**Obey**

John 14:12-24

***A thief had just been released from prison*** and decided to visit church. As he sat down in the back row his eyes were drawn to the large visual of the ten commandments on the wall of the church. And as a convicted criminal the words seemed to continually condemn him - “You shall not steal.”

But then he saw the wooden cross beside the stone commandments and it was like **a new light broke onto the Law of God**. The words that had just been condemning him suddenly took on new meaning. “You shall not steal,” became ***a PROMISE instead of a verdict***. God promised him a new heart and the ability to never steal again. “You SHALL NOT steal.”

***Have you experienced God’s Law in this way?*** At first you see the demands it places on you to “be holy” as God Himself is holy. “You shall not have any gods before me… You shall not steal, you shall not bear false witness, you shall not kill, you shall not covet.” One after another they are condemnations upon all of us because we do all of these things in our hearts, and with our words and actions. But then, in the light of the cross, the Law of God takes on a new meaning. Instead of words of judgment we hear these words as promises from the God of all grace. “You shall not covet anymore; you shall not have any other gods or images; you shall not lie or cheat or steal anymore,” because I have changed you and I am with you and in your heart.

Notice that the two directives in this passage in John are not phrased as commands **but as promises**:

“Whoever believes in me ***will also do*** the works I do… If you love me, ***you will*** keep my commandments.” John 14:12,15

Yes, these have the force of commands, but it is significant that they are not expressed as commands. ***This is what faith does*** and it is what love does. Faith will move you to action. Love will move you to obedience. ***The natural fruit of genuine faith is good works.*** The natural fruit of love is obedience.

***If you love your parents, you obey them***. If you don’t obey your parents it’s a sign that you don’t love them, or not very well.

If you believe in someone or something, ***you do things to make that faith tangible***. If you believe in our church, for example, you give to support the ministry and you participate in a group or ministry or both. If you believe in a non-profit like Oasis Pregnancy Care Centers, you pray for them, you give to support their ministry and maybe you volunteer to help out when you can. If you believe in a product or company, you invest in it. If you believe in a candidate you talk abou them and support their campaign.

As James wrote in his letter, ***“Faith without deeds is dead.”*** True, living faith produces action. And true love produces obedience. It WILL happen.

So be encouraged! Listen to the words of verse 12. We’ve probably heard them before but ***I’m not sure we’ve fully believed them yet.***

“Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these he will do because I am going to the Father.” John 14:12

Now pause for a minute and consider the WORKS Jesus did. Let’s stay in the gospel of John for the sake of simplicity. What were the works or signs or miracles that Jesus did in the gospel of John? Shout them out.

Good job! You got all 7!

**The Works of Jesus in John’s Gospel:**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 1. Water into wine (ch. 2)
2. Healed official’s son (ch. 4)
3. Healed paralytic (ch. 5)
4. Fed 5,000 (ch. 6)
 | 1. Healed Blind man (ch. 9)
2. Raised Lazarus (ch. 11)
3. Rose from the dead (ch. 22)
* Walked on water (ch. 6)
 |

There are only ***7 miracles documented in John’s gospel*** - an important symbolic number. You can see there is debate about whether the 7th sign includes walking on water or if it is the resurrection itself. I’m inclined to see the walking on water as a bonus miracle just for the disciples.

But just take this in. Jesus says that because He has gone to the Father, **we will do GREATER THINGS** than He did while He was on earth. Greater. Things.

“Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these he will do ***because I am going to the Father***.” John 14:12

Jesus is very clear about the reason for this: it’s not because the disciples were so impressive or filled with faith and boldness. The reason they would do greater things was JESUS. They (and we) would have access to an advocate before God the Father that Jesus Himself did not have. This is why we know this passage applies to us as well, because the condition applies to us. **Jesus is our high priest and advocate**, who lives to make intercession for us before the throne of God.

***So the exhortation of this passage is to obey the commands of Christ*** and do the works He did - primarily to LOVE one another and love your neighbor. But the commands are phrased as promises, as descriptions of the new kind of life the disciples would begin to live after Jesus ascended to the Father and the Holy Spirit was poured out on them. And to encourage the disciples (and us) Jesus filled this passage with promises. So let’s study the four promises Jesus gives us here in John 14 to empower our obedience.

**Promises from Jesus to Empower Obedience:**

1. Answered **Prayer**: His power is available to accomplish His work

“Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.” John 14:13

Here is Jesus describing His role as our high priest and advocate. Jesus is the Prime Minister of the Universe, upholding all things in heaven and on earth with the word of His power. He stands at the right hand of God the Father and intercedes for you and for me. Yes, this is for our salvation, reminding us that when God looks at us He sees Jesus’ righteousness not our sin. But Jesus’ intercession is not just to “get you into heaven when you die.” It is also for RIGHT NOW, for every day - to help you live for Him and for His kingdom.

Notice the **two conditions** for answered prayer: 1) praying in Jesus’ name - according to His will, as if you were Him; and 2) praying for the glory of God, not for the indulgence of your own desires. Our model for prayer is “YOUR kingdom come; YOUR will be done.” Not MY will be done. Often when we begin to pray that is how we start - “MY WILL be done.” Like toddlers demanding our own way. But the love of the Father and the grace of the Son begin to soften our selfishness and break through our short-sightedness so we can let go of our own will and begin to pray for God’s will and His way and His timing.

And God is so patient with us - like a Father with His young, precious child. He does not judge us or shush us or send us away for our shallow, selfish prayers. He welcomes them. He wants us to come to Him with EVERYTHING that is on our hearts - to pour it out before Him. ***Read the Psalms*** if you’re unclear on this point. They overflow with anger, depression, fear and confusion. So it must be ok to pray that way - God had it recorded in the Bible!

And look again at verse 14:

**Promises from Jesus to Empower Obedience:**

1. Answered **Prayer**: His power is available to accomplish His work
	* You can do greater things because of Jesus’ **Intercession**

“If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it.” John 14:14

Repetition in the Bible is never an accident - it is God’s HIGHLIGHTER. Jesus wants it to be crystal clear what He is offering here: the PROMISE of answered prayer. In other words: ***ASK. Pray. Cry out.*** Call for help. Don’t be so proud and self-reliant that you forget to pray or neglect prayer, or think you can handle things on your own. “Ask and you shall receive.”

You can do GREATER THINGS than Jesus did because ***you have JESUS helping you***, interceding for you. You have His Spirit guiding you. You have His absolute authority working on your behalf.

**Four times in John 14, 15 and 16** Jesus makes this same promise. Ask whatever you wish and I will do it. Four separate times. Once here, twice in chapter fifteen and again in chapter 16. And technically he says it 6 times because the first and last one state it twice. I’ve got them all on one slide for you because I know some of you still don’t believe quite yet.

**Ask Jesus for Help:**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| “Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do… If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it.” 14:13-14“Ask whatever you wish and it will be done for you.” 15:7 | “Whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you.” 15:16“Whatever you ask of the Father in my name, he will give it to you… Ask, and you will receive.” 16:23-24 |

Yes, we have to ask **IN JESUS’ Name**, meaning according to His will and in line with His kingdom purposes. “In Jesus’ Name” is not a magic formula or incantation. It is a principle. Are we asking for things Jesus wants to give us, that are good for us and good for others? Or are we “asking with wrong motives, to spend what we get on our pleasures,” as James warns against in his letter?

***But the point is to ASK.*** How will we do greater things than even Jesus did? Only if we ask Him for help. Certainly not on our own.

Some of us have listened to ***the Maverick podcast***. The first season tells the story of an African Muslim who comes to Christ and is miraculously saved from his family’s attempts to execute him. It’s a wild roller coaster of a story. But here is this brand-new believer they call Bishara, just learning about Jesus, seeing God’s miraculous intervention in his life - but also suffering a great deal in the process. Then his mother gets very sick and is dying in the hospital.

So Bishara goes to visit his mother and, not knowing what else to do, but knowing he read about Jesus healing people and the young missionaries who led him to Christ told him to pray in Jesus’ Name, he asked his mother if he could pray for her in Jesus’ name.

Now keep in mind this is a Muslim woman in a powerful Muslim family that tried to kill their son for abandoning his faith. He did not expect her to grant this request. But she was so sick and was also desperate so figured, “what can it hurt?” He prayed for her - a very simple prayer for healing in Jesus’ name. And the next day she was better. Completely healed. It was so dramatic that people in the hospital heard about it and began to ask if he would come and pray for THEM in Jesus’ name. He did, and many others were healed!

Soon his mother put her faith in Jesus and SHE began to pray for people in Jesus’ name and they were healed.

Now. We hear stories like this and **put them in a category** like “overseas missions,” or “dangerous Muslim setting,” or “bold desperate faith,” so we hear them and mostly believe they are true, but we don’t really believe they apply to us. The result? We don’t pray for miracles. And we don’t see miracles.

Could it be that simple a diagnosis? ***“You have not because you ask not?”*** If we love people like Jesus loved them, why wouldn’t we pray for them and believe that God still does miracles? We don’t demand them. We ASK for them - like children with our Father. And we have the infinite advantage of big brother Jesus interceding for us as we ask. That’s the first promise to empower our obedience. Number two.

**Promises from Jesus to Empower Obedience:**

1. The Helper’s **Presence**: His Spirit will always be with you

“If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper to be with you forever.” John 14:15-16

Not only does Jesus promise to answer our prayers when we ask Him, but ***He promises to be with us forever through His own Spirit***. Let’s not lose sight of the context here. “Whoever believes in me will do the works I do - and even greater works.” And those who love Jesus will keep his commandments. The context is about faith leading to action and love leading to obedience. **These are PROMISES**. If you love me, you WILL keep my commandments.

***How can Jesus be so sure?*** First, because He Himself intercedes for us, His people. And second, because He sent His Holy Spirit to change us from the inside out and to be with us forever. Those are two MASSIVE advantages. We cannot overstate how significant these gifts are. The intercession of Jesus and the indwelling presence of the Spirit. If we learn to walk with the Spirit we can live in the overflow of all the fullness of God, according to Ephesians 3.

1. The Helper’s **Presence**: His Spirit will always be with you
	* You are never alone because the Holy Spirit **Dwells** in you forever

“Another Helper to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth… You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you.” John 14:16-17

Jesus’ goal in this long teaching is ***to encourage his disciples*** who are tempted to be fearful as he explains that he is leaving them soon. Remember last week, “Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God. Believe also in me.” Yes, trouble is coming for them just as it was coming for Jesus, but they did not have to be afraid because Jesus had a plan and central to that plan was the Holy Spirit.

After His resurrection, Jesus told the disciples not to do anything until they were ***“clothed with power from on high.”*** They didn’t rush out and start preaching and healing people. They huddled together in dark rooms, waiting. But when the Holy Spirit was poured out on the day of Pentecost, those 11 disciples were different. (and the 12th one, Matthias too.) With the Holy Spirit now inside them and empowering them, they preached with greater boldness and did even more miracles.

So the next time you are praying for a friend or loved one, remember these two promises. First, Jesus Himself is interceding for you and He promised numerous times that whatever you ask IN HIS NAME, he will do. And second, Jesus gave you His Holy Spirit to be with you forever. You know the Spirit - because He dwells in you and has been with you from the moment you first called on Jesus to save you.

But there may be some here who don’t know what I’m talking about here.

1. The Helper’s **Presence**: His Spirit will always be with you
	* You are never alone because the Holy Spirit **Dwells** in you forever

“The Spirit of truth whom the world cannot receive because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you.” John 14:17

The natural condition of people, before they call on Jesus to forgive them and take over their lives, is **blind and dead.** We are all born in sin, with a selfish, sinful, God-resistant nature. Those who are “in the world” in this sense, do not know the Holy Spirit - they cannot see him or experience Him. UNTIL they bow the knee to King Jesus. Until they confess their sins and turn from them.

So if this is super confusing to you, don’t be discouraged - ***ask Jesus to help you see***. Ask Him to show you your sin and resistance to His Holy Spirit. Ask Jesus to forgive you and to become your Lord, your King, your Master and Savior. Then, suddenly, you will begin to understand. The Holy Spirit is Jesus’ housewarming gift to every new believer.

If you believe in Jesus and come to love Jesus, all of this will begin to make sense very quickly, because the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Truth who helps us understand. That’s promise two - the Helper’s presence. Number three.

**Promises from Jesus to Empower Obedience:**

1. **Eternal** Life: His return will be your resurrection

“I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you… Because I live, you also will live.” John 14:18-19

This is Jesus’ primary comforting promise: **He is coming back - SOON**. “Yet a little while.” 2,000 years does not seem to us like a little while, but 1,000 years are like a day to the Lord and a day like 1,000 years. Our Lord is coming for us. He will not leave us as orphans - unclaimed, abandoned children. No! We are the children of God! We have been adopted into His family and the Holy Spirit is the sign and seal of that identity. We belong to Him.

And when Jesus comes back it will be ***to complete His work of salvation and restore all things, including us***. Those who have died in Christ will rise first, and those who survive to the end will be raptured up to join the great host of the saints for the great bridal procession into the new heaven and new earth for the wedding celebration of the Lamb.

Because Jesus lives, we know we will live forever. All who die with Jesus now will live with Him forever. If you save your life, you will lose it, but if you joyfully give up your life for Jesus, you will save it for eternity. As it says in Romans 6, “If we have been united with him in a death like his we believe that we will also be united with him in a resurrection like his.”

“Because I live, you also will live.” **We worship a risen Savior**. Our Lord and King is alive. He rose on the third day, triumphant over sin and death forever. And one day very soon He is coming back to be with us forever. In that moment he will wipe every tear from our eyes and will defeat every remaining enemy. The last enemy to be defeated is death itself. But death will be undone - as the dead are raised imperishable and we all get our upgrades.

Anyone excited for your human body 2.0? More like a trillion point oh. No more sickness. No more sadness. No more pain. We can’t even imagine it. But Jesus promises it!

**Promises from Jesus to Empower Obedience:**

1. **Eternal** Life: His return will be your resurrection
	* You have nothing to fear because Jesus is coming back **Soon**

“Yet a little while and the world will see me no more, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live.” John 14:18-19

***Whom shall I fear?*** What can mortal man do to me? Brothers and sisters we need not fear those who can kill the body but after that can do no more. Persecution is coming for us as it has already come for so many believers all over the world. But they cannot kill us - they can only send us home.

Jesus gave us so many passages like this in Scripture ***to encourage us and prepare us to face great suffering and fear.*** We should not be surprised when the world rejects us and opposes us - because that is how they treated Jesus. Should we expect different treatment than our Lord and Master?

What gets us through all the hardship and loss in this world is ***the promise of the next one***. Yes, right now we have the intercession of the Lord Jesus who hears and answers our prayers. Yes, we have the comforting presence of the Holy Spirit with us always and forever. And we also have the wonderful assurance that Jesus is coming back soon - and in that moment it will all have been worth it. Just to see Him. Just to be with Him.

So Christian - ***hold on a little longer***. Don’t lose heart. Keep believing. Keep trusting. Fix your eyes on Jesus. The pain will not last forever. But you will. Your new body is coming. Your Savior is bringing it - along with a whole new earth, united forever with His kingdom of heaven. It will all be worth it. One more promise to empower our obedience and endurance.

**Promises from Jesus to Empower Obedience:**

1. Loving **Union**: His revelation will show you the Father’s glory

“In that day you will know that I am in my Father and you in me, and I in you.” John 14:20

On that last day, when Jesus comes back, we will see Him face to face and everything will be clear. That is the Apocalypse - the Revelation. People think apocalypse means destruction and devastation, but it doesn’t. ***It means unveiling: revelation***. The Greek word for the book of Revelation is Apocalypse. They didn’t mess up the translation. The Great day of the Apocalypse will be the full and final revelation of King Jesus.

In that day **we will all know the full truth of God** - Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Jesus is one with the Father and we are one with Jesus, His Holy Spirit living in us.

1. Loving **Union**: His revelation will show you the Father’s glory
	* You can rejoice because you know God and are loved **in Christ**

“Whoever has my commands and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father and I will love him and manifest myself to him.” John 14:21

This is what Jesus just told Philip - “If you have seen me, you have seen the Father.” Jesus is the revelation of the Godhead in human form. He is the God-Man. He is the Word of God made flesh. To see Jesus is to see God. To know Jesus is to know God. To be united with Jesus is to be united with God.

***How can you be sure that you belong to the Lord?*** The fruit of a real relationship with Jesus is OBEDIENCE. You have the commands of Jesus and you DO THEM. You are not a fool who hears the teachings of Jesus and ignores them. You are the wise man who hears His words and puts them into practice.

***How can you be sure your children and grandchildren belong to the Lord?*** They keep the commands of Christ. By their FRUIT you will know them. Do they love God with all they are? Do they love the fellowship of believers? Do they love their neighbors as they love themselves. The primary mark of the follower of Jesus is LOVE.

***What if you have a loved one who is NOT following the commands of Christ?*** Was there a time that they DID love the Lord and walk with Him but you don’t see the fruit of it right now? Don’t be discouraged. Don’t lose heart. Remember where we started today: PRAY. Ask Jesus, according to His will, for His glory - ask for the Holy Spirit to draw your loved ones back to the Lord, back to obedience, back to the church.

And never stop reaching out. Never stop encouraging them to read the Bible and get to know Jesus again. Never stop sharing resources, books, podcasts, videos. Gently. Don’t be obnoxious. But don’t ever stop. It’s just too important.

Judas asked why Jesus did not manifest himself to the whole world right then.

1. Loving **Union**: His revelation will show you the Father’s glory
	* You can rejoice because you know God and are loved **in Christ**

“If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him and we will come to him and make our home with him.” John 14:23

Hear that word **ANYONE**. The invitation of Jesus stands open to ANYONE who will come to him in humble repentance and faith. Anyone without distinction. Jew, Gentile, male, female, slave, free, rich, poor. Anyone. But they have to come. They have to hear and believe and love and obey.

1. Loving **Union**: His revelation will show you the Father’s glory
	* You can rejoice because you know God and are loved **in Christ**

“Whoever does not love me does not keep my words. And the word that you hear is not mine but the Father’s who sent me.” John 14:24

***Jesus did what the Father told him to do.*** He received all the people the Father gave Him as His own. He trusted the Father’s plan and submitted to the Father’s will.

And that is our model - our example. Just as the Father sent the Son, ***so the Son has sent us to all the world***. We share the good news with everyone we can because we don’t know who will have ears to hear and who will be deaf and unresponsive. Sometimes people will be hard to the message for a while but then will suddenly soften. We don’t know.

But we pray. And we love. And we obey King Jesus. Because we belong to Him.

So here is our summary for today:

**Promises from Jesus to Empower Obedience:**

1. Answered **Prayer**: His power is available to accomplish His work
2. The Helper’s **Presence**: His Spirit will always be with you
3. **Eternal** Life: His return will be your resurrection
4. Loving **Union**: His revelation will show you the Father’s glory

As those who believe in Jesus, ***we WILL do the works He did***. In fact, we will do greater works because He is at the Father’s right hand interceding for us, and whatever we ask in His name He will do!

Because we love Jesus we will obey Him - we will keep His commands. And we will because His Holy Spirit lives in us, empowers us, guides us and helps us. We also have His comforting promise that He is coming back soon and we will rise to live with Him forever.

So we have nothing to fear because we belong to Jesus by faith. We have seen His glory - the glory of the one and only Son - who has come to us and made His home with us, as we learn to abide in Him.

The sad conclusion of the Maverick podcast is that after a few years of faithful witness and ministry, after many miracles and leading many people to believe in and follow Jesus, that Muslim background believer walked away. Bishara got overwhelmed. The pain and hardship were too much. The relentless opposition, the threats, the beatings.

But the story ends with hope that he will come back one day. And that’s the hope that I know many of you are holding onto for your loved ones.

***So let’s pray right now for the people*** we know who are not right now walking with Jesus. Maybe they did know Jesus years ago. Maybe they did believe and did love him. But it has been a while and you don’t see that fruit now.

Pray. Ask King Jesus to work in their hearts. Ask the Spirit of Truth to open their eyes. Ask The Holy Spirit to convict them of sin and righteousness and judgment. Believe in the God of miracles. Whatever you ask in Jesus’ name - for His glory, according to His will and surrendered to His timing, he promises to do.

Let’s pray.

2 minutes of quiet prayer.

Then I’ll close.