

John 14:11-14

“Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in Me; or at least believe on the evidence of the works themselves. I tell you the truth: Whoever believes in Me will do the works that I have been doing. And they will do greater works than these because I am going to the Father. And I will do whatever you ask in My Name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. You may ask me for anything in My Name and I will do it.”

About ten years ago I was in a meeting of about 20 church leaders and we had just read this passage. Someone remarked how wonderful these promises were. I said, “Why do you say they are wonderful?”

None of us here believe them, and I don’t know anyone who does.” The shock that my remark caused was palpable. All eyes turned to the leading minister for his rebuffal, but he did not meet their gaze. Neither he nor anyone else in that room could defend a claim to believe those promises. Somethings are just too hard to believe.

The thing is, we tend to sanitise the Gospels. We keep the nice bits and quickly pass over the awkward bits. Some parts are awkward because they are difficult to understand, some are awkward because they challenge our priorities, and some, like this passage, are awkward because we simply don’t know how to believe them.

“... at least believe on the evidence of the works themselves. I tell you the truth: Whoever believes in Me will do the works that I have been doing. And they will do greater works than these because I am going to the Father.”

I want to focus on just two aspects of this passage. First, the place of miracles in Jesus’ ministry and secondly the place of miracles in our ministry.

Throughout Jesus’ ministry, as in this passage, Jesus pointed to His miraculous works as a reason for people to believe. In fact He was taken by surprise when Nathaniel believed without seeing any miracles (Jn 1:50).

We need to recognise that the miracles were not performed to prove He was God’s Son, but to demonstrate that the Gospel He proclaimed was true. That is why miracles have continued to be part of the witness of the church after the ascension.

Jesus called his miracles “signs”. Signs are meant to be seen. Healing was part of Jesus *public* ministry. Yes, some healings took place in private, but mostly they were performed as a public witness to back up his preaching. We need to restore the biblical link between healing and preaching.

As far as Jesus was concerned, miracles were an essential part of proclaiming the Gospel. When he sent the 12 and then the 72 to proclaim the Gospel message he first gave them power and instructed them to heal the sick. And then, before he ascended to heaven, he

again gave power and commissioned the disciples to preach the gospel to the ends of the earth with healing and deliverance – and that is what they did. So we conclude that miracles were a vital and central part of Jesus’ proclamation of the Gospel, and they continued to be so in the early church.

That was part one of my sermon – the easy bit. The second part is the place of miracles in our ministry.

Jesus is here with us now. Do you truly believe that? I wonder what He makes of our attempts to proclaim the Gospel. Do you not think He must be astonished that we attempt to share the Gospel and lead people to faith in Him without miraculous signs to back our words? Jesus, the best preacher in the world did not preach without miraculous signs. Is it surprising that we have such a struggle to share our faith and fill our churches when all we offer is words and kindness?

Paul was fully persuaded of the centrality of the miraculous in presenting the Gospel.

“My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit’s power, so that your faith might not rest on human wisdom, but on God’s power.” (1 Cor 2:4-5)

So what can be done about it? It is entirely understandable, even reasonable, to conclude that we can do nothing about it. Jesus is not doing miracles here like He did in Galilee, so all we have is our words and our love. But this is not Jesus’ conclusion:

“I tell you the truth: Whoever believes in Me will do the works that I have been doing. And they will do greater works than these because I am going to the Father.”

If a great athlete or skilled magician said these words, we would simply discount them, saying, “I do not have your skills. I could never do what you do.” But these words were spoken by Jesus and similar words are recorded numerous times in all four Gospels. They are not given as aspirations for very holy professional Christians, they are given as promises to all believers, and it is clear that Jesus intends that we should both believe these promises and act boldly and confidently on them. In fact, if we really want to please God then we *must* believe and act on them.

“I tell you the truth: Whoever believes in Me will do the works that I have been doing. And they will do greater works than these because I am going to the Father. I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. ”

Jesus wants us to believe and act upon these promises so that the Father may be glorified. To do so pleases and glorifies God.

The only way we can ever hope to live out these promises is to make a start and then keep going, regardless of what results we see. John has been doing this for decades. I really

started trying to live out these promises 5 years ago. It is always challenging and I shrink back far more often than I act in faith, but as I have stepped out in faith I have seen God work countless miracles.

I have seen hundreds of wonderful healings since 2012 – and not all of them in Africa. Here in our communities I have seen dozens of healings; everything from aches and pains to broken bones, genetic diseases, sciatica, arthritis, disintegrated vertebrae, depression and cancer. In Africa I have seen cataracts instantly go, the deaf hear, the dumb speak and seriously mentally ill people be restored to normality. God can and does heal absolutely any kind of sickness. There is nothing God cannot do. And let me assure you, God is doing the most wonderful and amazing healings all round the world every day through ordinary believers who dare to believe. The question is not “what can God do?” It is not even “what will God do here and now?” The question God places before us is, “Will you believe and act upon my promises?” How God acts is His responsibility. Our responsibility is to believe:

“I tell you the truth: Whoever believes in Me will do the works that I have been doing. And they will do greater works than these because I am going to the Father.”

Jesus gave these promises to all believers, not just to a gifted few, and so we pray that many of you will let these promises take possession of your heart and that you will grow in boldness to offer healing to your friends and colleagues.

But it is the responsibility of leaders to lead and so we want to encourage you to tell others that they can find healing for their physical and mental sicknesses in Jesus. Invite them to church, or let John or any of the leadership team know and we will be glad to pray.

If the idea of offering healing in our churches troubles you, please come and talk to John.

If you want to grow in faith for healing do let us know and we will be glad to offer mentoring.

Stephen Dolley