs to be met for that is part of what the Lord asked us to pray. Nor does it preclude asking often, for we have not because we ask not. It is the attitude and motive that is paramount!

3) *That we come with a sincere desire that Jesus would be glorified.* We desire to pray for that which lines up with who Jesus is, with his purposes, and with his desires taking a place of preeminence in

our life. Theologian Ralph Keiper struggled all his life with limited vision. He would often complain to God about this affliction. Why should he suffer from this limitation? Couldn't God do something about it if he wanted to? He kept praying about his problem and seem to get nowhere. Moreover, he could not even see the reason for God's delay. He had tried to please the Lord as best he knew how. Why was God silent? Then one Sunday afternoon, while he was pouring over his books, the Holy Spirit began to speak to his heart and mind. He asked Rob, "If you had the choice, what would you rather do, glorify God or have perfect vision? Of course, Rob had to answer that he would choose perfect vision. Do you really wish to glorify God, the Holy Spirit asked again. When Rob answered in the affirmative, the Holy Spirit replied, "If you do, why worry about the method which God chooses for you in glorifying him?" The goal of prayer is not the fulfilling of our own requests; it is the glorifying of God.

It is this kind of praying that unleashes the power of God in our lives and in the lives of others. **In the fall of 2000, doctors diagnosed Pastor Ed Dobson with Lou Gehrig's disease (ALS). The doctors gave him 2 to 5 years to live and predicted that he would spend most of that time in a disabling condition. Shortly after he was diagnosed, he wanted someone to anoint him with oil and pray for healing. And he wanted someone to pray who really believed in healing. So Ed invited a friend, a Pentecostal pastor who had regular healing services, to come over and pray for him. Here's how he described what happened: It was one of the most moving evenings of my entire life. He began by telling stories of people he had prayed for who were miraculously healed. He also told stories about people he had prayed for who were not healed and had passed away, receiving that ultimate and final healing. Before he prayed for me he gave me some advice. "Don't become obsessed with getting healed, Ed," he said. "If you get obsessed with getting healed you will lose your focus. Get lost in the wonder of God, and who knows what he will do for you." This is some of the best advice I have ever received. Since that night, I've been trying to get and stay lost in the wonder of God. Ed has not been healed, but he remains lost in the wonder and the joy of the love of God.

Conclusion:

I believe that greater things are yet to come and greater things are yet to be done in not only Charleston, but in our country and around the world. We as Christians have great hope in a world fraught with every kind of problem imaginable and virtually no human solutions seeming possible. Jesus lovingly asks us not to become anxious and troubled in our hearts. And he has some great medicine for this spiritual malady. We have the hope of a heavenly home. And we have the absolute assurance of getting to that heavenly home because Christ is the way there and travels alongside of us until we get there. But Christ also gives us the high and holy privilege of through him coming to understand the God that we will see one day in heaven. It is this God who answers our prayers when we pray for them properly “in Christ’s name.” And we will see that the final prescription for our troubled hearts is the ministry of the Holy Spirit in our lives. With all of these things going for us who could possibly stand against us? What could possibly overwhelm us? In all these things we are more than conquerors through Christ who loved us and gave himself for us.

What others see in your heart is really important. I close with this illustration. During a Saturday afternoon community service day a member of a church was walking down a narrow side street in the city of Compton, California, heading towards one of the worksites sponsored by her local church. It was towards the end of the workday, and dozens of yellow shirted church volunteers, maybe 50 in all, were streaming out of the site, getting ready to head off to lunch after finishing a complete makeover of a local house. She was six or eight houses away when she passed a married couple working in their own yard. She paused to complement the woman on her roses, and the woman asked what they were doing down the street. She replied that they represented a band of churches united in a desire to serve the city. And they continued chatting about the radical neighborhood transformation this neighbor had witnessed by the church’s simple acts of goodness. During their conversation the woman’s husband had been weed whacking on the other side of the front yard. But when he saw the lady’s yellow “volunteer shirt,” he turned off his weed-whacker, set it down and

started walking straight towards the lady and his wife. The lady will never forget his words. After looking into my eyes, he nodded approvingly towards the renovated house down the street and then said, "I love your heart. Where can I get a heart like yours?" Flabbergasted, I simply said, "We got our hearts from Jesus, he would be glad to give you one like his too." I am certain that every one of us wants a heart like that!