

Sermon Series: "When Heaven Invades Earth"—Lord of Life Lutheran, Westfield, IN—4/22/2007

Title: "Doing Even Greater Things Than Jesus"

Text: John 14: 8-14

Intro.: Ills.: Billy Graham and Changed Flight Patterns

Theme: Jesus promise to us as his Church is that in his departure he would endow us with his Spirit who would move the Kingdom of God ahead in exponential fashion through the miracle of faith at work within us.

### ***What keeps us from 'doing even greater things than Jesus?'***

- Religious skepticism
  1. Philip says, "I will believe it if you can show me, once for all!" (vs. 8)
  2. *We live by faith, not by sight. 2 Cor. 5:7*
  3. Too often, we aren't living by faith but by sight and so often we never expect the miraculous to show up
    - a. Intervention in building programs, miraculous healing in response to prayer, restoration of broken relationships
    - b. "You do not have because you do not ask God." James 4:2
- Quantitative but not qualitative time with Jesus
  1. Jesus' response to Philip, "I have been with all of you for a long time. Don't you know me yet, Philip?" vs. 9
  2. We run through the motions of religion but we do not connect our "regular" life with our faith in Christ
- Seeing Jesus as nothing more than a religious figurine
  1. Jesus says, "Don't you believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? What I'm telling you doesn't come from me. The Father, who lives in me, does what he wants. Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and that the Father is in me. Otherwise, believe me because of the things I do. vs. 10-11
  2. **Ills.: Do we pack Jesus away with the Christmas manger sets and the Easter crosses and lilies**
- Dumbing down the definition of 'miracle' as some manipulated human endeavor
  1. We don't expect to see and do the miraculous, when we don't see Jesus able to do things beyond our human effort
    - a. Weirded out by something which takes us out of our comfort zone
    - b. Being careful not to buy into the Americanized, upper-middle class malaise of the faith
  2. Trivial/temporary religious displays of greater worth than God's miracle of saving faith passed to others through us
    - a. So caught up in our agenda that we fail to dwell in the Father's will as Jesus did (vs. 9b)
    - b. **Ills.: Prayer doesn't change God, it changes me! C. S. Lewis**

### ***The promise, purpose, and power to 'do even greater things than Jesus'***

- Knowing Jesus **Promise**
  1. Jesus promised that we would do the same things he did (vs. 12a)
    - a. Save souls, heal bodies, preach the good news, crush Satan
    - b. *The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. Rom 16:20*
    - c. "Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are recorded in heaven." Luke 10:20
  2. Jesus promised that we would do even greater things than he did (vs. 12b)
    - a. **Ills.: God's Greatness through Us**
  3. Jesus' promised his indwelling, powerful Spirit to us
    - a. *And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever-- the Spirit of truth . . . On that day you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you. John 14:16-20*
- Focused on doing Jesus' **Purpose**
  1. **Ills.: Larry Crabb on his confusion about prayer**
  2. Jesus' purpose behind his promise is to glorify the Father through our actions as he always did with his
  3. The reason why answers and displays of Christ's power within us often curiously go a different direction than ours

- Letting go of the end result so that we experience Christ's *Power* in us and through us
  1. Being living streams of the saving good news in Jesus
    - a. *Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him." John 7:38*
  2. Doing God-ordained actions set out for you from eternity
    - a. We are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. Eph 2:10
  3. Doing the miraculous—as defined by God—which will astound your neighbor and give you a platform of witness
    - a. *"No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him" 1 Cor. 2: 9*

### **Billy Graham and Changed Flight Patterns**

I remember the first time my older son Jim and I worked as counselors with the Billy Graham Crusade. It was at Shea Stadium in New York. The airplanes from La Guardia Airport flew over the stadium, dozens by the hour. On the opening night of training, the Reverend Billy Graham started talking with us from the podium as the engines roared overhead. He paused, glanced up and quietly said, "We'll have to do something about this noise. This just won't do." He bowed his head and said a simple prayer to the effect: "Lord, we ask you to shift the wind and send these planes in another direction. Thank You. Amen." Well, we were believers, but this was a tall order. We weren't sure what, if anything, to expect. But God did it—he answered our prayers in a wondrous way! The morning newspaper reported that the winds had changed during the night, and the airplanes over Shea Stadium had to be routed another way. For several days thereafter, thousands of people came to Christ under this anointed leader's preaching. At the conclusion of the crusade, the winds reverted to their normal flow, and the airplanes returned to their normal flight patterns. **Bobbie Byerly, Miracles Happen When Women Pray (Regal, 2002, p. 20)**

### **"Shadowlands": Prayer Changes Us**

Shadowlands portrays the joy and pain of the relationship between C. S. Lewis and American writer Joy Gresham. A growing friendship led to a marriage of convenience. The Oxford professor wed the single mother in a secret, civil ceremony so that Joy could gain English citizenship. Eventually it was discovered that Joy had terminal cancer, and Lewis realized his love for her. Joy's cancer went into temporary remission, and for a season she and Lewis experienced the depth of committed Christian love. During this time, an Anglican priest talked with Lewis about prayer. In their conversation, we hear a mature description of how prayer works. The Priest said, "I know how hard you've been praying. And now God is answering your prayer." Lewis responded, "That's not why I pray, Harry. I pray because I can't help myself. I pray because I'm helpless. I pray. I pray because the need flows out of me all the time waking and sleeping. It doesn't change God, it changes me."

**Elapsed time: From the opening credit, 01:29:35 to 01:30:15 Content: Rated PG Shadowlands, (Savoy Pictures, 1993) written by William Nicholson, directed by Richard Attenborough; submitted by Greg Asimakopoulos and Doug Scott, Naperville, Illinois**

### **God's Greatness through Us**

Donald Grey Barnhouse writes: Aboard a United States submarine in the waters of the Pacific, a sailor was stricken with acute appendicitis. The nearest surgeon was thousands of miles away. Pharmacist Mate Wheller Lipes watched the seaman's temperature rise to 106 degrees. His only hope was an operation. Said Lipes: "I have watched doctors do it. I think I could. What do you say?" The sailor consented. In the wardroom, about the size of a Pullman drawing room, the patient was stretched out on a table beneath a floodlight. The mate and assisting officers, dressed in reversed pajama tops, masked their faces with gauze. The crew stood by the diving planes to keep the ship steady; the cook boiled water for sterilizing. A tea strainer served as an antiseptic cone. A broken-handled scalpel was the operating instrument. Alcohol drained from the torpedoes was the antiseptic. Bent tablespoons served to keep the muscles open. After cutting through layers of the muscle, the mate took twenty minutes to find the appendix. Two hours and a half later, the last catgut stitch was sewed, just as the last drop of ether gave out. Thirteen days later, the patient was back at work. Admittedly this was a much more magnificent

feat than if trained surgeons in a fully equipped operating room of a modern hospital had performed it. Study this analogy and you will know the real meaning of Christ's words: "Greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father." For Christ, perfect God, to work directly on a lost soul to quicken and bring out of death and into life is great, but for him to do the same thing through us is a greater work. **Let Me Illustrate: Stories, Anecdotes, Illustrations (Revell, 1967), pp. 358-59; submitted by Kevin Miller, Wheaton, Illinois**

### **Larry Crabb and His Confusion on Prayer**

When I was 10, I first heard Matthew 21:22, where Jesus, who never lies, said, "If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer." It was the "whatever" model of prayer—believe, ask for whatever you want, and it's yours. I remember running outside, standing on our driveway, closing my eyes real tight, and praying: God, I want to fly like Superman. And I believe you can do it. So I'll jump, and you take it from there. I jumped four times—and each time landed half a second later and half a foot farther down the driveway. I had believed and I had asked, just like Jesus said. But I didn't receive. Thus began my 50-year journey of confusion about prayer. **Larry Crabb, "Great Expectations," Pray! magazine (November/December 2006), p. 34**

### **John 14:8-14**

<sup>8</sup>Philip said to Jesus, "Lord, show us the Father, and that will satisfy us." <sup>9</sup>Jesus replied, "I have been with all of you for a long time. Don't you know me yet, Philip? The person who has seen me has seen the Father. So how can you say, 'Show us the Father'?" <sup>10</sup>Don't you believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? What I'm telling you doesn't come from me. The Father, who lives in me, does what he wants. <sup>11</sup>Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and that the Father is in me. Otherwise, believe me because of the things I do. <sup>12</sup>"I can guarantee this truth: Those who believe in me will do the things that I am doing. They will do even greater things because I am going to the Father. <sup>13</sup>I will do anything you ask the Father in my name so that the Father will be given glory because of the Son. <sup>14</sup>If you ask me to do something, I will do it. [GW]