

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

Getting to Know the Father John 14:12

There are times in our lives when what we may have enjoyed in the past is suddenly taken from us, perhaps in a way that we may not have ever anticipated. It might be that we had thought we had a happy marriage only to discover that our husband or our wife wants a divorce. Or perhaps, one day after many years of faithful service in a particular company, we discover that we are being laid off.

These kinds of events certainly can be very destabilizing and would very understandably cause us to wonder whether the best years of our earthly lives are behind us rather than ahead of us.

This was the situation that the disciples found themselves in **John 14**. They thought things were going very well in terms of their expectations. They had thought that Christ was about to establish His earthly kingdom but then Christ threw them a curveball. Rather than establishing His earthly kingdom Jesus told them that He would very shortly be separated from them through death and though they would seek Him, they would not be able to find Him nor come to Him.

But then, He promised them in **John 14:1-3** that though they would not be able to come to Him, He would, at some future time, come to them and take them back to the place that He had prepared for them in glory.

But here is the \$64,000 question: If Christ was going to leave them, and then at some future point in time, come back to receive them to Himself, then what was going to happen to them in the meantime? What kind of lives would they be living? Would they find themselves going back to the way they lived their lives before they had met Him or would they be living their lives in a totally different way? Or, in other words, after the departure of Christ “Would the best years of their earthly lives be ahead of them or were the best years of their earthly lives behind them?”

Christ will seek to answer that question for us now in **John 14:12-15**. Let me read these verses for you, **“Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go to the Father. (13) And whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. (14) “If you ask anything in My name, I will do it.” (15) If you love Me, you will keep My commandments.”** So what, in essence, did Christ tell His disciples about what was ahead for them?

Jesus, in John 14:12-15, told His disciples that in spite of the fact that He was leaving them, the best days of their earthly lives were still ahead of them.

I am hoping that after we examine this passage this weekend that we will be encouraged by these words of Christ to His disciples, not only in terms of what these words meant to them, but also in terms of what these words mean to us and what we have to look forward to not simply in heavenly terms but in earthly terms.

So what is the first thing that we would want to look at in terms of these better days that Jesus spoke to His disciples about?

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The first thing that we want to look at is: The promise of better days (verse 12)

And where do we find this promise? We find this promise in **verse 12**. Let me read this verse for you, **(12) “He who believes in Me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go to the Father.”** Before we begin to look more specifically at the promise itself, let us first of all consider the recipients of this promise.

This promise in **John 14:12** was addressed to those who believe in Christ. In other words, the promise that we find in John 14:12 was addressed to those who believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God and the only way to the Father.

This means that we should understand this promise as extending beyond the eleven disciples to others who shared or would, in the future share, the same faith as these disciples. So now let us begin to examine this promise.

First of all, in looking at this promise, we should note that it actually consists of two different parts. Let us first of all consider the first part.

The first part of the promise to Christ’s disciples was, “He who believes in Me, the works that I do shall he do also.”

What did Jesus mean when He said, “the works that I do shall he do also”? What works is He talking about? There are a number of options. Jesus could be talking about; acts of humility such as we saw in **John 13:14** when He told His disciples, **“If I then, the Lord and teacher, washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet.”** Or Jesus could be talking about acts of love such as we saw in **John 13:34-35** when He told His disciples **“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. (35) By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”**

Even though these are options, they are not the best option. So what is the best option? Based on John 14:11, the works that Jesus is referring to in John 14:12 are primarily, if not exclusively, miraculous works.

Hopefully, you remember **John 14:12**. It was the verse where Jesus appealed to His disciples to believe His words based on what? Based on what appears to be, clearly, His miraculous works.

So, if everything I have told you about the recipients of this promise and the nature of their future works is true, then what can we conclude about what Jesus told His disciples in respect to the first part of this promise?

Jesus therefore told His disciples that after His departure the ministry of the believing community would be characterized by miracles.

So let me ask you, based on New Testament scriptures was this promise fulfilled?

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Did the believing community have a continuing ministry after the departure of Christ that was characterized by miracles? And, of course, the answer is absolutely, “Yes!” This is exactly what happened.

Certainly, this is what happened in respect to the apostles. Let me read for you the words of Paul to the Corinthians in **2 Corinthians 12:12**. What did he say to them? This is what he said; **“The signs of a true apostle were performed among you with all perseverance, by signs and wonders and miracles.”**

Did the apostles of Christ after His departure perform miracles? Absolutely, in fact a person could not claim to be a true apostle of Christ unless he, like Paul, actually performed miracles. But it was not only the apostles among the believing community that performed miracles after the departure of Christ.

Not only did the apostles among the believing community perform miracles but certain ones that were associated with the apostles also performed miracles. This, I believe, was demonstrated by the miracles attributed to Stephen and Barnabas in the Book of Acts.

Let us, for a moment, consider the miracles associated with Stephen. What do we know about them? The great wonders and miracles attributed to Stephen in **Acts 6:8** did not take place until after the apostles of Christ had prayed and laid hands on Stephen and certain other men in **Acts 6:6**.

And now, let us for a moment, consider the miracles attributed to Barnabas in **Acts 15:12**. What do we know about them? The signs and wonders attributed to Barnabas were done in conjunction with the Apostle Paul and in the shadow of His ministry to the gentiles.

So what do the miracles of Stephen and Barnabas suggest? It suggests that the apostles of Christ not only had the power to perform miracles as apostles after the departure of Christ but were also, as apostles, able to bestow, on those working closely with them, the same kind of miraculous power as they themselves possessed very much in the same way as Christ was able to bestow upon them the power to perform miracles when He had sent them out in **Matthew 10:1**.

But even beyond this, there was still another group of individuals within the believing community after the departure of Christ that also performed miracles. Who was that group?

Not only were the apostles and those closely associated with the apostles among the believing community able to perform miracles after the departure of Christ but also those individually gifted by the Spirit of God to do that very thing were characterized by miracles.

How do we know this? Let me read for you **1 Corinthians 12:4-10** **“Now there are a variety of gifts, but the same Spirit. (5) And there are varieties of ministries, and the same Lord. (6) And there are varieties of effects, but the same God who works all things in all persons. (7) But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. (8) For to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, and to another the word of knowledge according to the same Spirit; (9) to another faith by the same Spirit, and to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, (10) and to another the effecting of miracles...”**

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Were Christ's disciples, after His departure, going to go back to their lives pretty much as they had lived them before meeting Christ while they waited for Him to return? No, not according to the first part of the promise given to them by Christ in **John 14:12**; rather he told them that not only they, but the believing community as a whole, would continue to have an ongoing ministry that would in fact be characterized by miraculous power.

But, as a side note, I would like to make the following point. Though Jesus in John 14:12 indicated that the future ministry of the believing community would be characterized by miracles He did not indicate the duration of that future activity.

This is a topic that I will address next week. But, let me at this point, suffice it to say that the miraculous activity that occurred in the early church and which was in fact the fulfillment of the first part of this promise here in **John 14:12** was short lived and should not be expected by us to be a part of our everyday church experience now in the 21st century. So, what is this second part of the promise?

Let us once again go back and read **John 14:12** but this time we will read the entire verse, **“Truly, truly I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do ...”** So what did this mean?

Jesus, in the second part of the promise in John 14:12, told His disciples that after His departure, the believing community would even perform greater works than Himself.

So what did Jesus mean by this? What did Jesus mean when He told His disciples that they would do even greater works than Himself? First of all let us consider what He did not mean.

When Jesus told His disciples that the believing community would perform even greater works He did not mean that they would do more spectacular miracles. How could it mean this in light of the kind of miracles Jesus had performed? This was just not going to happen? There just was no way that they could top the raising of Lazarus from the dead. There was no way that they could top Jesus walking on water. There was no way that they could top Jesus' multiplication of the five loaves and two fishes. There was no way that they could top Him turning water into wine. Clearly this is not what Jesus meant when He told His disciples that the believing community was going to perform even greater works than Himself. What else did He not mean?

When Jesus told His disciples that the believing community would perform even greater works He did not mean that would perform more miraculous works than He had performed. Why would I say this? I would say this for two reasons. First of all, because the word translated “greater” in this passage is not the best way in the Greek to communicate the thought of “more in quantity.” And secondly, if a greater quantity is what Jesus had meant, the point would have not seemed particularly meaningful since it would have been a given, considering how large the believing community would eventually become. So, if this is true, then what would be a better explanation?

I believe that the best explanation is this. When Jesus told His disciples that the believing community would perform even greater works He meant the greater works associated with the bountiful harvest of souls in the church age.

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I believe this is indicated by the fact that He had spoken of this harvest just a few days before in **John 12:23-24**. Let me read these verses for you. What did He say? **“And Jesus answered them, saying, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. (24) Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains by itself alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.”** And later that evening, in **John 17:17-20** Jesus again spoke of this future harvest of souls .

Let me read those verses for you, **“Sanctify them in truth; Thy word is truth. (18) As Thou didst send Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world. (19) And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth. (20) I do not ask in behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word.”**

Of course these greater works associated with the bountiful harvest of souls in the church age could not begin until when? It could not begin until His redemptive mission had been completed or until His death, burial, resurrection, ascension and glorification had been completed or, in other words, this bountiful harvest of souls could not happen until He had returned to His Father and this is exactly what He had told them at the end of this verse. Let us once again read **John 14:12**, **“Truly, truly I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go to the Father.”**

The disciples were demoralized. Their earthly dreams were slipping through their fingers. Jesus, in the farewell discourse, is attempting to comfort them. He did this by challenging them to change their focus from an earthly kingdom to a heavenly kingdom, a kingdom that He would one day return and take them to.

But what would their lives be like in the meantime? Would they go back to the way they lived their lives before they had met Him or, could they look forward to something better? Christ has now given the answer. They could look forward to something better.

The same thing is true for us. When we come to Christ our lives will be forever changed for the better.

Does this mean that we will have better health? No! Does this mean that we will live in affluence? No! Does this mean that we will prosper in anything that we attempt to accomplish? No!

But it does mean that we will have the opportunity to participate in something that is truly significant. It does mean that we will have the opportunity to participate in something that is truly glorious. And what is that? It is the opportunity that Christ has provided us to be actively involved in God’s work of bringing men and women, boys and girls to Himself and salvation through the redemptive work of Christ.

Now, if this does not excite us, then what is the problem? This is the problem. We are still focused on things of this earth rather than on things above. We are still focused on an earthly kingdom rather than on a heavenly kingdom. And what is the big deal about this?

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This is the big deal. If we fail to get excited about the opportunity that Christ has provide us to be actively involved in His work of bringing souls to Himself and salvation we are robbing ourselves of the most exciting and fulfilling work that we can be involved with in this world and, at the same time, exposing ourselves to repeated disappointments in terms of any other earthly dream.

May God give us the grace to appreciate and value the opportunity that Christ has afforded us through His redemptive work to rescue the souls of men in this present age.