

**The Works of the Father**  
**John 14.11-12**  
**Series: Signs of Life**  
**April 25, 2021**

I. Introduction

- A. Albert Benjamin Simpson had a dream
  - 1. Or maybe it was a nightmare
- B. **A.B. Simpson** was the founder of the Christian & Missionary Alliance
  - 1. Life and ministry spanned the latter portion of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century into the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century
  - 2. The year was 1878
    - a. He was a Presbyterian pastor at the time in Louisville, KY
    - b. It was more than a decade before the C&MA would be birthed
    - c. And he was traveling
  - 3. He had attended a “Prophetic Believers Conference” in Watkins Glen, NY
    - a. Heard from a number of notable Bible teachers
  - 4. Tenor of their messages
    - a. World was deeply corrupt and disintegrating
    - b. Only the return of Jesus Christ would provide the basis for a world of genuine peace, righteousness and justice
    - c. Only the gospel of Jesus Christ, spread across the whole world, would have any lasting redemptive impact in the world
    - d. And only the fulfillment of the Great Commission – the church taking the gospel to the ends of the earth – would bring back the King of kings
  - 5. The conference had a deep impact on the pastor, whose heart for the whole gospel for the whole world was just beginning to become enflamed
    - a. And in his mind the wheels were turning
    - b. What could he do to play his part in fulfilling this Great Commission of Jesus to the church?
- C. He traveled from Watkins Glen to Chicago
  - 1. And while in Chicago he had his dream
    - a. This was a real dream – not using dream as a metaphor for an idea or a vision
  - 2. He found himself in an auditorium, filled with thousands of Christians
    - a. On the stage was a multitude of men, women and children – all of whom appeared to be Chinese
    - b. There was no sound, but these Asian faces were weeping, looking out across the audience of believers imploring them to come
    - c. They were wringing their hands, anxious for the mass of believers to come to their aid
  - 3. It seemed to him that, like Paul’s Macedonian vision, they were calling on him to “Come over here and help us!”
- D. Dreams need to be interpreted

1. Simpson's interpretation was that God wanted him to go to China
  - a. He would be a missionary to China
- E. He wrote to his wife Margaret and shared the vision with her
  1. Evidently, God hadn't given her the same dream!
    - a. When he returned to Louisville she told him he was free to go China if he wished
    - b. But that she and the children would be here when he returned
    - c. "You're on your own" basically
  2. Actually, it was a little more colorful than that
    - a. Their granddaughter, who used to spend time with Margaret and be regaled with Simpson stories, reported that Margaret told her that she had told Albert, whom she affectionately called Bertie:
      - b. "Go Bertie go! And heaven be praised if I can rid myself and the children of a lunatic!"
- F. Well, Simpson didn't go to China
  1. He presented himself as a missionary candidate
    - a. But he was rejected
  2. They said he had a case of the "terrible toos"
    - a. Too old
    - b. Too unhealthy
    - c. Too many kids
    - d. Too late
- G. Thank God that he didn't go
  1. If Simpson had gone to China as a missionary, I'm sure he would have had a good ministry
    - a. And that quite a number of Chinese would have come to Christ as a result
  2. But instead, he founded a movement
    - a. And as a result of that movement, 130 years later
    - b. There are more than 20,000 churches in more than 80 countries with more than 6 million believers
- H. A.B. Simpson, as gifted as he was, could never have had anywhere near that effect if he had gone to China as a missionary
  1. Good that he stayed home
  2. The movement he created would do much greater work that he could possibly have done himself
- I. I thought of that story as I studied the passage we have before us today
  1. Jesus is answering a question posed by Philip
    - a. **John 14:8** (NASB95) — 8 Philip said to Him, "Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us."
    - b. **John 14:9-10** (NASB95) — 9 Jesus said to him, "Have I been so long with you, and yet you have not come to know Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; how can you say, 'Show us the Father'? 10 "Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father is in Me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on My

- own initiative, but the Father abiding in Me does His works.
2. And then Jesus says this:
    - a. **John 14:11–12** (NASB95) — 11 “Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father is in Me; otherwise believe because of the works themselves. 12 “Truly, truly, 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 the Father.”
  3. “Greater works than these he will do”

## II. **Questions and Answers**

- A. The context is the upper room discourse
  1. Jesus is meeting with the inner circle – his 12 disciples (actually, the 11 – Judas Iscariot has left on his sinister errand)
  2. And Jesus has told them He was leaving them
- B. That news had provoked a series of questions
  1. Peter: “Lord, where are you going?”
  2. Peter: “Why can’t I follow you now? I’m willing to die for you!”
  3. Thomas (after Jesus said they knew the way where He was going): “Lord, we don’t know where you’re going, how do we know the way?”
  4. Finally, Philip: “Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us.”
- C. Jesus had answered each of those questions in turn
  1. “You can’t follow me now, Peter – but you will later... And by the way, all the bravado about laying down your life for me is just so much bombast – you’ll deny Me three times before the rooster crows”
  2. “And Thomas, I am the way – and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father but through Me.”
  3. “And Philip, have you really been with Me this long and don’t really know me? If you’ve seen Me you’ve seen the Father.”
- D. So Jesus summarizes all of this by saying, “Believe in Me that I am in the Father and the Father is in Me... otherwise believe because of the works themselves.”
  1. And then He says, “Truly, truly, 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 the Father.”

## III. **An Extravagant Promise**

- A. This is an extravagant promise
  1. Just think of what Jesus is saying
    - a. “The works that I do, he will do also”
- B. Just think of what Jesus did – what were His works?
  1. The Gospel of John is all about the works of Jesus
    - a. Many of them are called signs
    - b. The miracles which are recorded in John – just a sampling as John says of all the miracles that Jesus did
    - c. And those signs mean something – they teach us about who Jesus is
  2. **John 20:30–31** (NASB95) — 30 Therefore many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; 31 but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is

the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name.

3. Taught with authority
  4. Healed people
    - a. Gave sight to the blind
    - b. Opened the ears of the deaf
    - c. Restored the lame to walking
    - d. Healed the lepers and restored them to society
    - e. Stopped the bleeding of a hemorrhaging woman
    - f. He even raised people from the dead
  5. He cast out demons
    - a. Restored the demon-possessed to their right minds and bodies, brought them back to functioning in their families and communities
  6. And Jesus says, “You people will do these things too!”
  - C. Even more than that, He says, “greater works than these he will do”
    1. “You’ll even go beyond what I have done!”
  - D. Hard to imagine – believers going beyond their Master
    1. Doing works that surpass the works of Jesus!
  - E. That’s an extravagant promise
    1. Hard to believe!
- IV. **A Puzzling Promise**
- A. That’s why it’s also a puzzling promise
    1. How are we supposed to understand this?
      - a. Has that really happened?
      - b. Has it actually been fulfilled?
      - c. Is it being fulfilled?
  - B. This verse has been debated for these very reasons
    1. It’s hard to see the same kinds of miraculous works taking place that Jesus did
    2. So how are we to understand Jesus’ extravagant promise that “greater works than these he will do...”
- V. **An Apostolic Promise**
- A. It’s an apostolic promise – it is meant for the apostles
    1. And it has been fulfilled by the apostles
  - B. The apostles did do miracles
    1. Acts records a number of **miraculous signs** done by the apostles
      - a. Peter and John healed a lame man
      - b. Sick were healed merely by Peter’s shadow falling on them
      - c. Stephen performed miraculous signs
      - d. Philip cast out demons and healed the lame
      - e. Peter healed lame Aeneas in Lydda
      - f. Peter raised Tabitha from the dead
      - g. Paul blinded Elymas the wicked sorcerer
      - h. Paul and Barnabas performed miraculous signs in Iconium
      - i. Paul and Barnabas healed the crippled man who had faith

- j. Paul and Silas cast out demons
  - k. Paul healed the sick and demon-possessed when people touched him
  - l. Paul raised Eutychus from the dead after he preached him to sleep, falling out of a window!
  - m. Paul was unharmed when bitten by a snake
  - n. Paul healed Publius' father of fever
  - o. Paul healed sick people on the island of Malta after his shipwreck
- C. But as astonishing as those miracles were, they are dwarfed by the miracle of the new birth – of regeneration
- 1. The **miracle of conversion** – when unbelievers come to faith in Jesus
    - a. Remember what happens in conversion
    - b. Ephesians 2 – dead in sins and trespasses – but God raises the spiritually dead to new life in Him
    - c. That is much more miraculous than all the physical healings we have noted
  - 2. That's not just my take on it
    - a. Jesus had sent out, not just the 12, but 70, to preach and heal
    - b. **Luke 10:17–20** (NASB95) — 17 The seventy returned with joy, saying, “Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name.” 18 And He said to them, “I was watching Satan fall from heaven like lightning. 19 “Behold, I have given you authority to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing will injure you. 20 “Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are recorded in heaven.”
  - 3. It is more important, in Jesus view, that human beings are transferred from death to life, born again of the Spirit – than that they are healed or delivered even from demons!
- D. And transferred from death to life happened in spades under the apostolic ministry
- 1. Acts 2: On the day of Pentecost alone, under Peter's preaching, 3,000 people believed and were saved
  - 2. By Acts Chapter 4 – 5,000 had believed in Jerusalem
  - 3. That's hundreds more believers transferred from death to life than all of the 3 plus years of Jesus' ministry!
    - a. Greater works than these!
- E. And consider **the expanse of the apostolic ministry**
- 1. Jesus did all His works within about a 70 mile radius
    - a. Extending from Jerusalem and Judea to Galilee
  - 2. The apostles multiplied these works across an astonishing geographical area
    - a. Into Syria
    - b. Into Asia Minor – now Turkey
    - c. Into Europe, into Macedonia, Greece, Italy
    - d. In fact, well into Europe – all the way to Spain, most likely even to

- Britain
      - e. Evidence that the apostles took the gospel and the works of Jesus into North Africa, all the way even to India
    - 3. And they did all that in the generation of the apostles!
      - a. That's astonishing
      - b. Greater works indeed – all in one generation
      - c. The generation of the apostles!
  - F. And consider **the kinds of people** who were both healed and converted
    - 1. Not just Jews – the primary focus of Jesus' ministry
      - a. But Gentiles as well as Jews
      - b. Palestinian Jews
      - c. Hellenistic Jews scattered all over the Roman empire
      - d. Palestinian Gentiles
      - e. Asian Gentiles
      - f. Roman Gentiles
  - G. The nature of the works
    - 1. The geographical extent of the works
    - 2. The ethnic background of those affected by the works
      - a. Incredibly, under the ministry of those fearful 11 on Good Friday
      - b. After the resurrection, the entire Roman Empire was deeply impacted by the works of Jesus through the apostles
- VI. **An Ecclesiastical Promise**
  - A. But this is also an ecclesiastical promise
    - 1. And I don't mean "ecclesiastical" in some kind of institutional sense
    - 2. I mean ecclesiastical in the sense of the church – the ekklesia (Gk)
      - a. The church after the age of the apostles
    - 3. Jesus isn't just talking about the apostles in this verse
      - a. "He who believes in me..."
      - b. Believers of all ages
  - B. While the signs and wonders did diminish following the age of the apostles – for reasons I won't take the time to explain now
    - 1. The miracles of conversion and cultural transformation have continued
  - C. Within 300 years of the end of the apostolic age
    - 1. Nearly all the idolatrous temples – and all of the immorality they represented – has been closed because of the influence of Christianity
      - a. Converts in the Roman Empire numbered in the millions by that time
    - 2. "Greater works than these he will do..."
  - D. But the progress of the gospel has continued – spiritual transformation has spread into every continent
    - 1. We measure the completion of the Great Commission in terms of unreached people groups
      - a. People group is a ethnic and linguistically distinct group separated from others by language and culture
      - b. Unreached when there is no church or gospel witness indigenous to

- that people group
2. Things are changing so fast that it's hard to keep track of the numbers
    - a. Definitions of people groups are also dependent on, not just language, but also tribal dialects
  3. But the progress is remarkable
    - a. In the first 1,000 years of Christian history the church had reached 20% of people groups
    - b. By 1800 that had grown to about 25% of people groups
    - c. But today there is gospel witness in some form to over 80% of people groups!
    - d. The explosion in missions in the last 200 years has been exponential!
    - e. Greater works than these!
- E. Even more, the cultural transformation that has taken place as a result of missions in the last 200 years is stunning
1. Recent work in the last 20 years by sociologist Robert Woodberry has demonstrated the culturally transformative effect of what he called Protestant **"conversionary missions"**
    - a. Conversionary missions is distinguished from state sponsored Christianity being implanted in nations
    - b. Conversionary missions has as its first priority the preaching of the gospel of Christ so that, as the Gospel of John says, people might "believe in Jesus, and believing, have life in His name"
    - c. In other words, so that people might be born again
  2. Woodberry, in amazing research, studied the cultural effects of those missionary efforts six ways to Sunday
    - a. His work has been dissected and analyzed by the academic community
    - b. And has stood up to every analytical test possible
  3. He discovered that places which were the object of conversionary missions
    - a. More economically developed
    - b. Better health
    - c. Lower infant mortality
    - d. Lower political corruption
    - e. Greater literacy
    - f. Higher educational attainment – especially for women
    - g. More significant membership in non-governmental organizations
  4. The remarkable part about all of this is that those missionaries didn't set out to change cultures or be political activists
    - a. They set out to transform hearts
    - b. To take people from death to life through faith in Jesus
    - c. But all of these outcomes were unintended consequences
    - d. Glorious unintended consequences
  5. You can chart the same effects by examining the great awakenings through church history

- a. In which not just people were converted
  - b. But whole societies transformed
- 6. “Greater works than these he will do”
- F. By the way, that’s one of the reasons why we should be very concerned as we are part of a culture that is spinning out of control away from a God-centered world view
  - 1. Yes, the church will still be the church
    - a. Jesus said He will build His church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it
  - 2. But as our nation rejects God we can expect those same positive cultural outcomes to deteriorate
    - a. And that’s not the way to love our neighbors!

VII. **A Spiritual Promise**

- A. “The works that I do, he will do also; and greater works than these he will do...”
  - 1. An extravagant promise
  - 2. An apostolic promise fulfilled
  - 3. An ecclesiastical promise being fulfilled
- B. But it’s also a spiritual promise
  - 1. We can’t do any works of Jesus
    - a. Not on our own
- C. It’s a spiritual promise because of faith
  - 1. “He who believes in Me, the works that I do, he will do also; and greater works than these he will do”
  - 2. Faith is a necessary condition to do any works that even vaguely resemble Jesus’ works
    - a. **Hebrews 11:6** (NASB95) — 6 And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.
    - b. Jesus taught that faith as small as a mustard seed could move mountains
  - 3. Faith is trust in Jesus
    - a. Trust in Him
    - b. Trust in His word
    - c. Trust in His power to do above and beyond all the we ask or imagine
- D. It’s also a spiritual promise because of the Holy Spirit
  - 1. “And greater works than these he will do; because I go to the Father”
  - 2. Why does Jesus go to the Father?
    - a. What does Jesus do when He goes to the Father?
  - 3. He sends the Holy Spirit!
    - a. **John 14:16** (NASB95) — 16 “I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever...”
    - b. **Matthew 28:19–20** (NASB95) — 19 “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all



that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”

4. It is by the Spirit that we are able to do the works of Jesus

VIII. **A Responsible Promise**

- A. **John 14:12** (NASB95) — 12 “Truly, truly, 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 the Father.
- B. An extravagant promise
  - 1. An apostolic promise – fulfilled in the apostolic age
  - 2. An ecclesiastical promise – for the church of all ages
  - 3. A spiritual promise – through faith and the power of the Holy Spirit
- C. But also a responsible promise
  - 1. There is still work to do
    - a. We are responsible to complete the Great Commission
    - b. It’s one of our core values – see it on the wall as you enter the foyer!
  - 2. You can’t experience the promise unless you do the work!
    - a. You can’t experience the promise unless you step out in faith!
    - b. You can’t experience the promise unless you die to self, are filled with the Spirit, and obey the word of God!
- D. And when you do those things – you will see the works of the Father
  - 1. And you will be amazed!
- E. What a promise!
  - 1. Extravagant
  - 2. Apostolic
  - 3. Ecclesiastical
  - 4. Spiritual
  - 5. Responsible