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In the Name of Jesus

John 14.13-14

Series: Signs of Life

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I. Introduction

A. Mothers Day

1. Mothers are arguably the greatest source of benevolence in a family
 - a. At least that's the way it usually works
2. Dads are the ones who are normally a bit more stingy with their benevolence toward their children
 - a. The ones who often set conditions for the blessings they so want to give
 - b. The quid pro quo usually comes from Dad
 - c. That's not always the case, of course
 - d. There's often the father – daughter thing going on; Dad wrapped around the little finger of little girl; that sort of thing
 - e. Mom seeing through the manipulation of the daughter; she was a daughter herself, of course
3. But by and large it's Mom who is the benevolent one; the one less inclined to set conditions for blessings

B. And if that's the case with mothers, with grandmothers its even more extravagant!

1. Our grandchildren call Jean "Gigi"
2. We have a sign on the wall of our guest bedroom
 - a. A sign which is universally affirmed by everyone in our family
 - b. "If Mom says no, ask Gigi.
 - c. "If Gigi says no...
 - d. "Who are we kidding. Gigi never says no!"

C. Moms are extravagant givers

D. But as extravagant as Moms are as givers, no one is more extravagant than God

1. Someone has said, no one can ever out-give God
 - a. It certainly seems like that truth is affirmed in the section of the Gospel of John that we have been exploring lately

E. We have already seen an extravagant promise by Jesus given to the church

1. **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."
2. Amazing! Think of all the extraordinary works that Jesus did!
 - a. And yet Jesus promises that the church will do even greater works than Jesus did
3. And as we examined that text we discovered that it was fulfilled, and is

- being fulfilled, on more than one level
- 4. It was an apostolic promise
 - a. During the generation of the apostles the gospel spread all through the Roman Empire, into North Africa, likely into India, and very possibly all the way to Britain
 - b. The expansion of the gospel during the time of the apostles was accompanied by the kinds of signs and wonders that Jesus Himself did
- 5. And we also saw that it was an ecclesiastical promise – a promise for the church of all ages
 - a. We saw how the gospel has spread through every continent
 - b. And that as the gospel spread, and as the Christian faith was established, an amazing array of human benefits have followed
 - c. Including freedom, education, health care, the rising status of women
 - d. The social benefits have followed when large numbers of people have been converted to Christ
 - e. There is more work to be done, to be sure; more people groups to be reached
 - f. But the extravagant promise is, by all accounts, unsurpassed by any other vain attempt by human enterprise

II. Another Extravagant Promise

- A. But how will these things happen?
 - 1. How will the church do greater works than these?
 - a. By far, the most important factor is prayer
 - b. Prayer is the number one activity of believers in Jesus in catapulting the church forward in its completion of the Great Commission
- B. And Jesus makes an even more extravagant promise in regard to prayer than even the most benevolent Gigi, the most prolific grandmother
- C. **John 14:13–14** (NASB95) — 13 “Whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. 14 “If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do it.”
- D. Now that’s extravagant!
 - 1. **“Whatever...”**
 - a. **“Ask anything...”**
 - 2. Even your favorite grandma wouldn’t go that far!
- E. Let’s unpack that promise a bit
 - 1. Because as extravagant as it is, we need to understand it
 - 2. If it really is the key to the church doing “greater works than these” we need to find out if there really are some conditions attached to this promise

III. A Promise for Christians

- A. First, this is a promise for Christians
 - 1. We find that in the text itself: **“Whatever you ask... If you ask anything...”**
 - a. Who’s you?
 - b. It’s the apostles to be sure

- a. “Whatever you ask in My name...”
 - b. “If you ask anything in My name...”
- B. One of the saddest aspects of prayer in the church – all through the age of the church
 - 1. Is how we have taken that simple phrase and turned it into a formula
 - a. Waived it like a magic wand
 - b. Held it like a talisman
 - c. Used it like a good luck charm
 - 2. How we’ve pretended that when we stick it on the end of our prayers it’s like we’ve stuck a postage stamp on our letter
 - a. And the Postal Service is thus bound to deliver it
 - b. God will surely answer our prayer because we’ve sealed the envelope with “in the name of Jesus”
- C. What does it mean to pray “in the name of Jesus”?
- D. The first thing that it means is that the Christian has only one foundation for his or her prayers
 - 1. That foundation is Jesus
 - a. Only Jesus
 - 2. Maybe that seems to you to be obvious
 - a. What believer would in any way question that?
 - b. I would submit to you that many of us violate that principle all the time
 - c. That we don’t pray only in the name of Jesus, on the basis of the finished work of Christ for us
 - d. That we actually sneak in other credentials that we think will add weight to our request
- E. R.A. Torrey – one of the great theologians and Bible teachers of the late 19th and early 20th Century
 - 1. Preaching in Australia
 - a. Note was placed in his hands as he began to go to the platform
 - b. “Dear Dr. Torrey: I am in great perplexity. I have been praying for a long time for something that I am confident is according to the God’s will, but I do not get it. I have been a member of the Presbyterian Church for thirty years, and have tried to be a consistent one all the time. I have been superintendent in the Sunday school for twenty-five years, and an elder in the church for twenty years; and yet God does not answer my prayer and I cannot understand it. Can you explain it to me?”
 - c. He took the time as he prepared to speak to answer the note in front of the audience (be careful handing notes to preachers before they preach – you might just get an answer in public!)
 - d. “It is perfectly easy to explain it. This man thinks that because he has been a consistent church member for thirty years, a faithful Sunday school superintendent for twenty-five years, and an elder in the church for twenty years, that God is under obligation to answer

his prayer.

- e. “He is really praying in his own name, and God will not hear our prayers when we approach Him in that way.
 - f. “We must, if we would have God answer our prayers, give up any thought that we have any claims upon God.
 - g. “There is not one of us who deserves anything from God. If we got what we deserved, every one of us would spend eternity in hell.
 - h. “But Jesus Christ has great claims on God, and we should go to God in our prayers not on the ground of any goodness in ourselves, but on the ground of Jesus Christ’s claims.”
- F. To pray in the name of Christ means that we come to God
- 1. Not because there is anything in us to recommend us or our prayers
 - 2. But because we come on the basis of who Christ is – the beloved Son of the Father
 - a. And on what He has done – lived a life of complete holiness and righteousness, which we could never have done
 - b. And He has died in our place, taking upon Himself the just penalty for our sin
 - c. Forgiving us of our sin
 - 3. And by virtue of our faith in Him, we have become united with Him
 - a. John 14:20 (NASB95) — 20 “In that day you will know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you.”
- G. We come to God in prayer, not because of anything in us
- 1. But because we are united with Jesus
 - a. And only Jesus has any right to ask anything of God the Father
- H. “Whatever you ask... in My name”
- 1. “I’m with Him; I’m with Jesus”
- I. “If you ask anything ... in My name”
- 1. “It’s because I’m with Him; I’m united with Christ by His Spirit”
- J. “Don’t answer my prayer because of me”
- 1. “Answer my prayer because of Him!”
- V. **A Promise with Integrity**
- A. What else does it mean to pray in the name of Jesus?
- 1. It means that we pray with integrity
- B. If we pray with integrity, if we pray as believers in Jesus
- 1. It means that we will pray as those whose life reflects the One in whose name we pray
 - 2. Not perfectly, but substantially
- C. Look at it this way
- 1. If you present yourself as united to Christ, as belonging to Christ, as being represented by Christ
 - a. And God looks at you
 - b. And says, “Gee, I don’t see any resemblance of Christ in you at all. Why should I give you the time of day?”
 - 2. When you come to the Father in the name of Jesus, the Father would

recognize you as a member of His family

- a. After all, Jesus said, “I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you.”
 - b. “But you don’t look like you’re in Jesus!”
- D. Imagine you’re in the military – Army, Marines, Coast Guard, Navy, Air Force – whatever
1. And you report in uniform to your commanding officer
 - a. And he gives you a top secret message to deliver to the General (or Admiral, or Commandant, or whatever)
 2. And on the way you take a little detour
 - a. You’re going by your favorite lake where you love to fish
 - b. So you change your clothes; put on your fishing clothes
 - c. So spend the day fishing; at the end of the day, you’re hot a sweaty mess; and you smell like fish
 - d. But then you remember – you’ve got a message to deliver to the General (or Admiral, or Commandant, or whatever)
 - e. You don’t have time to change; so you race to the General’s office
 3. You show up, in a ratty t-shirt, shorts, deck shoes – smelling like fish bait
 - a. “I have an important message for you, General so-and-so”
 - b. “Sure you do. Get this guy out of here. He’s not soldier (or sailor or airman or whatever)
 4. He wouldn’t give you the time of day
 - a. You bear no resemblance to anyone in his army, or in his navy
 5. Unless you bear some resemblance to Christ, you can’t pray in the name of Jesus
- E. God doesn’t look on the outward appearance
1. Ultimately, He doesn’t look at our facial characteristics or our clothes
 - a. But the clothes He looks for are the clothes of character
 - b. He especially looks on the heart – the center of the transformation that God is working on to change us into the image and likeness of Christ
 - c. And there ought to be some indication that that transformation is taking place
 2. **James 4:3** (NASB95) — 3 You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures.
 - a. In other words, your prayers aren’t answered because your heart isn’t right
 - b. You don’t bear the family resemblance of Jesus Christ
- F. Now we’re all a work in progress
1. But only when there is some progress are we able to pray in the name of Jesus
 - a. And expect that the Father will hear and answer our prayers
- VI. **A Promise with Purpose**
- A. **John 14:13** (NASB95) — 13 “Whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son.”

1. The overriding purpose in prayer is the glorify the Father in the Son
- B. If that your primary concern when you pray – that God the Father would be glorified
- C. Sometimes God is glorified when He answers prayer in a spectacular, miraculous way
 1. Remember the death of Lazarus
 - a. Word was sent to Jesus that His friend Lazarus was sick – indeed, sick unto death
 - b. Remember how Jesus responded?
 - c. **John 11:4** (NASB95) — 4 But when Jesus heard this, He said, “This sickness is not to end in death, but for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified by it.”
 2. Then Jesus waited for two more days before starting toward Bethany
 - a. Waited so that by the time He arrived, Lazarus had been dead four days
 - b. Dead so long “he stinketh” (KJV)
 3. Why?
 - a. So Jesus would raise Lazarus from the dead
 - b. So God would be glorified
 4. Or remember the story of the man born blind (John 9)
 - a. **John 9:2** (NASB95) — 2 And His disciples asked Him, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he would be born blind?”
 - b. **John 9:3** (NASB95) — 3 Jesus answered, “It was neither that this man sinned, nor his parents; but it was so that the works of God might be displayed in him.”
 - c. This man was born blind so God would be glorified in his healing
 5. Sometimes God is pleased to glorify Himself by intervening in a miraculous way
 - a. And He still does it!
- D. But sometimes God is glorified by sustaining His child through infirmity, weakness, illness, and even death
 1. **2 Corinthians 12:7–10** (NASB95) —
 - a. 7 Because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, for this reason, to keep me from exalting myself, there was given me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me—to keep me from exalting myself!
 - b. 8 Concerning this I implored the Lord three times that it might leave me.
 - c. 9 And He has said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.”
 - d. Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me.
 - e. 10 Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ’s sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong.

2. God was glorified in his weakness, his illness, his infirmity
 - a. God answered his prayer, and glorified Himself
 - b. By sustaining him in the midst of suffering
 3. **1 Corinthians 1:27–31** (NASB95) —
 - a. 27 but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise,
 - b. and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong,
 - c. 28 and the base things of the world and the despised God has chosen, the things that are not, so that He may nullify the things that are,
 - d. 29 so that no man may boast before God.
 - e. 30 But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption,
 - f. 31 so that, just as it is written, “LET HIM WHO BOASTS, BOAST IN THE LORD.”
- E. Ralph Keiper – late; author of *The Power of Biblical Thinking*, and *Positive Thinking in Negative Times*; editor of *Eternity*
1. Limited vision
 - a. As a young man he complained to God about it
 - b. Reasoned that God had it in His power to change His vision
 - c. “Why should I suffer from this limitation? God could do something about it if he wanted to”
 - d. But his prayer went nowhere
 - e. He was perplexed about why God hadn’t answered him
 - f. He had tried to please God; yet God did nothing
 2. His testimony
 - a. Young theology student
 - b. Saturday afternoon
 - c. Studying theology
 3. HS began to speak to him
 - a. HS: “What is the chief end of man?” (Reminding him of the first question from the Westminster Shorter Catechism)
 - b. RK: “To glorify God, and to enjoy him forever!”
 - c. HS: “Do you wish to glorify God?”
 - d. RK: “Of course!”
 - e. HS: “If you had the choice, what would you rather do, glorify God or have perfect vision?”
 4. His “of course!” began to dissolve
 - a. His sight was a very precious faculty
 - b. Especially precious if you don’t have much of it
 - c. He struggled with the question
 - d. RK: “There is only one answer, and that choice is to glorify God.”
 5. The conversation, however, continued

- a. HS: “Do you really believe that God’s glory is more important than your vision?”
 - b. RK: “My vision, or lack of it, is not worthy to be compared to the glory of God!”
 - c. HS: “Do you really wish to glorify God?”
 - d. RK: “Yes, I do!”
 - e. HS: “If you do, why worry about the method which God chooses for you to glorify him?”
- F. So Ralph Keiner joined the ranks of Paul
- 1. Who may also have had low vision as some scholars would argue
 - a. In glorifying God in weakness
- G. And he also joined the ranks of Jesus
- 1. **John 17:4** (NASB95) — 4 “I glorified You on the earth, having accomplished the work which You have given Me to do.”
 - a. Glorified the Father by going to the cross
 - b. By suffering
 - c. By dying
- H. So Ralph Keiner learned to pray in the name of Jesus
- 1. **John 14:13** (NASB95) — 13 “Whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son.”

VII. Conclusion

- A. It’s an amazing promise
 - 1. Extravagant!
 - a. Whatever you ask in My name...
 - b. If you ask anything in My name...
- B. A promise for believers
- C. A promise with one foundation – in the name of Jesus
 - 1. Jesus only
- D. A promise with integrity
 - 1. For those whose lives bear resemblance to Jesus
- E. A promise with purpose
 - 1. To glorify the Father through Jesus Christ
- F. But it is still extravagant
 - 1. And prayer is the primary means by which we, the church, will do “greater works than these”