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Pastor Jonathan Falwell

Greater Things: Greater Things Than These

Scripture: John 14:1-14

Summary: In this sermon, based on John 14:1-14, Pastor Jonathan Falwell talks about three concepts that will help us understand what it means to do greater things.

Today we're going to begin a new series that is simply entitled *Greater Things*. Greater things. An idea and a concept that comes from a verse that I'm going to share with you in just a moment. It's a verse that comes directly from the heart, from the lips of Christ Himself when He told us that we would be able to do greater things than even He had done.

I've got to be honest with you, that's an interesting concept. It's also a baffling concept. When you think about all that Jesus did, when you think about the fact that Jesus healed the sick and that He raised the dead, when you think about all of the miracles that we've read about in Scripture—turning the water into wine—all of the incredible moments that we see in Christ's life, and to think that Jesus said, "Yes, and these things you'll be able to do even greater things." It's doesn't really make sense.

So over the next couple of weeks as we as a church march towards our 59th anniversary as a church, as we begin our 60th year as a church, we want to ask ourselves the question and try to understand how it's possible that we would be able to do greater works than even Christ Himself.

I use the word *try* there very deliberately, because it is a difficult concept to grab hold of. And so today what we're going to do as we look in John chapter 14, as we're going to begin to answer the question of how and begin to answer the question of why, begin to take a look at what this passage says to us, before we can ever get to the idea of what it is that Christ wants to do through this church and through you as a Christ-follower, we kind of have to understand some basic principles.

And so what we're going to do first is I want to go to John 14:12. That is our memory verse for this week, and I encourage you—and we're going to do this in a moment as we read it together, read it aloud together—I encourage you over these next six days before we get to next Sunday to read this verse five times each and every day, and I promise you, you will memorize this verse.

And I believe this with all my heart. Hebrews 4:12 says that God's Word is living, it's powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword. I believe that God's Word never returns void. God's Word encourages us to hide His Word away in our hearts that I might not sin against Him.

I believe that when we make the commitment to read and to study and to memorize God's Word, it will change us in ways we never comprehended. So let's read this verse out loud together today, from John 14:12 where it just simply says this, "Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father." I want to read this verse again, out loud, one more time together today. John 14:12, "Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father."

I want you to stay in John chapter 14, because we're going to read a passage of Scripture as we begin to ask ourselves the question how is that possible that we would be able to do the greater works. How is it possible that we would be able to do even more than the God of the universe did when He walked on this Earth in human form?

Let's go back a few verses to John 14:1. I want to read this passage as we set the stage for our conversation together today. We're going to read through this passage. It's a familiar passage. You've heard this; you've read it before; you certainly understand some of the concepts that I'm going to share through this passage today. And then after we read through this passage I want to share with you three very important thoughts of what it looks like to begin to see the greater works being done in and through each of us.

So let's read God's Word, beginning with verse 1, John 14, "Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also. And where I go you know, and the way you know."

I want to pause for a moment here in verse 5, because this is one of my favorite verses in all of Scripture. And I'll explain this to you in just a moment. In verse 5 it says, "Thomas said to Him, 'Lord, we do not know where You are going, and how can we know the way?'"

Now some of you are probably thinking, *Why in the world is that one of his favorite verses? That's not one of those great, incredible theological statements that we find in Scripture, not one of those incredibly encouraging statements in all of Scripture. So why would that be one of the pastor's favorite verses?* Well, here's why. Because what this does is it gives us a picture, it gives us the idea, the concept that it is okay, as human beings, for us to question, to wonder, to wonder aloud even, what is God doing and what can God do?

This is obviously from the words of Thomas. We know him as "Doubting Thomas," right? You all know Doubting Thomas. Even Thomas, who had walked with Christ and seen all of the things that Jesus had done, he'd seen the miracles over and over again, he'd seen all of that, and yet he, just like you and I, is sitting there wondering, *What does that mean?*

And Thomas, as he asked that question, “Lord, we don’t know where you’re going. And how is it that we can know the way?” In Scripture, as Jesus always does through His Word, every time there is a moment of doubt in the life of a believer, Jesus answers that doubt affirmatively. Because in verse 6, and I know you know this verse; we’ve quoted it many times here together, Jesus said to him, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.”

And so when Thomas, as many of us would do, in doubting what God’s Word says, in doubting what God’s promises are, in doubting what it is that God was saying that He wanted to do in our lives, just like you and I would do—as if we were there like Thomas was, or that many of us do even today, Jesus answered our doubts very quickly, very affirmatively, and very powerfully and just simply said this, “I am the way.” When Thomas said, “We don’t know where you’re going. How can we know the way?” Jesus said, “I am the way.”

We live in a culture today—this is an important statement as we begin this conversation over the next few weeks—we live in a culture today that is constantly and more significantly putting God at the corner, pushing Him to the side. “Jesus doesn’t matter,” they say. “We, regardless of the religion, regardless of what you believe in, regardless of what god—little g—that you believe in, we’re all working to the same place. We’re all heading in the same direction. As long as we’re sincere, as long as we’re doing well and doing good works and doing good things, we’re all going to end up in the same place.”

Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. And no man comes to the Father except through Me.” Jesus is the only way. It doesn’t matter what you might believe; it doesn’t matter what religion you might follow; it doesn’t matter what god—little g—that you believe in. If you die without Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, according to God’s Word—not this preacher—you’ll spend eternity in hell; eternity in a place of eternal separation from God. But that is not God’s design and it is not God’s desire. God sent His Son Jesus to be the way, and if we will believe in the way, we will spend eternity at a place that, as Jesus said a few moments ago, that He went to prepare for us.

I took that moment today to hit that home in a brief pause in this passage. I wanted to make sure that we get this. Because if you do not start at the premise that Christ is the only way, if you do not start at the premise that God has sent His Son Jesus, who died and was buried and rose again for us and that if we will believe in that truth that we will spend eternity in heaven, that we will be saved, if you don’t start at that premise, talking about the greater works is a waste of time, because it all happens through the power of Christ.

Let’s continue reading this passage in verse 7, “If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; and from now on you know Him and have seen Him.” Philip said to Him, “Lord, show us the Father, and it is sufficient for us.” Jesus said to him, “Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; so how can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? The words that I speak to you I do not speak on My own authority; but the Father who dwells in Me does the works. Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father in Me, or else believe Me for the sake of the works themselves. Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the

works that I do he will do also; and greater *works* than these he will do, because I go to My Father.”

And verse 13—don’t miss these two last verses we’re going to read today. “And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask anything in My name, I will do it.”

The New Living Translation says it this way in verse 12, “I tell you the truth. Anyone who believes in me will do the same works I have done, and even greater works because I’m going to be with the Father. You can ask for anything in my name and I will do it, so the Son can bring glory to the Father. Yes, ask me for anything in my name and I will do it.” Man, what a great statement that is. What a powerful truth, a powerful promise that we’re given in that passage. Ask for anything in the name of Christ, and He will do it.

There are people gathered in this room today that need that kind of power to show up in the midst of what you’re facing today. There are people in this room today that are going through moments where they need to know that there is a God in heaven who loves you so much, who just simply said, “You ask me and I’ll show up. I’ll be there. I will take care of you.”

I know that’s an encouragement I need often in my life. It’s an encouragement that every day helps me to keep going on and keep moving forward and keep doing what God has called me to do, because I know that not in my power but in the power of a very living, very present God, we can do all things through Christ who strengthens us.

This church has been around since 1956. It started in June of 1956 with a group of 35 that gathered together and decided as they gathered together in that sleepy little village of Lynchburg 59 years ago, they got together and said, “Let’s start a church, and let’s change the world through this church.” Can you imagine the audacity of a group of 35 people getting together and saying, “Let’s change the world from Lynchburg”? Let me say that again: From Lynchburg.

I don’t think I need to spend a lot of time up here explaining to you, this is not New York City. This is not Atlanta. It’s not Los Angeles. It’s not Dallas. It’s not Tokyo. It’s not Hong Kong. It’s not London. No. This is Lynchburg. And that group of 35 got together and they believed that they could change the world through this small church in this small town in this small state, that they could impact the world. And they believed that with all their hearts. You know why they believed that? Because they knew that if God was in it, God can do anything. They believed the concept of verse 12, the greater works that could be done if it is done in the name of Christ.

This week I met with a young man, Chad Milokowski. He’s a young man who just graduated from college. I’m not even sure what college he graduated from, but he graduated from college and he just landed a dream job in New York on Wall Street. Going to work at one of the big firms on Wall Street. And he called a few weeks back and asked if he could come and sit down with me and talk with me, because he had a question for me.

I was a little bit nervous, because here’s a guy who graduated from a big school. But he came and talked to me and met with me because he had this question. I was a little bit intimidated

because here's this guy that's landed this great job on Wall Street, and here he just wants to come and talk to me and ask me some advice. First of all, math is not my number one subject. It's not even my number ten subject. In fact, it's not even a subject that I care about that much.

He came in and said, "I've got a question for you. I'm moving to New York. I'm moving to Wall Street." He told me the story of what he's going to do, and he said, "I just need to know this: I need to know as I go into this place, a new city and a new place and all of the rat race and all the things that are there, what can I do? What's some advice that you can give me to make sure that I stay grounded in my faith and continue to grow as a Christ-follower?" That's a pretty great question there, isn't it? Because he knows he's going to a place that's a whole lot different than Lynchburg. A totally different idea of a city.

And so this group of 35, they got together 59 years ago and said, "We've got to change the world. We're going to do it from right here." And that's a great place for us to start in our discussion over the next few weeks of these greater things. What does that look like? What are the greater works? How can we see the greater works put into practice? And here we are 59 years later and God's done some amazing things through this church. We've seen, literally, this church change the world. It's touched all corners of the globe. The work that we're doing in places like Guatemala, incredible ministry that's happening there, and over the next few weeks I'm going to share with you some of the things that God's doing.

Some of the things that God's doing through this church. We have planted literally thousands of churches around the world in these past 59 years. Over these next few weeks, we're going to share with you some of the stories of those churches that have been planted. We're going to share with you some of the stories of the churches being planted right now around the globe through this local church.

We're going to share with you the work that God's doing through our ministry in Nepal after the earthquake a few weeks back. Through the gifts of this church and the passion of this local church, we—you know this is an incredible statistic I just found out this morning. Over the last three weeks, Thomas Road Baptist Church has been able to secure and put into place 56,000 tons of food—56,000 pounds of food over the last three weeks; 760,000 meals that we have delivered into Nepal. And right now it's being distributed to 641 churches that—by the way—Thomas Road Baptist Church has planted over the last three years in Nepal.

And so God's Word and the love of Christ is being spread throughout that nation, spread throughout that country right now. Why? Because a group of 35 just simply believed that greater works can be done when it's done in the name and the power of Jesus Christ. But we've got to start somewhere. We've got to start a conversation of what that looks like. And so today I want to share with you three quick thoughts. Three things that I want to share with you today is the concept and the idea of what we must understand about the greater works.

The first thing that we've got to understand is this: It is only possible, it is only done through God's authority. Look what it says in the second part of verse 9 in John 14. "He who has seen Me has seen the Father, so how can you say 'Show me the Father'? Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father in Me? The words that I speak to you, I do not speak on My own

authority, but the Father who dwells in Me does the works.” In other words, man does not dictate the greater works. Man does not create the greater works. It is only through the authority of the power of God in our lives that we see what happens.

We live in a culture today where we understand the power of man. We understand the intellect of man. In fact, this week I saw some statistics that said in the next five years that the level of human intelligence, the level of technological advances will increase—listen to this—32 times in the next five years. So everything that we know today, everything that we technologically have seen and that we experience today, in the next five years it will multiply by 32 times. That sounds pretty incredible, doesn't it?

Let's take it one step further. Let's go out ten years. In ten years, it's not just 32 times. You know what's going to happen in ten years? In ten years the level of human intelligence and the level of human technological advances will increase 1,000 times. Let's take it 20 years. What do you think it might be in 20 years? Well, statistics tell us that in 20 years from today human technological advances will increase 1 million times. Let's take it one step further, shall we?

Let's go to 30 years. Thirty years from today. Today is 2015. Thirty years from now, 2045—I can do math once in a while. 2045 it will increase 1 billion times. That means in 30 years there will be a museum somewhere that people of that day and that time will walk through that museum and they'll see on display an iPhone 6 and they'll see a laptop computer and they'll see these flat-screen TVs. They'll see all of these things, and you know what they're going to say? They're going to say, “Boy, things were rough back then.”

We see the incredible growth of the human intellect, the human and technological advancement, and let me just tell you something: all of it combined a billion times over will not allow us to see the greater works that only our God can do through His people. That's what this passage is talking about here when it says, “Greater works that I will do,” through the power of God. So God's authority is something we've got to grab hold of.

The second thing we get from this passage is not only that it's God's authority. It's God's provision. It's God's provision. Look what it says in verse 12 again, “Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father.”

The only possibility, the only way that we are going to see the greater works done is through the truth of the fact that Jesus lives. If Jesus were still dead in the tomb, if He'd allowed Himself to be crucified and then never rose again three days later, we would not see the greater works. We would not see God's move. We would not see God's power.

And Jesus said it very clearly here in this verse: You're going to see the greater works. Why? “Because I go to My Father.” In other words, He could have said it this way, “Because I will rise again.” Let me just tell you something: because Christ lives, anything is possible. Aren't you glad that's true? Aren't you glad that's something that we can believe in? The fact that when Jesus told us to go into all the world and preach the gospel, that we live in a day and age where we can actually do that?

Paul, we know him as probably the greatest Christian that ever lived, we read the stories of Paul and all the things that he was able to accomplish. And did you know this? Paul, as best we can see, he only ever visited about 55 cities. In all the impact that Paul made on our world, he only did it through traveling to 55 cities. We live in a day and age where that changes quite a bit, doesn't it?

In fact, it wasn't until 1911 that the very first telegram was able to actually circle the globe. In 1911 *The New York Times* decided to test this whole idea of sending a message around the world, so what they did is they sent a telegram out of New York City. They sent it off, and it went from relay station to relay station to relay station. It went across the ocean to another relay station, and 16 ½ minutes later that message got back to the original operator in New York City. And they were amazed. We were able to circle the globe in 16 ½ minutes.

Sixty-six years later, in 1977, NASA sent up Voyager 2, a spacecraft that went up and orbited the Earth, and in that spacecraft they put a time capsule, and they put something really technologically advanced. They put a 33 record. Some of you are, "What's he talking about? What's that?" It's a record. You older people know what a record is, right? They recorded a record, and on that record they put a message from Jimmy Carter, who was president at the time. They put some music of the day. They put some different stories and different things that were happening. And they sent that around the globe and they were amazed at how quickly they were able to send that around the globe.

That was 1977. Do you know that today you can go home and if you happen to have a computer sitting in your house, you could sit down, and without NASA and without *The New York Times*, you could type an email, and you can send an email and in .0008 seconds your message can circle the entire globe. Isn't that amazing? It's incredible.

It's amazing what we're able to do in today's age, so when you go back to what Jesus said in Mark 16:15 when He said, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel," you get the picture here that when He said those words, they probably were like, "How in the world is that possible to preach the gospel to the entire world?" We live in a day and age that because of the power of God, not only can we preach the gospel to the entire world, we can do it instantly.

As I'm standing on this stage today and preaching in this room, these cameras that are around this room and the audio system that is in this room, do you know that there are people right now that are literally around the world watching this service live? They are joining us in worship today, right now, in places like Africa and China and Japan and Russia, other places around the world. They are joining us in worship. Why? Because we have the ability to go into all the world and preach the gospel.

The greater works can only be done not only through God's authority, but through God's provision, but there is one other element that is key. There is one other element that actually is more important than all the rest put together, and it's God's plan. It's God's plan. God's plan we find in verse 13 and 14, and I'm going to read these two verses again. Verses 13 and 14 it simply says this. "And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask anything in My name, I will do it."

It's interesting that immediately after verse 12 where Jesus said, "these greater works you will do," immediately after this He went on to say, "And if you ask for anything in My name, I will do it." You know what Jesus told us in a roundabout way through these three verses in John 14? Here's what He said: "You're going to be able to do things that will blow your mind. You are going to be able to do things that are greater even than I, as the Son of God, have done on this Earth. And here's how you're going to do it. Because you are going to come to Me in prayer."

Let me just tell you something. Above everything else that we talk about, as this journey begins that we, over the next few weeks leading up to our 59th anniversary as a church, the one thing that we better get is this: It is only through the power of prayer that we will see the greater works done. It is only through the power of prayer that we will see the world changed through Christ-followers who want to be used. It is only through the power of prayer that you and I will be able to do anything that God promised to do through us. We need to understand that it starts with prayer.

My dad always said this statement. I've quoted him a million times. There are people all around the world that have quoted him in this quote, and still as many times as I've heard it, I can't hear it enough. "Nothing of eternal significance is ever accomplished apart from prayer." Isn't that a great statement? "Nothing of eternal significance is ever accomplished apart from prayer."

As we talk about the greater works, I hope and pray that we as a church understand that all the incredible things that God has done in 59 years are all wonderful moments that we want to reflect on. In fact, in a few weeks as we come together, June 21, to celebrate our 59th anniversary, we're going to take you on a visual journey through 59 years of ministry, and we're going to share with you some things that are pretty amazing.

Eric Peterson, who's seated down here on the second row, has been working diligently with Gus Richey and Jon Daggett and Ron Gifford and others to put together a visual journey for us that day that I know you don't want to miss as we celebrate all the things that God has done. But as we celebrate all the things that God has done, I want to remind you what Jesus said: Greater works are yet ahead, and it starts with the power of prayer.

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