Congregation of the Lord Jesus Christ,

As we have been reminded many times in this sermon series, John tells us why he wrote his Gospel in 20:31. He says that he wrote these things “*so that [we] may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing [we] may have life in His name*.” And those words really are the perfect summary of John 14. As you know, Jesus is preparing His disciples for His approaching death and for the fact that He will no longer be with them as He has been these past few years. And the only thing that will carry them through this time is believing that He is the Christ, the Son of God, and having life in His name.

* So the first 11 verses of this chapter focused on how His leaving would reveal Him as the Christ, the Son of God. So He called on the disciples to believe in Him, as they believed in God. He told them that He is the way, the truth, and the life, and that no one comes to the Father except through Him. So that’s the “*believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God*” part. That was our main point last Sunday – faith in Jesus Christ is our only hope for salvation.
* But the rest of ch. 14 is about the “*that by believing you may have life in His name*” part. Jesus wanted the disciples to know that His leaving would make for a much better relationship with Him than the physical one they had enjoyed these past few years. He wanted them to know that His rising from the dead and being glorified as the ascended Son of God would give them life in His name. And yes, that includes eternal life in heaven, as vv1-3 explained, but it is also about the most wonderful life that a person can live while on earth!

So today we want to think about **the wonderful life that is life in Jesus’ name**. And there are seven things that Jesus says about life in His name in this passage and we will only have time to consider the first two today.

But before we do that, there is one theological issue that arises in this passage that I quickly want to address: It arises from the words at the end of v28 where Jesus says, “***For the Father is greater than I***.” You see, this is one of those verses that JWs or others who deny Jesus’ equality with God turn to as proof of their claims. See! they say, Jesus said that the Father is “greater” than He is. So He cannot be equally God with the Father.

1. But we have already heard Jesus say, “*I and the Father are one*” in **10:30**. In **John 5:18**, the Jewish leaders, having heard Jesus speak about Himself, were trying to kill Him, because “*He was even calling God His own Father, making Himself equal with God*.” They knew what Jesus was claiming. And later on in John, Thomas will proclaim Jesus to be his God and Jesus accepts Thomas’s profession of faith. So Jesus is one with and equal in majesty with the Father.
2. What He says here in v28 is not about His essential being but about His time on earth as a human being. In **Philippians 2**, we are told that Jesus, “*though He was [God in heaven], did not count equality with God a thing to [hold on] to, but made Himself nothing … being born in the likeness of men*.” Jesus voluntarily gave up the position of majesty that He shared with the Father in heaven to live on earth as a lowly human being, where He needed to have His nappy changed and be fed, and where He was spat on and crucified. It is His time as a human being, with all of its limitations, that He is referring to when He describes the Father as “*greater than He is.*”
3. But having returned to heaven Jesus once again enjoys equality with the Father in every respect. So this verse does not prove that Jesus is unequal with God.
4. Well, let’s return now to our main theme, which is **the wonderful life that is life in Jesus’ name**. And the first part of this wonderful life is described in v12 where Jesus says, “*Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father*.” So life in Jesus’ name means that **we do the works that He did *and even greater ones***!
   1. Now, if I ask you, What works did Jesus do while He was on earth? you would probably think of Him turning water into wine, healing the blind, and raising Lazarus from the dead, etc. In other words, His **miracles**. Right? And so, we might start thinking about the miracles of the Apostles as the ‘greater works’ that Jesus was talking about? After all, there were twelve of them and only one of Him and the Book of Acts speaks about many wonderful miracles performed by the Apostles. But notice that Jesus speaks about greater works than He did being done by “*whoever believes in [Him]*.” And in the 2000 years since Jesus was on earth, many believers have not fed 5000 or walked on water, etc! So how are we to understand this promise of Jesus?
      1. Well, the Greek word translated as “**works**” is not the word usually used to describe the miracles of Jesus. It is the more general word that is rightly translated as “works.” In **John 4:34**, Jesus said, “*My food is to do the will of Him who sent me and to accomplish His work*.” And in the first 11 verses of ch. 14, Jesus has explained that He came to bring people to the Father. So, obedience to the Father and bringing people to the Father was the chief work of Jesus (repeat). For a short time, the Apostles did perform wonderful miracles, but what is chiefly in view here, for all believers, is obeying God’s commands and the work of missions/evangelism.
      2. Think, for example, about the **Great Commission**. Before He ascended to heaven, Jesus said to His disciples, “*Go therefore and make disciples of all nations*.” And that’s what the Book of Acts is all about; the missions/evangelism work of the Apostles. And while very few people responded to Jesus’ preaching by believing in Him as Saviour and Lord, many people came to faith through the preaching of the Apostles. For example, the result of Peter’s very first sermon in Acts 2 was that “*there were added that day about three thousand souls*.” Three thousand people now professed Jesus as their Saviour and Lord! And still today, millions are coming to faith in Christ through missions/evangelism. This is what Jesus meant by ‘greater work.’
      3. But I only gave you the first part of the Great Commission a moment ago. The full commission is “*Go therefore and make disciples of all nations*, *baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you*.” So those 3000 converts had to be taught to obey all the commandments of God.
      4. And it is the same today – those that come to know Jesus as Saviour and Lord must then learn to obey all God’s commands.
      5. Look at what Jesus says in v15 – “*If you love me, you will keep my commandments*,” in v21, “*Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me*, and in v23, “*If anyone loves me, he will keep my word*.” Later on in his **First Epistle**, John said, “*Whoever keeps [God’s] word, in him truly the love of God is perfected*.” Does having the love of God perfected in you sound like a really good thing? Then strive to obey all His commandments.
      6. The best life, the joyful life, the life with purpose and meaning, is the life of obeying God’s commands. There is a common idea, sometimes even found among professing Christians, sadly, that the commands of God take the fun and joy out of life. But nothing could be further from the truth.
         1. So boys and girls, the best life for you is the life of obeying your parents in the Lord. Is obeying your parents something you work hard to do?
         2. Young people, adults, the best life for you is the life of submission to authorities in the church and in the world, of working hard and forgiving others and avoiding sinful anger, of sexual purity, etc. Are these things you strive to do?
         3. Husbands and wives, the best life for you is the life of love and submission and continued commitment to each other. Do you pray for strength to do this?
   2. So, by way of summary, to do the works that Jesus did is to strive to obey all God’s commands and to share the gospel with others. That is the first part of the wonderful life that is life in Jesus’ name.
5. But the second part of the wonderful life that is life in Jesus’ name is the promise of vv13-14 that **our prayers will be answered**. Jesus said, “*Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it*.”
   1. Jesus’ disciples had enjoyed a very intimate communion or conversation with Him these last three years. But now He was leaving them. He wanted them to know, though, that His leaving did not mean the end of communion with Him but a change in how they communed. He would be in heaven and they would be on earth, but prayer would remove any distance between them. And these words are applicable for you and me today also as followers of Jesus. We too can talk to God anytime, anywhere, in prayer. For that’s what prayer is – talking to God!
   2. But notice two things about Jesus’ promise:
      1. Notice, first, the **scope** of the promise – “*Whatever you ask*” and “*ask me anything*” and I will do it. And you cannot get a wider scope than whatever and anything!
         1. Now, there are some who say that we won’t always get what we ask for but that just the act of praying is very good for us. They don’t want us to get hung up on the words “whatever” and “anything,” but to know that even if we don’t get what we ask for, we will get something just as good, whatever that might be.
         2. Well, I like the response of **James Montgomery Boice** in his commentary on these verses. He says,

*It is no doubt true that that many of us do not get what we pray for; for we pray foolishly and selfishly, and God often does not grant what we ask. It is good that He does not, for we would bring many troubles on ourselves (and miss out on many wonderful things - AH) if all our requests were granted. At the same time, however, we have to say that this view is not the doctrine of prayer … taught here. The doctrine of prayer [taught here] … is that there are certain people who can pray in a certain way … who will get … the very thing that they ask for*. (repeat underlined section)

* + 1. And you are probably thinking to yourself, really!? How can I be one of those people who get exactly what they ask for? Well, the answer from the quote I just gave you is that the promise is for those who “pray in a certain way.” And Jesus says that in this promise when He says, “*Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son … If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it*.” So secondly, we have to note that the scope of the promise is tied to the **method** of prayer, And the method of prayer is to pray “***in Jesus’ name***”and “***that the Father may be glorified in the Son***.” It is those who pray in this way who will get whatever they ask for.
       1. You see, there are many people who really pray in their own name. Let me explain what I mean. Perhaps a loved one is ill and they really want them to get better. So they start reading the Bible every day and they go to Bible study even and they get serious about tithing and they pray repeatedly and for a long time. And they remind God that they taught Sunday school for 18 years! Do you see what they are doing? They are trying to put God under obligation to heal their loved one; they are saying, Lord, look at what I have done what I am doing, you owe me! They are, in effect, praying in their own name. But God owes us nothing. Even if we could offer Him a perfect life, it would just be what we owe Him!
       2. But Jesus says it is only those who pray *in Jesus’ name* who will get whatever they ask for. And that does not just mean saying “in Jesus’ name” at the end of your prayers, as though that were the magic formula that then placed God under obligation to give us whatever we ask for. No, to pray in Jesus’ name means:
* Knowing Jesus as your Saviour and Lord – this promise is only for Christians!
* And in view of what we just said about the danger of praying in our own name, to pray in Jesus’ name is to pray on the basis of Christ’s merit, not any supposed merit of our own.
* And thirdly, to pray in the name of Jesus is to pray as we seek to be like Him by striving to obey God’s commands, as vv15&21&23 make clear.
  + - 1. But not only must we pray in Jesus’ name, we must also pray “*that the Father may be glorified in the Son*.”
         1. You see, we often think about prayer as what we want from God. But surely our chief thought in prayer should be what God wants from us! And He wants us to glorify Him!
         2. The Apostle Paul once thought that being healed of his thorn in the flesh would be what brought most glory to God. But God’s reply was that His grace was sufficient for Paul. At that time in Paul’s life, God could do greater things through a ‘weak’ Paul than He could through a ‘strong’ Paul; it was Paul *with the thorn in the flesh* that most glorified God.
         3. And this may be the case with you also, whether that be in relation to an illness or injury that you or a loved one are suffering from. It may be that a sick or injured or disabled you most glorifies God. This was the difficult lesson that *Joni Erickson-Tada* had to learn.
         4. And remember that there was even a time when Jesus prayed that the cup of suffering might be taken from Him. But it was His cruel death on the cross that brought glory to the Father and salvation to you and me. And that is why Jesus also prayed, “*Not my will be done, but yours*.”
         5. And this is why John says in **1 John 5:14-15**, “A*nd this is the confidence that we have toward Him, that if we ask anything according to His will He hears us. And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests that we have asked of Him*.”
         6. When sorrow and trouble comes, the world panics. It has no answer in the face of disappointment and no hope in death. But we know that God will turn to our good whatever adversity He brings us in this sad world. And we know that He will do this because He is our loving Father in heaven. And we have the privilege of coming to Him in prayer in order that our will might increasingly be conformed to His will and that others might therefore be led to glorify the Father through our testimony.
    1. So, the prayer of those who truly believe that Jesus is their Saviour and Lord, who pray on the basis of Christ’s merit alone, who are striving to obey their Father in heaven, who want above anything else that the Father will be glorified, will get whatever they ask for. And praying like this is the second part of the wonderful life that is life in Jesus’ name!

Well, I hope this has whetted your appetite for more of the things that make up the wonderful life that is life in Jesus’ name! Praise God for putting us together in a congregation where so many share the gospel with others and strive to obey all God’s commands and pray in Jesus’ name. But may He cause us all to grow in these things and may He bring new disciples of Jesus to enjoy this wonderful life with us. Amen