

Doing the Works of Jesus and Greater Works

by John Piper

As Christians, we continue the life of Jesus, do the works of Jesus, and do greater works than Jesus, all of which are empowered by the Holy Spirit.

Duration: 44:04

Scripture: John 14:12, John 20:21

Topics: "Holy Spirit", "Prayer Ministry"

Description

This sermon delves into the profound teachings of John 14:12-14, exploring the promises Jesus made to believers. It emphasizes the continuation of Jesus' works through all believers, the concept of doing greater works through the power of the Holy Spirit post-resurrection, and the significance of praying in Jesus' name. The sermon highlights the filters of praying for Jesus' fame, worth, payment on the cross, and sovereign wisdom, ensuring alignment with God's will.

Transcript

Let's pray. Father, be our teacher now by the Holy Spirit that you've sent into the world to guide us into truth. So we renounce reliance upon ourselves and we trust in the Lord with all our hearts that he will make our paths straight and we will know the truth and the truth will set us free.

So come, open our minds to what's here and make it plain. I ask in Jesus name, Amen. These few words of Jesus, perplexing as they are, are rich with powerful inspiration and encouragement.

If you ponder them in their context, yes, they are. And I mean powerful for your life individually and powerful for this church now and in the future. What a surge of excitement went through me when David Livingston on Friday texted me that we had purchased the land on I-35W and in Lakeville.

And then when he called, or I called him, a few minutes later, my heart leaped with gratitude when he told me the price for which we got that land. And then the first thought after that was Jason Meyer, who will preach now for the next three weekends toward a May 20th vote for him to move toward being my successor in this pulpit. And as the pastor for preaching and vision and what surged up inside of me was this double excitement that God is amazingly orchestrating.

That we would be, in this moment of transition, putting in place a third anchor campus like this one and the one up north. And that we would be putting in place somebody to lead that, Lord willing, for the next 30

years is amazing to me. And I am so thankful at this process and this person.

It's amazing. And these words, these verses here, John 14, 12 through 14, are about the greater things that are yet to be done. Three things are mentioned in this text.

All of us who believe in Jesus, will carry on his work in some wonderful way. Second, we will, in some inscrutable way that is perplexing to us, do greater things than the works of Jesus. Right? That's what it says.

Third, as a means to that end, we will have access to the living cross. And we'll be able to ask him for whatever we need and he'll do it. That's the text.

Those three statements. Astonishing promises, all three of them. Not just one of them, the middle one, all of them.

Perplexing, mind-blowing verses. That's why the text is so short. It's gonna take me a long time to deal with it as it is, so buckle up.

All of us, let's name them again, all of us who believe in Jesus will carry on his work. Number two, all of us who believe in Jesus will do greater things than Jesus' earthly works. And three, we will have access to the living Christ.

Now, in this service, he's there and he says, you ask me in my name, I'll do it for my father's glory. So let's just take those one at a time. Number one, carrying on the work of Jesus.

First half of verse 12. Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do. Two crucial observations now.

Number one, this is not a promise simply to the apostles. It's to all who believe. Second, this is not a promise to do greater works than Jesus.

It's a promise to do the works of Jesus, which may be more amazing. So let's take those one at a time. This is a promise to all believers.

Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me. This is not apostles. This is not charismatics.

It's not missionaries or professional Christians or elders evangelists or highly gifted Christians. This is, if this doesn't happen to you, you're not a believer. That's what it says.

Everyone who believes does this. This is normal Christianity. Believing on Jesus is what unites us to Jesus for eternal life and whoever believes in Jesus will do the works that Jesus did.

Period. Second observation, we will do the works that he did. Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do.

Now, we create a huge problem, an insurmountable problem for ourselves if we leap to equate the works that he did with his miracles. Here's what he's done so far in John. He had turned water into wine, chapter 2. He had read the mind of the Samaritan woman, chapter 4. He had healed the official son, chapter 4. He had healed the man crippled for 38 years, chapter 5. He had fed 5,000 people with five loaves and two fish, chapter 6. He had walked on water, John 6, 19.

He had healed a man born blind and he had raised Lazarus from the dead after he was stinking and in the grave four days. So what did Jesus mean when he said, truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me, everybody who believes in me, every Christian, will do the works that I do. Not maybe or sometimes or one or two of you, especially gifted.

Does he mean you will walk on water, you will raise the dead, you will feed 5,000, and if you don't, you're not a believer. Does he mean that? No. And one of the pointers that he doesn't mean that is that if you're willing to take the rest of his word, the Bible, the New Testament into account, he says not to expect that everybody will have the gift of miracles or healing.

I'll read it to you. This is 1st Corinthians 12. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.

For to one is given the spirit and the utterance of wisdom. To another, faith by the same Spirit. To another, gifts of healing by the one Spirit.

To another, the working of miracles. Do all work miracles? Do all possess gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? And the answer is no. And he's talking to believers.

You don't get disqualified as a believer if you don't have the gift of healing. You don't get disqualified as a believer if you don't have the gift of miracles or faith. The New Testament didn't interpret Jesus that way.

That you have to do, you have to walk on water and feed 5,000 and raise the dead and heal the sick or you're not a Christian. So when Jesus said whoever believes in me will do the works that I do, can't mean that they'll do all the miracles. Well, what does it mean? Let's look, is it a couple of pointers that I think keep us safe from making it mean what it shouldn't mean? That come right from inside the text? So let's look at the connection between verse 11 and verse 12 and then there'll be another pointer besides this one.

This is key. It's always good to get your key close by. Verse 11, believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me.

Or else believe on account of the works. So now we've got believe and works. And that's what we've got in verse 12.

If you believe you'll do my work, but now he's got my works are to help you believe, right? Is that the meaning at the end of verse 11? If my word is leaving you in some doubt about who I am, believe on the count of the works. Then he says, truly, truly I say to you whoever does that, whoever believes on account of my works will do the works. Now, what would be the the least that this could mean? I find it safe to start with the least and then you can move toward the most.

The least this means is the meaning of his works. He doesn't tell us which ones he has in mind in verse 11. He just says when I do them, they help you believe.

So I'm going to take that as his meaning right now. The works that he's doing are works that point to his truth and help people believe. Okay, that's all I'm going to define it as because that's what I see in verse 11.

Believe on account of my works. I'm doing things that point you to the Father. I'm doing things that point you to my truth.

I'm doing things to get you from doubt to faith. And if you will believe me, that's what your life will be. Are you with me? Every Christian does that.

No exceptions. If that's not happening in your life, you're not a Christian. If you're not doing the works that point people to Jesus, if you're not helping people believe in Jesus, if the works and the life that you're living isn't directing people to Jesus, helping them overcome their doubts, but you're pointing them in the other way, you're not a Christian.

Every Christian does this. Points people to faith by the way they live. So if Jesus means more than that, maybe he does.

I'm just not sure. This is what I see. This is huge.

If we believe on him, we do the works that he does and the works that he did in verse 11 helps them overcome their unbelief, points them to his truth, brings them to faith, and that's what the Christian life is. The Christian life is. Christians do that by their life and their works.

Here's another pointer. If you do a word search, you can do this in English in the ESV with your computer, or you can do it in the Greek. Exactly the same results.

Interesting. If you just take the phrase the works that I do in verse 12, first half of verse 12, the works that I do, put that in your cursor, click search, bang, you get one other text in the Bible. John 10, 25, which goes like this.

Jesus answered them, I told you and you do not believe, the works that I do in my Father's name bear witness about me. That's what they do. That's my works.

That's my life. That's why I'm here. Everything I do, not just the miracles, everything I do is that.

That's my life. What I do is testify to the Father. Every breath I take, I take in my Father.

I lift my hand. I speak a word. I touch anyone.

I go anywhere. I teach anything. I am pointing people to the Father.

That's the works of Jesus and every Christian. John 17. Jesus prayed, Father, I glorified you on the earth having accomplished the work you gave me to do.

I glorified you and the totality of my work was that, was that, was that, was for that. That's what our life is. Whatever you do, whether you eat or drink, do all to the glory of God.

My life was that. John 13, 35, By this will all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another. If you live a life of love, you point to Jesus as your Lord and yourself as an authentic born-again disciple.

That's what it is to be a Christian. People will know. They'll look at you and they'll know.

And that's what my life is for. That's what your life is for. Matthew 5, 16, Let your light shine before others that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.

Jesus lived for the glory of his Father in everything he did. We are to live for the glory of Jesus and the Father in everything we do. If we're a Christian, we do what Jesus did.

Christians are defined by works or by life which flows from faith and points to the glory of Jesus. So my conclusion to part number one of this text is however many Christians, God may give the gift of miracles and healing, however many, and there should be more. That's another sermon.

However many, what I do know is everybody does his works. Defined like verse 11. Defined like 10, 25.

Defined like Matthew 5, 16. Defined like John 13, 35. Every Christian has a life that points to Jesus.

Or you're not a Christian. If you're pointing to the devil, pointing to yourself, pointing to your family, pointing to your work, pointing to money, you're not a believer. Believers live out of treasuring Christ as supreme.

And they make choices and they say words that make much of Jesus. People look at them. If they have long enough to look at them, they say it's about Jesus.

That guy's about Jesus. He may be a pain in the rear end, but he's about Jesus. Number two, doing greater works than Jesus.

Second half of verse 12. Let's read the whole verse again. 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. Now notice again, this is every Christian. Okay, not just charismatics, not just missionaries in raw situations, not just super spiritual pastors, elders, whatever, but every Christian.

Whoever believes in me, greater works than mine will he do. If this isn't true of you, you're not a Christian. Pretty sobering, right? This is not just a perplexing text, it's a devastating text because of whoever believes in me.

It's another word search you should do. I have a whole, I just skipped over it, just a time. Just do, just search on that phrase.

There's five of them and it's just normal Christianity every time. Believe, got the Holy Spirit and they're all in John. So if greater works means more amazingly miraculous, there are no Christians and there never have been any, period.

Pretty sobering. Walk on water, feed 5,000 people with five loaves of bread so that they're satisfied, you got 12 baskets left over, and raise the dead after four days of dead. Nobody has ever done those three things, period, except Jesus.

Let alone doing anything more amazing. So I am content to let 1st Corinthians 12 help me again. If it's true from 1st Corinthians 12, do all work miracles? No.

Do all possess gifts of healing? No. Do all speak in tongues? No. That was real experience in the church and the apostolic word blessed it.

That's real, authentic Christian church life. Not all Christians have the gift of working miracles, tongues, or healings. There are diverse gifts and therefore this can't mean whoever believes works greater miracles.

If you lose handle on that whoever believes, you'll make hash out of this text. I've read so many people trying to give crazy explanations that that only apply to a handful of people. You'll find somebody that did a more great miracle.

So what? This is every believer. Don't lose the handle at the front end of the text. So what does it mean? There are a couple of clues.

First, the phrase at the end of verse 12, because I am going to the Father. Greater works than these will every believer do because I am going to the Father. And the other clue is the text from Easter two weeks ago.

John 20, I invite you to turn there with me. See if you see what I see. John 20 verses 21 to 23.

As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you. Now that does that ring true to what we've been saying for the last 15-20 minutes? You're just going to keep on with my work. It's going to keep extending my God-exalting, Christ-vindicating life into the future.

I'm sending you out the way I was sent. I was sent to glorify the Father. I'm sending you.

I was sent to do the works that point to my truth. You go do works that point to my truth. All kinds.

I am sending, as the Father has sent me, so I am sending you. And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said, Receive the Holy Spirit. And I said I thought that was an acted-out parable of what would happen in a few weeks where the Holy Spirit would come upon them as the Spirit of the crucified and risen Christ.

Verse 23, If in the power of this Spirit, extending my ministry, you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven. And if you withhold the forgiveness of any, it is withheld. That's big.

So he's saying his disciples will not only continue his works, he'll do greater works because he has gone to the Father. And on his way to the Father, this is the way he's thinking. We saw this what three weeks ago, four weeks ago? Verses 1 through 12 or 11.

On his way to the Father, I'm going where you cannot go. He's going to the cross to die for our sins. He's going to the grave to get a good victory over death.

He's coming out of the grave on Easter morning, and he's going to ascend to the right hand of the Father and rule there and intercede. And he's going to pour out the Spirit who is not just any Spirit, but is the Spirit of the living, crucified and risen Christ, which had never happened in the history of the world. This is big.

This is new. This is greater. What's going on here? And now here in John 20, 21 to 23, this continuation of the work gets ramped up with that Spirit.

I'm going to breathe on you now. Breathe on you. You get ready for this because when this comes, I will have gone to the Father and this will be me coming to you by the Spirit and when I come to you, I am coming as a risen Christ triumphant over death.

I'm coming as a Christ who has finished the work of redemption and paid it all and by that truth, message, and power, you're going to forgive sinners. Not in anticipation like everybody did up until my death, but you will forgive sinners on the basis of it is finished. I never did that.

Jesus never did that on the earth. Everything Jesus did, and he did forgive sins, but he forgave sins in anticipation of someday, someday, this awesome event of God Almighty Incarnate is going to stretch himself out on a cross and he is going to bear the sins of all his people of all time and all place and he's going to put to death the enmity between the Father and his people and he is going to rise from the dead and he is going to pour his life into all Christians and when they direct people by their lives and their word to this crucified and risen Christ, they lead people into an experience nobody had ever had before the resurrection of Jesus, namely union with the crucified and risen Christ. So you see where I'm going or where I've arrived.

What's new? What's greater than Jesus works on the earth? Never before in history had anyone been forgiven by faith in an already crucified, already risen, already reigning, already indwelling Christ. Nobody had ever been drawn into that experience because he was not yet crucified and he was not yet risen and that's why the Holy Spirit was poured out in the way he was 40 days later or 50. So all salvation up till now had been by anticipation of that, by promise of a coming Redeemer and now Jesus has gone to the Father.

Because I go to the Father, you will do greater works. And what I do when I get to the Father is on the basis of my death, on the basis of my resurrection, I pour out the Holy Spirit who is the Spirit now of the glorified, crucified, risen Christ into every believer for the doing of the works that I do in such a way that it draws people into that saving new age, new reality, new era experience that I never gave anybody on the earth. So I think Jesus would have said if we'd asked him, even when I have forgiven sinners during my earthly life, I have forgiven them in anticipation of that.

But you, you will forgive them on the basis the finished basis of that. The Spirit in you will be the Spirit of the crucified Christ, the risen Christ, the glorified Christ. The message you preach will not be of a promised ransom.

The message you preach will not be of an unpaid debt. The message you preach will not be of an incomplete unpaid payment or unfinished propitiation. It will have been perfectly, completely finished.

Now for the first time in history, you will be proclaiming that and you will be drawing people into that every one of you. Pretty amazing, Christian. You're pretty amazing.

The least in the kingdom is greater than John the Baptist. That's the end of number two. And I know I haven't left much time for number three and that's intentional.

Even though it's just as perplexing as all the others because it occurs in chapter 15, it occurs in chapter 16. We will come back to this, Lord willing, at least two more times. And therefore to give it summary treatment here may be justified.

Please let it be justified. I'm going to just give you the big picture of what I think verses 13 and 14 mean and then we'll go at it in more detail later. So let's read it.

So now remember the first point of this message was if you're a Christian, you continue the life of Jesus. You keep on with the works of Jesus, which are defined by all that he did that pointed people to him as

true and real and helped people overcome unbelief and put their faith in Christ, whether it's miraculous or whether it's more normal acts of love and witness and care and the fruits of the Holy Spirit, whatever. The second point of this message was that we do, we do, all of us greater works than Jesus because as we point people to Jesus on this side of the crucifixion and the resurrection, we are pointing them to and drawing them into an experience by the spirit that had never been had before because the spirit that existed before was not known as the spirit of the risen and crucified Christ because he hadn't been crucified and raised from the dead yet.

Now, I argued as a means to living that way, we have access by prayer to Jesus who will give us everything we need. All right, let's read that. 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'll do it. So as you seek to carry on my work, let your light shine, live in love, offer forgiveness, draw people into this unparalleled, greater experience of fellowship with the crucified and risen Christ through forgiveness of sins. As you do that, ask whatever you need to get that done.

I'll give it to you. Now, what's perplexing here, right, is that the conditions we usually expect to be placed on answered prayer are missing. No condition as in John 15 7. If you abide in me and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish and it will be done for you.

So what's become of that? It's not here. No condition like 1 John 5 14. If we ask anything according to his will, he hears us.

And if we know that he hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests asked of him. That's missing. Asking according to his will is not here.

No condition like Mark 11 24. Whatever you ask in prayer, believe that you have received it and it will be yours. No mention of faith here.

There's only one condition mentioned here. You see it? In my name. Verse 13, whatever you ask in my name, I will do it.

Verse 14, if you ask anything in my name, I will do it. So here's the key question. Does Jesus mean that we can ignore all those conditions that I just mentioned and others? We can just ignore those because they're not here.

And absolutize this promise if we just fasten in Jesus name at the end of our prayer. Or does the phrase in Jesus name include all those conditions? I see those as our two possibilities. And I'm going for number two because I don't believe any text of the Bible nullifies other texts of the Bible.

Except in a redemptive historical sense of priests getting nullified and catfish getting nullified by the cross. When you get to the New Testament you better be really careful if you're gonna pick and choose and say well here's a verse that says you have to believe. But you don't have to believe because it doesn't say here.

And here's a verse that says you have to pray according to his will. But you don't have to hear because it doesn't say that. Here's the verse that says you have to have his word abiding in you or you won't ask correctly.

You don't have to do that here. You don't want to go there. That'd make hash out of the Bible.

Treats Jesus like he has to say everything in every text. You don't have to say everything in every text any more than you talk that way. But can it bear that? Can in my name bear that? And so I'm just gonna put it in a couple of sentences and then we'll be we'll be done.

I think that he's saying you'll be given the Holy Spirit, the power of the crucified and risen Christ. And I promise you that as you seek to live out this life of love and this these works that are gonna point people to me, you cry out to me for what you need to do that the way I want you to do it and I'll give you everything you need. Which means that in my name has I think at least four filters for requests.

This is not a text that says I now bequeath to you divinity. You may now run the universe and I will obey everything you say. This is not a dethroning of God saying to you come to me.

You know you you ask that you can jump off the Empire State Building and not that's an old illustration in not a very tall building anymore. You ask that I'm not going to give it to you. I wouldn't even ask my father that I could jump off the temple.

I'm not gonna let you ask. Here are the four filters. I think when he says pray in my name he means for my fame and not yours.

That rules out about a thousand of my desires. Vain, selfish person that I am. Number two, I think it means pray because of my divine worth not yours.

When you come to the Father in my name or come to me in my name it's because I'm infinitely worthy. You're not. I am.

Let my worth shape, filter everything that comes through here or pray in my name means pray on the basis of an infinite payment that I made on the cross. You'll come to me without the gospel. Don't you cry to me for any blessing if you're not resting like a little child in the payment that I made for God's yes to all his promises to you.

You got any other angle on how to get to me besides through my payment, my name? I'm not gonna listen to you. And fourth, and this is probably the most sweeping, in my name I think means according to my sovereign wisdom which means we do what Jesus did regularly. Not my will but thine be done.

Because you have a wise plan. I think I know when my kids should be saved. I think I know lots of things.

God knows. Not me. I think in your name means I submit to putting all my requests through the filter of your fame and your worth and your payment and your wisdom.

And when we do that, I think the assurance we get is you will have everything you need to live the works that I call you to live. I have prepared works for you to walk in them. Ephesians 2 10.

I'll give you what you need for those. And I'll give you what you need to do what I never did. Lead people into the experience of being forgiven by the finished work of the Savior in fellowship with the crucified and risen Christ.

Let's pray. Father, you know, this is a hard text and I have given what I call least meaning. It at least means this.

If it means more, you show us in due time. But Lord, we have enough here to occupy us in great desperation for your Spirit, for our lifetime. And I ask that you would come and at the South Campus right now and at the Downtown Campus right now, you would save sinners who have been saying to themselves, if that's what a Christian is, not sure I am one.

Would you move in power into that life? And would you take all of us who are weak and struggling Christians and remind us this is not a maybe. He didn't say whoever believes in me, maybe he will do the works that I do. This is a promise and the promise is because you are God.

Jesus, you are God. You are crucified and risen and reigning and present in sweet fellowship with us and we will have everything we need to display you in this world. You are a very friendly Savior.

Forbid that we would neglect to come to you in prayer. Pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Video: https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/UCjgwh_ogrU.mp4

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/john-piper/doing-the-works-of-jesus-and-greater-works/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net