

Sermon – 16/04/2006 am

Greater Works

Study Text: John 14:12-18

Jesus began his ministry with a miracle. He turned water into wine at a wedding reception at Cana in Galilee. He went on to heal the sick, open the eyes of the blind, feed the multitude and walk on the water, and finally to raise the dead. On the basis of these miracles and what he said Jesus called upon his followers to believe that he was sent by God the Father. They were signs – and Jesus did many more than what is recorded in the Bible – they were signs pointing people to himself as God the Son. He performed many miracles and John recorded these for you that *you might believe that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God (20:31).*

The disciples had been with Jesus for three years and got accustomed to seeing him work. They had never seen anything like this before. They believed Jesus was the promised Messiah – the Christ or anointed one – who would deliver them like Moses had delivered their forefathers. But Jesus told them in the upper room – not for the first time – that he was going away.

They were shocked and horrified. How would they live without Jesus their teacher and their Lord? With troubled hearts they pleaded with Jesus ‘Where are you going, why can’t we come, just show us the Father’. Surely they would not simply return to being fishermen or tax collectors as if nothing has happened!

How different the disciples were to a lot of people today. Many are happy to return to their old ways after being with Jesus – or claiming to be with him. People come to church, they sing praises to Jesus and hear the words of Jesus, but then it is back to work as usual. Back to living like everyone else. People who truly know Jesus want to be with him always. They want to see him, they want to talk with him, they want to listen to him at every opportunity, just like these disciples.

Greater Works

Jesus was going away. Judas had just gone out to betray him. Jesus would soon be hanging on the Cross. He who never sinned would die at the hands of sinful men. But his death would be to the glory of God. His death was planned by God. God spoke through the prophet Isaiah 800 years beforehand declaring:

*For he was cut off from the land of the living
For the transgressions of my people he was stricken
He poured out his soul unto death
And was numbered with the transgressors
And he bore the sin of many
And made intercession for the transgressors (Isaiah 53:8, 12).*

And God would raise Jesus from the dead on the third day, and he would return to his Father in heaven. *I go to prepare a place for you, I go to my Father* Jesus told them (14:2, 12 – we will come back to this truth shortly).

Most assuredly/truly, truly – Jesus spoke with divine certainty the following words (14:12). He told his disciples that he who believes in me will do works just like me and *even greater works he*

will do. They thought that with Jesus going away they would not see any more miracles, but he said those who believed in him would do even greater works. What did Jesus mean? How could anyone do greater works than Jesus!

In what way would these works be greater? Would they do more miracles than Jesus? Greek has a specific word for 'more' (*mallon*) so 'greater' does not mean 'more'. Would they do more spectacular works? Is this how they would be greater? Jesus calmed the storm, he walked on the water and he raised the dead. What could more spectacular than raising the dead?

Remember the miracles or works that Jesus did are called signs in this gospel (2:11, 4:54). Signs point to something – they are not the thing itself. Jesus said the *works that I do bear witness of me that the Father sent me* (5:36). The signs here point to something beyond this world. They point to the Father who sent Jesus.

Jesus was not just a doctor who came to set up shop for a while and heal as many people as possible before upsetting the Jews and getting himself killed. He was not just a 'death delayer' like doctors today. Even the world's best doctor can do no more than delay your inevitable death.

Jesus came to cure death itself. 'He who believes in me' said Jesus 'will live; and whoever lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?' 'Yes Lord' said Mary, 'I believe you are the Christ, the Son of God who is to come into the world' (11:26, 27). Do you agree with Mary?

Jesus performed many miraculous signs before thousands of people. But you know, very few believed in him. Even his own disciples struggled to understand and accept what Jesus was saying. They believed he was the Christ, but the nature and magnitude of his deliverance/salvation they did not understand at this time. But Jesus promised they would and that is when they would do greater works.

I Go To My Father

They did not understand at this time. This is the key to the 'greater works'. Two things were about to happen. First, Jesus was about to go to his Father. *Because I go to my Father* said Jesus (14:12). A new age was about to dawn. Jesus was returning to his throne in heaven, to the glory he had with the Father *before the world was* (17:5), but only after he had dealt with sin.

Sin has plagued mankind from the time of our first parents. All people, and through us all creation, suffers under the burden of sin. Sin brought death. Jesus was about to die on the Cross, he was about to offer himself as a sacrifice for sin. *He himself is the propitiation for our sins and not ours only but also for the whole world* (1 John 2:2). Jesus would triumph over death, he would rise from the dead and return to heaven. Nothing like this had even happened before in the history of the universe and it will never happen again.

So Jesus would return to his Father in heaven and from there would hear the prayers of his people. He promised *whatever you ask in my name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son* (14:13). He repeated this promise to make sure they heard it. Jesus would in fact be exalted to glory in heaven, no longer bearing the likeness of sinful flesh.

What would they ask in Jesus name? What would you ask knowing that Jesus has gone to the Father – knowing in fact that Jesus died to take away your sin and rose again victorious over the grave? Would you simply be asking Jesus to heal your friend's sore foot, or give your child a good grade at school? If you believed in Jesus and had eternal life in him would you not want the

same for your family, for your friends, and for all people! Better to enter heaven without a foot than go to hell with a healed one (Matthew 5:30).

In I John 5:14 we read *Now this is the confidence we have in him that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us* and we know that we have what we asked for. Now read on – *if anyone sees his brother sinning...he will ask and he (Jesus) will give him life* (I John 5:16). It is God's declared will that the gospel be proclaimed to all sinners, to all people in this world, and that we pray for all people to be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth (Matthew 24:14, I Timothy 2:4). Is it your desire, is it your prayer, is it the purpose of your work, that your family and your friends – and even your enemies – be saved?

Another Helper

In relation to doing 'greater works' the second thing that was about to happen was the coming of the Holy Spirit. Jesus told his disciples that his Father would give them *another Helper* (paraclete), *that he may abide in you forever – the Spirit of truth* (14:16). Later on, as Jesus ascended into heaven, he said to them *you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you and you shall be my witnesses* (Acts 1:8).

The coming of the Holy Spirit was contingent upon Jesus leaving. The person and work of the Holy Spirit is closely linked to Jesus. While Jesus is *the truth* (14:6) the Holy Spirit is the *Spirit of truth*. The Holy Spirit is called another Helper, the other being Jesus.

Helper/Comforter/Counsellor translates the Greek *paraclete* (literarily, one who stands beside). Jesus is called paraclete/advocate in I John 2:1. Jesus could comfort his disciples with the words *I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you* (14:18). Remember, however, that the Holy Spirit is a person not a force or power. He is the third person of the Godhead.

We do not have time to look at the doctrine of the Holy Spirit any further today, but I trust you now understand these 'greater works' which Jesus told his disciples they would do. What happened at Pentecost? Jesus returned to the Father and he sent the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit entered their hearts and they boldly proclaimed the gospel. They called upon people to *repent and believe in Jesus that your sins may be blotted out* (Acts 2:38, 3:19).

And what happened? 3000 believed and were baptised; 3000 dead souls became 3000 living souls through the preaching of the gospel! Soon it was 5000 and the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

Was this not a greater work than what Jesus did while he was with them? With Jesus in heaven and Holy Spirit poured out upon believers on earth we have seen, and continue to see, Christ crucified being preached and many being saved from sin and death, to the glory of God the Father and Jesus Christ who gave his life for this purpose. Are you among those who are saved?

Rev. Dr. Dennis K. Muldoon