

May, 1, 2016
John 14:12-14

First UMC, Waverly

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“Even Greater”

I remember reading John 14:12 for the first time and then having to re-read to see if I read it right. I don't know about you but when I am reading the gospels I am having an internal dialogue either the gospel writer or with Jesus himself. Here is part of my internal conversation with Jesus when I read John 14:12.

“That's a good one, Jesus. You had me going for a while there. Every now and then I forget you have a sense of humor. To think that I and each of your followers might do what you did and even greater things is a real hoot! Ha, ha, hah! Excuse me, what did you say Jesus, I could not hear it because of my laughter. What? You say that I interrupted you. Sorry, please continue.”

“I am telling you the truth: those who believe in me will do what I do---yes, they will do even greater things because I am going to the Father. And I will do whatever you ask for me in my name, so that the Father's glory will be shown through the Son.” John 14:12-13

Wow, those are some words. Now if we are going to take the gospel as the gospel truth then let us try figure out what it means to do what Jesus did and even more. What Jesus did is seen in the second half of verse 13. He revealed God's glory through his words and actions. Therefore, what we are ‘to do and even more’ is to reveal God's glory through our words and actions.

On that face of it that makes some sense. Jesus was baptized and then had three years of words and actions to reveal God's glory. Think of us. How many years that we have each had since we were baptized? Or how many years since we confirmed our baptism? For most of us, we have had many more than Jesus and his three years. Jesus was right (once again), because on a timeline most of have had so many more years than He did to reveal God's glory.

As we contemplate this possibility of doing what Jesus did in our lives or even doing greater things than Jesus did let me take the pressure off of us by noting *what is not* expected of us before we focus on *what is possible* for us.

First and foremost, we do not need to use all the methods that Jesus used to reveal God's glory. Jesus revealed God's glory through his teaching, healings, and miracles. Although what is being accomplished at the Lied Transplant Center at UNMC is pretty miraculous as well as advances in knee and hip replacement seem to be amazing, in my humble opinion. Humanity through flight, medicine and industry has done some pretty amazing things. Yet, if we try the miracle method we will get all wet.

We will put unnecessary pressure on ourselves if we attempt to engage in the types of miracles that Jesus did and it will leave us wanting. Such attempts on our part will not reveal anything about God's glory in the process. I invite you to page over to John 6:16f. There it notes that Jesus walked on water, some 3-4 miles. If we believe Jesus is making reference to methodology when he says that his followers will do things as great as him or even more then all we need to do is to try to walk on water for 3 or 4 feet, much less 3-4 miles. It does matter how much faith we are filled with we will sink and get all wet. We do not need to use all of Jesus' methods, especially miracles, to do what he did, which is to reveal God's glory.

Second, we do not need to reconcile humanity to God. We are made one with God through Jesus. Please hear the words of Paul in Romans 3:21-24:

“But now God's way of putting people right with himself has been revealed. It has nothing to do with law, even though the Law of Moses and the prophets gave their witness to it. God puts people right through their faith in Jesus Christ. God does this to all who believe in Christ, because there is no difference at all: everyone has sinned and is far away from God's saving presence. But by the free gift of God's grace all are put right with him through Christ Jesus, who sets them free.”

Jesus has reconciled humanity to God. That takes a load off of us. Nothing for us to do except accept the gift from God.

Now that we understand what *do not* need to do to reveal God's glory in our lives let me suggest three things we can do. We reveal God's glory as we *respond* to divine invitations, *rejoice* in God's presence, and make *requests* to God Almighty. As we respond, rejoice and request God's glory will be revealed in our words and actions.

Responding to the Divine Invitation

Moses provides a model for responding to the divine invitation in Exodus 3:1-3.

One day while Moses was taking care of the sheep and goats of his father-in-law Jethro, the priest of Midian, he led the flock across the desert and came to Sinai, the holy mountain. ² There the angel of the Lord appeared to him as a flame coming from the middle of a bush. Moses saw that the bush was on fire but that it was not burning up. ³ "This is strange," he thought. "Why isn't the bush burning up? I will go closer and see."

God called out for the attention of Moses and he responded. Because Moses responded he was able to reveal God's glory by going to Egypt and leading the Exodus. I would suggest that God calls out to each of us repeatedly in life. We may have the same reaction of Moses when God calls out to us, "This is strange." That was my reaction when I was requested to play Psalty in the children musical this spring (show picture of me in the Psalty custom). Yet, like Moses, I said "Yes." As we go closer to see the "divine attention getter" in our lives we too can reveal God's glory through our faithful response. This is one aspect of what Jesus meant when He said we would do all He did and even more.

Rejoicing in God's Presence

David, the king of Israel about 1,000 before the time of Jesus, provides a model for rejoicing. We read again and again of David breaking out into ecstatic rejoicing throughout his life and it is reflected in Psalm 95 which we read earlier this morning.

"Come, let us praise the Lord,
let us sing for joy to God, who protects us!"

Can't you just envision David crying out like this after narrow escapes in his life? Remember him as a youth when he faces and defeats the giant Goliath with just a sling and a polished stone.

"Come, let us praise the Lord,
let us sing for joy to God, who protects us!"
God's glory is revealed in his celebration.

Remember when David was a young man and the one is trying to help the king but King Saul does all he can to search out and kill David. After each narrow escape you can hear David cry out "Come, let us praise the Lord, let us sing for joy to God, who protects us!" God's glory is revealed in his celebration. As we read through the Psalms we see the words that David penned that rejoice and rejoice and rejoice because of the divine presence in his life. Our rejoicing about God, the difference maker in our lives, reveals the glory of God to others. This is one aspect of what Jesus meant when He said we would do all He did and even more.

Requesting Prayerful Results

Finally, we can request Jesus to reveal God's glory in our lives. We see the power of request in verse 13 of our gospel lesson.

"And I will do whatever you ask for me in my name,
so that the Father's glory will be shown through the Son."

Note carefully what Jesus said----not that all our prayers would be granted, but that our prayers made in his name would be granted. The test of any prayer is "Can I make it in the name of Jesus?" No person, for instance would pray for revenge, financial wealth, popular acclaim in the name of Jesus. When we pray we must always ask "Can I honestly make this prayer in the name of Jesus?"

The prayer which can stand the test of that consideration, and which, in the end says, “Thy will be done” has an answer that reveals God’s glory in our lives. This is one aspect of what Jesus meant when he said we would do all he did and even more.

The bottom line of the words we hear in our gospel lesson is that Jesus believes in us even more than we believe in ourselves. Jesus sees and calls out the great potential we have in lives to reveal God’s glory in many manners for the multitudes to see.

As we respond, rejoice and request God’s glory will be revealed through the words and actions of you and me. Belief it or not, that is the gospel truth.
Amen.