**Series: What Jesus Would Say**

*VBC*

*Pastor John Johnson*

*John 14:8-21*

*October 26-27, 2013*

**“The Difference Prayer Makes”**

Last week—we looked at a conversation Jesus had with His disciples in the Upper Room

-specifically Thomas—and what Jesus said in 14:6 is one of the most radical statements in John

-I like how Erwin McManus of Mosaic church put it—*play video*

-the “way” was right in front of Thomas—and he missed it

-now the conversation shifts to Philip—who is a lot like Thomas

-skeptical, analytical, pessimistic, reluctant, unsure, and oblivious—*like some of us*[[1]](#endnote-1)

-Thomas wanted *Jesus to show him the way*

-Philip wanted *Jesus to show him God—read verse 8*

-Philip is important to the story

-in John—he was the only disciple Jesus explicitly called

-he was the first one Jesus said “Follow Me”—1:43

-when the crowd needed food—it was Philip Jesus turned to and asked—“*So what are we going to do Philip? Where will we buy bread*?”—6:5

-Jesus invested in Philip—tested Philip at times

*-“Should we be overwhelmed by the numbers, by the circumstances—or do you think the odds are irrelevant, that feeding 5000 is no harder for Me than changing water into wine or healing paralytics—can I do whatever is in My will”?*

-Philip was uncertain—and still is

-he wants greater certainty—a personal encounter with God

-Moses made a similar request in the wilderness—and God gave him the trailing edge of the back of His glory (Exodus 33)

*-and maybe some of us do here as well—we want a first-hand experience—a greater sense of His reality—“it will be enough!”*

-so what is getting in the way?

-Jesus tells Philip in the following verses

-it is the veil of unbelief—and unless it is removed—two things can happen—

1. WE CAN MISS THE PRESENCE OF GOD BEFORE US

-and this is what was happening to Philip—*read 9-11*

-Philip’s unbelief blinded him—he could not see that Jesus was no less than God in the flesh

-that He and the Father were one in essence

-that Jesus had been showing the disciples the face of God, the revelation of the Father’s presence, His will, His words, His works, His power, and His glory for three years

-Philip missed what Jesus had just said before—*“The one who sees Me—sees the One who sent Me”—12:45*

-Moses only got a drive by—Philip had a front row seat

-but Philip’s vision was obscured by his UNBELIEF

-missing what was in front of him—just as we do

-we say—if only there were a closer encounter—not realizing—not believing that God is revealing Himself

-day to day God speaks forth through creation—Psalm 19—*but will we pay attention?*

-the table of communion opens up an experience of intimacy with God—I Cor 10—*but do we miss it?*

-the Word is God’s means of penetrating and speaking-Hebrews 4:12—*but* *are we taking the time to let it enter?*

-worship is a place God occasionally makes His presence known—such that even the unbelieving will notice—I Corinthians 14:25—*but will we?*

*-unless there is faith—we may like Jacob find ourselves saying—“Surely the Lord is in this place and I did not know it”*

-we might be as obtuse as Philip

But Jesus wants Philip to know a lack of believing can lead to something just as damaging

1. WE CAN MISS THE POWER OF GOD IN US—*read verses 12-14*

-Philip was not only blind to the presence of God *before him*

-he was missing the potential power of God *within him*

-the double amen—the “I assure you” are used whenever Jesus is about to say something radical, earth shaking

*-and these words are!*

*A. The one believing has the CAPACITY TO ACCOMPLISH THE SAME THINGS JESUS ACCOMPLISHED—verse 12*

-live out the same power Jesus lived—live in the same epicenter of God’s activity

-how can that be—what was Jesus telling Philip—telling us?

-if you take Jesus seriously—step out in faith—

1. We can live out the SAME COURAGE that drove Him to cleanse the temple—stand for righteousness, call for justice, confront the darkness, boldly speak to a world that stood against Him

2. Have the same INDIFFERENCE to anything but the will of the Father—no longer bound by expectations of others

3. Have the same passion to CROSS BARRIERS—reaching out to the marginalized and loving on people

4. Be the same INSTRUMENT OF HEALING for God to do whatever He chooses to do through us

5. Carry out the same work of SPIRITUAL RENEWAL

*-for this was the work Jesus was doing—*

-awakening people to true spirituality—authentic faith

-showing people what it means to have a heart for God

6. Do the same work of RECONCILIATION

-building community—removing alienation—extending grace—ministering forgiveness

-with faith—this is possible—and we might get this

-but then Jesus takes Philip (and us) to another level—

*B. The one believing has the POTENTIAL TO ACCOMPLISH MORE THAN JESUS ACCOMPLISHED*

-what does this mean?

-is Jesus speaking to something that is mere quantitative—“more things” just because there are wider fields and more of us?

-or does it imply things more spectacular?

-hard to imagine things more impressive than healing the lame, raising the dead, walking on water, and feeding 5000

*-how can this be?*

Jesus tells us in verse 12—“*because I am go to the Father*”

-meaning possibilities will become realities

*-His ascension begins a radical new order—HOW??*

1. Jesus is no longer limited by His incarnation—His physical body

-He is now with us in a more transformative and interior way

-He is in us (Col 1:27) and amongst us when we gather (I Cor 5:4)

-we no longer go to a temple—we are the temple of God

*-“The ascension does not mean the absence of Christ so much as it means the presence of Christ in a new way.”—Meditation and Communion with God, Davis*

2. Jesus’ authority is now manifest

-having disarmed the rulers of darkness

-He now sits on high—ruling invisibly over empires and nations

-God has placed all things under His feet (Eph 1:20ff)

-and this kingdom is more extensive in its global outreach and more intensive in its redemptive power than any earthly expire in history

*-we just don’t readily see it because it claims hearts, not lands[[2]](#endnote-2)*

3. Jesus’ entrance has released the power of the Spirit

-“Unless I go away, the Spirit will not come—16:7

-who now empowers our lives by taking up residence

4. Jesus has created an access

-heaven is open 24/7

5. Jesus lives to make intercession

-that is—throughout this current age—Jesus spends His time pleading our cause, securing for us the benefits of His death—Heb 7:25

-the language tells us He is our permanent intercessor—our ongoing Advocate

*IN SUM—HIS LIFE, DEATH, RESURRECTION, AND ASCENSION TO THE FATHER—AND HIS SENDING OF THE SPIRIT RELEASES PREVIOUSLY UNRELEASED POWER*

-the sort that lead to lives with amazing potential

-the only thing getting in the way is unbelief

-it all comes down to asking—verse 13

*-asking that has the potential to lay hold of and release God’s willingness and ability to act*

-Jesus wants His disciples to know this—because He underscores this promise numerous times in the upper room—

*-“If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do it”—14:13*

*-“If you remain in Me and My words in you, ask whatever you want and it will be done for you”—15:7*

*-“Whatever you ask the Father in My name, He will give you”—15:16*

*-“Anything you ask the Father in My name, He will give you”—16:23*

-He almost sounds as if He is saying “Try Me”

-go ahead—tell God exactly what you want regardless of how impossible it sounds

-make my kids a spiritual success

-change the heart of my parents

-raise up peacekeepers in Syria

-heal this body of its disease

-eliminate our debt

-it not—what is the point of prayer?

-if we cannot come to God straight out—*how can we expect God to do greater things?*

-the Bible is full of prayers of women asking for children, soldiers asking for victories, farmers asking for rain

-Paul prayed for a safe journey, for healing—as did James

-knowing that a closed door means God is opening another gate

-nonetheless—the “whatever” and “anything” do have some *parameters—*

1. They must be sent in the name of the ascended Jesus

-prayers that shift away from trying to get God to do what we ask

-but prayers that fulfill God’s intentions and desires—that pray *in His name, align with His authority*

2. Prayers that aim for His glory

-prayers that ask God to do what only He can do in order that He might receive the praise, the fame

CONCLUSION

This passage forces us to ask—

1. Am I missing God—who just may be right in front of me?
2. Am I living less than a full life—accomplishing the much smaller works—because of unbelief?
3. Do I really believe in prayer?

-what is a prayer that is waiting for me to pray?

-that just might lay hold of and release God’s willingness and ability to act—that accomplishes the greater things?

-somewhere Philip got it

-Philip believed—he emerges in Acts 8, crossing barriers, in Samaria, preaching to Ethiopian eunuchs

-a man on a mission—constantly available to the Spirit

-will we?

1. MacArthur, Twelve Ordinary men, 133 [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Micahel Horton, Christian Faith, 524 [↑](#endnote-ref-2)