The Unreasonable Jesus - Part Two

# Whatever???

# (John 14:13-14)

Welcome to Christ’s Community Church. Thank you for joining us as we’re continuing with part two of our series entitled “The Unreasonable Jesus”. We’re exploring some of the familiar, yet challenging, and even unreasonable sayings of Jesus that the Bible records. It’s my prayer that as we study these difficult words of Jesus that together we’ll become the Church he’s called us to be and you’ll see the full potential of faith blossoming in your life.

I’ve been praying that as we look at these unreasonable sayings of Jesus, that we’ll not only refine our faith, but that our faith would grow, that it would multiply, and that we would put our faith into action in a way that would be pleasing God. You see, it’s those things that we often see as unreasonable in the natural, where if we look from the perspective of faith, that we’ll begin to experience the supernatural in our lives. And so, I want to challenge you today to begin to expect that God would help you, that he’ll come alongside of you, that he’ll protect you, that he’ll use you, and that he’ll work through you in spite of what you’ve experienced in the past. You see, Jesus reminded us that with man there are things that are impossible but it’s not so with God, he said,

“All things are possible with God” (Mark 10:27).

And as we read the Gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, we read a lot about miracles and we see what a little faith can do. It’s those things that we often perceive as being unreasonable or impossible, and yet that’s exactly where God begins to move in a supernatural way that would bring glory to his name. As we flip through the pages of Scripture, in Matthew chapter 9, he tells a very brief story about two blind men who were taught a lesson about faith. Verse 27 tells us,

“As Jesus went on from there, two blind men followed him, calling out, "Have mercy on us, Son of David!" When he had gone indoors, the blind men came to him, and he asked them, "Do you believe that I am able to do this?" "Yes, Lord," they replied. Then he touched their eyes and said, "According to your faith will it be done to you" and their sight was restored..." (Matthew 9:27-30).

These two blind men find themselves in a place of need, their physical circumstances have created a vacuum in their life, it was a problem that they couldn’t solve for themselves, they were in need of a miracle, and it was at that point of need that they seized the opportunity to start living by faith.

It’s the same for many of you today, you have a vacuum in your life, you have a need that hasn’t been met, but you’re helpless to do anything about it. And so, you need God to intervene; you need God’s help, and yet as you’re leaning in, you’re hesitant, you’re cautious, because at some point you asked God to do something that you knew he could do, you thought he would, but he didn’t. And so, like many of us it shook your faith, because Jesus said, “Whatever you ask.” It left you wondering, “Didn’t I have that little mustard seed of faith?” You know, “Why didn’t God answer my prayer?”

Today as we look at “The Unreasonable Jesus” we’re going to consider that question, we’re just going to scratch the surface, but we’re going to try to understand better an incredible statement by Jesus. It’s a passage of Scripture that’s found in John’s gospel that contains what seems to be an amazingly unbelievable promise from Jesus. Kind of like a mythological genie in a bottle that gives you three wishes and the passage I’m talking about is from chapter 14 where Jesus said,

“I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father. You may ask me for anything in my name and I will do it” (John 14:13-14).

Now, some of you might say that’s unreasonable, because there was a time when you had a need, you asked in Jesus name, you knew that God could do it, but he didn’t do it. And so, obviously, this verse doesn’t work, or maybe, just maybe that’s not really what Jesus was saying. You know, maybe we’ve twisted the application and we just don’t understand. And so, what I want to do is give you the simplified version of a class I took many years ago called “Principles of Biblical Interpretation.”

Many people have given up on prayer, because they prayed without results, and then they say, “Prayer doesn’t work.” But I’d be willing to go out on a limb and say that the problems we have in prayer are most often user related. It’s not necessarily the fault of God but the fault is in you and me, because we’re just not doing it right.

Today, as we consider the words of Jesus, “I will do whatever you ask in my name” (John 14:13). I want to share with you three simple principles to find the real meaning of a passage of Scripture. You see, we want to be like the Bereans in Acts chapter 17 who received the message with great eagerness and “examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true” (Acts 17:11).

And so, number one, we need to look at the context of a passage of Scripture. You see, faith is important, but the object of our faith is equally important. And so, we need to understand the context, not just what the verse says, but what is coming before and after the verse, who wrote the verse, to whom it was written, and what is the theme of the passage. And so, we want to understand and embrace the context.

Number two, is interpretation, because the best way to understand, the best way to interpret the meaning of the Bible, is with the Bible. And so, we’re going to look at what other verses say about that similar topic and we’re going to increase our understanding through the consistency of the 66 different books contained within the Bible as we interpret Scripture with Scripture.

And then, number three, most importantly, we’re going to apply what we’ve learned, because the Bible is God’s handbook, God’s instructions on how to live. And so, what we want to do today as we consider these words of Jesus; is that we want to understand the context, to interpret the Bible with the Bible, and then learn to make application of it to our lives.

Now, as we look at John’s gospel, he’s writing to prove that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. In this 14th chapter, the main theme is not about prayer, but about the preparations that Jesus is making for you and I. And so, with that understanding we can study the Scripture from the perspective that we’re not the main character in the text but that God is the main character. And when Jesus says, “I will do whatever you ask in my name” (John 14:13) we can understand that the reason God answers prayers is not so that our life would be better, that we’d have the bigger house, the new car and the vacation we’ve always dreamed of. But the real reason God answers prayers is so that the Father may be glorified because he’s the main subject of the Bible and you and I were created to glorify him. And so, number one, we need to pray with the right motives.

## 1. With the Right Motives

And so, we can recognize that there’s a much different purpose for our prayers than what you may have thought. In fact, when I’ve analyzed my prayers that aren’t working, I’ve got to admit that the majority of them are me-centered prayers. You know, “God, make my life easier, make it better, give me more stuff, and on and on.” And so, if the only beneficiary of your prayers is you then you’re sabotaging your prayer life because your motives matter to God.

In fact, James, the half-brother of Jesus tells us,

“When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures” (James 4:3).

And in the Bible, we see this example in the Pharisees, because their motivation for praying was basically to be seen and heard by people. Their prayers weren’t really focused on God, but they were addressed toward God. It was more of a show, demonstrating how well they prayed, how long they prayed, or that they used the right verbiage. In Luke chapter 18, Jesus said,

“The Pharisee stood up and prayed about himself: ‘God, I thank you that I’m not like other men… I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get” (Luke 18:11-12).

But Jesus said, “I tell you, everyone who exalts himself will be humbled.” And I’m hoping that some of you would recognize that your unanswered prayer was because you prayed with selfish motives. You see, our motives really matter to God and that’s why he said, “When you ask, you don’t receive, because you ask with the wrong motives. In fact, the Bible says in Proverbs,

“All a man's ways seem innocent to him, but motives are weighed by the Lord” (Proverbs 16:2).

And so, if you’re feeling like your prayers are falling on deaf ears, would you just pause and ask yourself, "Am I praying only to satisfy myself, ignoring the needs of others, and how would my answered prayer glorify God?” You see, before we pray, we should consider if God answered that prayer...

• Would it bring glory to him?

• Would it advance his kingdom?

• Would it help other people?

• Would it help me to grow spiritually?

A sincere God honoring biblical prayer would accomplish those four things.

Augustine once said that the purpose of prayer is not that God should be instructed, but that through prayer we should be constructed. In other words, through our prayers we should be formed, becoming more like his Son Jesus Christ. Through our prayers we should see things changing and the first change is our hearts, our attitudes, and our Christ-likeness. But what if we’re not seeing God changing things the way we think he should? Well, when Jesus said “I’ll do whatever you ask in my name” he was speaking of authority, but number two, he was also saying that you’re praying according to his will.

## 2. According to His Will

Now, many of you, if you know the Word of God, when you pray, somewhere in the back of your mind you’re praying through the lens of those stories in the Bible like Joshua who prayed that the sun would stand still and it did for a day. Or Daniel in the lion’s den, with hungry lions everywhere, and yet when he prayed, they went on a starvation diet. Or even Jonah who got thrown into the ocean because he rebelling against God and yet when he prays God sends a giant fish to swallow him up and carry him safely to shore. And so, we pray through the lens of biblical testimony, but its not nearly as impressive. In fact, the reality is that for many of you, you've prayed for things much bigger than a football game, you might have even prayed for someone to be healed of a life-threatening disease, but here’s what we need to understand, prayer isn’t intended to be a magic formula that you use to get what you want.

We’re commanded to pray because it’s the process of communication with God through which we learn his will. As we’re learning his will, we’re learning what we need to change about ourselves, what we need to do on behalf of others, and how to further the ministry of Jesus Christ. The Bible tells us that Elijah was a person just like each of us and yet,

“Elijah was a man just like us. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years. Again, he prayed, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth produced its crops” (James 5:17-18).

Now, if you understand the context, you also understand that God told Elijah to pray that it wouldn’t rain and later he also told him to pray for rain at the appointed time. And so, Elijah was praying according to the will of God, to further the ministry of the kingdom of God. And so, as we learn to pray according to God’s will, like Elijah we’ll then be able to pray with confidence.

The apostle John tells us this in his first letter, he says,

“This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us — whatever we ask — we know that we have what we asked of him” (1 John 5:14-15).

And so, this is a powerful passage of Scripture, but it doesn’t mean that you name it and claim it, or blab it and grab it, because the qualifier is “according to his will”. God’s will matters, and that’s why as we’re seeking him, coming to him in prayer, that we’re living our lives in such a way that honors him. This is important, because if you take seriously the call to pray and intercede on behalf of others; more than anything else you must have an honest relationship with God through his Son. This is what the Bible tells us in John chapter 9, verse 31,

“We know that God does not listen to sinners. He listens to the godly man who does his will” (John 9:31).

You need to have a serious committed relationship with God through his Son Jesus Christ. Peter said it this way, he says, “The eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their prayer, but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil” (1 Peter 3:12). And so, God wants to hear from you, he wants to act on your behalf, he wants to reveal himself to you, but you have to know him and have a relationship with him through his son Jesus Christ. The third reason God answers prayers is that we’re believing and not doubting.

## 3. Believing and not Doubting

Believing that God will do what you’ve asked really matters and he responds to a simple childlike faith. And yet, most of us have to admit that the longer we’re in church the less childlike faith we have. In fact, sometimes it seems as if we’ve forgotten that his Word tells us that…

“With God all things are possible" (Matt 19:26)

Some of you have had a son, daughter, or a grandchild who really trusted Jesus and there's something that’s just so beautiful when you see childlike faith an action. I remember when one of my children, I think it was Megan, had her finger caught in the car door. And so, you know it was a traumatic experience for everybody, they’re stressed out, wondering if they have to go to the emergency room, but they stopped; they paused and prayed, and it was completely healed, the flap of skin restored. You see, with childlike faith she believed that God could do anything.

It’s this kind of faith that James tells us about in chapter 1, verse six, he said that our faith matters to God and that when we pray…

“When he asks, he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. That man should not think he will receive anything from the Lord” (James 1:6-7).

Earlier we read about those two blind men who came to Jesus, crying out for mercy. The scripture says, “He touched their eyes and said, “According to your faith, it will be done to you”, and their sight was restored.” This same God, who did that two thousand years ago, will answer your prayers when you pray with the right motives, according to his will, and when you believe all things are possible with God. You’ve got to believe and not doubt, because your faith matters.

Jesus said it this way, he said,

"According to your faith will it be done to you" (Matt 9:29).

I am believing that faith is rising in each of you right now. You’re becoming who God said you were. Instead of seeing an unreasonable Jesus, you’re believing that God is for you, that he’s working out the details of your life, even the difficult situations in your life for your good and for his glory.

Would you believe with me and not doubt, that God is at work in you, that he’s changing you, that he’s making you holy, that he’s transforming you into the image of his son Jesus Christ? God is waiting to pour out his blessings upon you, he’s eager to fill your life with good things, and he says, “According to your faith will it be done to you.”

You see, the Scripture suggest that you can only go as far in life as your faith is strong enough to take you. And so, we need to spend time in his Word and in prayer so that we can develop that deep abiding faith in the goodness of God. You need to trust his ability to take care of you, his ability to change you, and his ability to see you through your circumstances. It’s according to your faith that God will change you and that your faith in God will change your circumstances. Let’s pray.

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