Forerunner - Part 2

# Greater Things

## (Luke 1:59-80)

I want to welcome all of you and thank you for joining us today for the part two of our miniseries Forerunner. My goal this morning is to build the faith of all God’s people because I know the Word of God has power. And so, what I want to try to do today, in a time when there is so much turmoil, distrust and concern, in a time when so many are feeling a sense of inadequacy, is I want to bring perspective to who you and I are called to be as followers of Jesus Christ. This is so important because the Spirit of God gives us hope, and my prayer is that you would experience the very real presence of God, because I believe he is precisely and specifically what you need in this moment.

The message I want to share with you this morning is entitled “Greater Things” and I want to talk to you about the greater things that God is doing in your life, in my life, and in our lives in community. Last week we saw the Zechariah have this amazing encounter with an angel in the temple as Gabriel announced that God was working and he was about to do something completely new. Zechariah however, was skeptical of what he saw and heard, and God had to shut his mouth because his doubt and disbelief were threatening to keep him from participating in the greater things of God.

I wonder how many times you and I have missed what God was doing in our midst because of our own skeptical spirit. It was a spirit of cynicism that bound the lips of Zechariah because God had a plan, he had already worked it out, but when the angel made the announcement Zechariah was skeptical and unbelieving. And for some of us it may seem like wisdom, but it’s really a counterfeit wisdom. It may look like faith, but it’s really manipulation.

And so, in Luke chapter 1, God wasn’t about to allow the greater things he had planned to be interrupted or delayed because of Zechariah’s skepticism and lack of faith. He was doing something new, it was coming, and in fact the Bible says he already had a name for it. You may have caught it last week, it was just a little thing that God said, but he told Zechariah in verse 13, what I’m getting ready to do for you, I’ve already got a name for it. He said,

*“You are to give him the name John” (Luke 1:13).*

And so, God doesn’t just give Zechariah a vision of greater things, he’s so specific about his plan that he’s already locked down a name. God was doing something new, something greater, and so he couldn’t continue the priesthood the way it had gone on for centuries. This baby wasn’t going to be Zechariah Junior, his name will be John, and he will be the forerunner of greater things.

Now, all of this was happening on the inside of the temple, and yet Zechariah didn’t believe the Word that he heard. God was working and he was doing new things, but there was disbelief in the temple, doubt was praying, and skepticism was kneeling at the altar. However, it wasn’t just there inside the church, it was also on the outside when Zechariah went home. And this is so important for us because so much that is significant for our lives is heard in church, but we’ve got to take home what we’ve heard.

You see, the Word of God that Zechariah heard in the temple was not going to be conceived until he was at home and applied what he heard by faith. That’s why it’s so important that as we’re seeking the will of God in our lives, that we learn to filter the voices we listen to, because most of these voices come from our surroundings, they come from well-intentioned family and friends, but we need to discern the spirit behind those voices. And so, we’re going to have to listen to a different voice, taking a stand, believing God’s word, breaking away from those things that have continued for generations because greater things are coming.

God was doing something new and Luke tells us in verse 59, that a year later, after the child was born,

*“On the eighth day they came to circumcise the child, and they were going to name him after his father Zechariah, but his mother spoke up and said, "No! He is to be called John” (Luke 1:59-60).*

And so, Elizabeth breaks the tradition of passing on the father’s name, acknowledging that God was doing something new, she believed because she had carried this for nine months, but then there were all those other voices. How many of you know that there are always the other voices? Isn’t that right? We live in a day when everybody is quick to share their opinion, and so they said to her,

*"There is no one among your relatives who has that name" (Luke 1:61).*

In other words, you can’t do that because none of the uncles, none of the cousins, nobody has ever been named John. And so, this is just unheard of, it’s never happened in our family before, and so the family is grumbling, the neighbors are criticizing, and the Bible says,

*“They made signs to his father, to find out what he would like to name the child. He asked for a writing tablet, and to everyone's astonishment he wrote, "His name is John." Immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue was loosed, and he began to speak, praising God” (Luke 1:62-64).*

Both Zechariah and Elizabeth believed what the Lord had said and they refused to listen to those other voices. Their friends, family, and neighbors all had their opinions, but Zechariah and Elizabeth weren’t going to be moved by the opinions of others, they were going to be directed by the Word of God.

This is why you need to filter the voices you listen to, because otherwise you’re going to be tossed like a wave of the sea, blown by the wind, and the skeptics are going to drive you off course. You see, anybody can doubt, anybody can give you 10 reasons why not, because it doesn’t take faith to be skeptical; it takes faith to contradict your circumstances with your confession “Thus says the Lord…” And so, before any of those voices and labels life has put on you, traumatize you and silence you in disbelief, you’ve got to lean in to the Word of God, focusing on what God has said, and the greater things he has for you as your Creator.

Today when we’re surrounded by naysayers, circumstances and situations that say otherwise, we’ve got to listen to the voice of heaven that speaks of greater things. Because there is a God who speaks a better word over you, who knows what’s going on inside of you and says,

*“Concerning the words which you have heard, because your heart was tender… and you humbled yourself before Me, you tore your clothes and wept before Me, I also have heard you” (2 Chronicles 34:26-27, NKJV).*

Both Zechariah and Elizabeth professed faith in the Word of God and at that very moment Zechariah’s mouth was opened and his tongue was loosed as he began praising God.

He was filled with the Holy Spirit and began prophesying about who Jesus is, why Jesus came and what Jesus does, before turning to his newborn son and saying,

*“And you, my child, will be called a prophet of the Most High; for you will go on before the Lord to prepare the way for him, to give his people the knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of their sins, because of the tender mercy of our God, by which the rising sun will come to us from heaven to shine on those living in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the path of peace” (Luke 1:76-79).*

John was strengthened and edified by this prophetic word. He knew who he was, he knew his purpose, and he was confident and comfortable being who God called him to be. John the Baptist was the forerunner of greater things.

Now, we’re not told anything about his childhood, only what the Bible tells us in verse 80,

*“The child grew and became strong in spirit; and he lived in the desert until he appeared publicly to Israel” (Luke 1:80).*

And so, he didn’t go along with the crowd, he broke the traditions, he didn’t serve in the temple like his father, but instead in the spirit and power of Elijah the Bible tells us, “John wore clothing made of camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey” following the example of Elijah living in the desert (Mark 1:6).

John wasn’t trying to impress anybody, he wasn’t trying to be a superstar, because he knew who he was. He’s comfortable being who he is and he’s not intimidated by others, because he knows that he’s fully loaded and totally equipped for the purpose he was created for. He’s the forerunner, he’s confident in who he is, and he freely confessed, “I am not the Christ.” Instead he professed,

*"I am the voice of one calling in the desert, 'Make straight the way for the Lord” (John 1:23).*

And he was good with that, he knew his purpose, and there’s a peace that comes from knowing who you are and being willing to be yourself.

The Bible tells us that as John was baptizing believers in the Jordan River and he was there with two of his disciples. When John saw Jesus passing by, he said,

*“Look, the Lamb of God!" When the two disciples heard him say this, they followed Jesus” (John 1:35-37).*

John was so confident in who he was and in his purpose that he pointed out Jesus at the expense of losing his own followers. John was confident enough to be willing to suffer the loss of his own disciples, because he knew he was the forerunner and he was called to point people to someone greater. And so, these two disciples heard John, but they followed Jesus, and he was okay with that because he said,

*"I baptize with water, but among you stands one you do not know. He is the one who comes after me, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie" (John 1:26-27).*

And so, John knew his purpose, he knew there was someone coming after him that was greater, and he was okay with that, because he knew who he was and he knew what he’d been created for.

Wouldn’t it be amazing to be in a family, or serve in a church, or work in a place where everybody had that kind of attitude? You know, if everybody was just happy to be who they were, not comparing themselves with others, but knowing their God given abilities, knowing their limitations, and simply being content to be who God created them to be. And yet the reality is that we live in a world that is constantly teaching us to compare ourselves with others. You know, there is the first runner-up, the second runner-up, the winner and the nominee, and from the youngest age we’re taught to be competitive, because we live in a fallen world. We live in a culture where everybody is fighting to be better, everybody wants to be number one, and so we’re constantly measured, timed and compared over and over and over again.

John knew his purpose, he was confident and content, but there are some of you that are uncertain, unsure of yourself, doubtful of your abilities, because you don’t know who you are. You don’t know what you were created for and so you struggle with feelings of unworthiness because you’re only good enough until somebody better comes along and then you’re frustrated and aggravated. But it’s not your fault, because this the world in which we live, it’s the culture in which we have been placed, however the Bible does teach us a better way. The apostle Paul said,

*“We do not dare to classify or compare ourselves with some who commend themselves” (2 Corinthians 10:12).*

And I believe that is God’s will for us as the body of Christ, not comparing ourselves with others, but being able to celebrate one another, understanding that each one of us is one-of-a-kind, and acknowledging that we don’t have to try to be something we were never created to be.

That’s why the Bible says to look at yourself or examine yourself, considering who you are and the way you were created. The Holy Spirit says,

*“Each one should test his own actions. Then he can take pride in himself, without comparing himself to somebody else” (Galatians 6:4).*

And so, it’s important that we understand who we are and that we were created for a specific purpose so that we can take pride in ourselves, taking pride in who God created us to be.

This is why God’s word is so helpful, because he wants us to know that we have a purpose, and he gives us the information we need to know. His word is like a mirror in which we’re able to look and recognize our purpose. As we gaze at its reflection, the image of God looking back at us, we’re better able to understand what we’re supposed to do and who we are. For example, the Bible tells us in Ephesians chapter 2, verse 10,

*“We are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do” (Ephesians 2:10).*

Another translation says it this way, “So we can do the good things he planned for us long ago.” In other words, there is a master plan, you didn’t just happen by accident, you’re not a failure, but you were created for a specific purpose. In other words, you need to discover your purpose, trusting how God made you, and recognizing that you were born for a time such as this.

The thing that many of us struggle with is learning how to maximize our potential on our level. You see, once you understand who you are, you can be comfortable being you even when you are interacting with greatness. It just really comes down to understanding that God didn’t create us the same, he didn’t give us the same talents, nor did he ever promise to. In fact, he said in Matthew chapter 25,

*“To one he gave five talents of money, to another two talents, and to another one talent, each according to his ability” (Matthew 25:15).*

In other words, God didn’t create us alike, he didn’t gift us alike, and just as the human body is made up of many parts, each part is different and they all have different functions, but they form one body. And so, each of us are unique, gifted with our own skills, talents and strengths, and the only thing he asks of us, is that we would fulfill our purpose. That’s why the Bible says in first Corinthians chapter 12,

*“If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? But in fact, God has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. If they were all one part, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, but one body” (1 Corinthians 12:17-20).*

And so, I hope this is helping somebody today, because as we become more confident in who God created us to be, fulfilling our purpose in Christ, you can be happy to be you and I can be happy to be me. And so, even if I quack like a duck, I’m going to learn how to waddle down to the pond and I’m going to be happy and I’m going to do my best at splashing and swimming and making duck noises. In the same way, John the Baptist was content in the desert, he didn’t need a palace or an entourage, because he understood that he was doing exactly what he was created to do. He said,

*“I am the voice of one calling in the desert, 'Make straight the way for the Lord'" (John 1:23).*

John recognized that he was just a voice, his title wasn’t important, his name wasn’t important, because there was one greater that was coming. And so, he said, this joy of mine is fulfilled, he must increase, but I must decrease (John 3:30, NKJV). He had heard the bridegroom’s voice and rejoiced because he’s fulfilled his purpose, he’s done what he was created to do.

There are some of you who have been struggling all of your life, because you’ve been comparing yourselves with other people. Maybe a brother or sister and you’ve compared yourself with their successes and accomplishments all of your life and it’s made you feel insecure and inferior. Because you’re not happy with who God created you to be, and so you’re missing the joy and the peace and the contentment God intended for you to have. Today I want to encourage you to break through all those words that have been said about you and the words that you’ve said to yourself, because you need to know that you’re not a mistake, you’re not a failure, and not only did God create you for a divine purpose but he gave you everything you need to fulfill that purpose.

As we wrap up this message, I want to encourage you to listen for his voice and respond in faith. Don’t look to others to validate your identity, because if you know who you are, you don’t have to wait for affirmation, you don’t have to wait for anybody to validate you. In other words, if you know what God has spoken, if you know what he said, if you know where you came from and where you are going you can step out with confidence.

However, there are some of you who have been so consumed with the voices of others that you can’t even hear the voice of your Heavenly Father, but I believe this morning that you’re going to begin listening to his voice and agree with what he has said. In fact, the Bible says this, and I hope you to get this deep in your soul,

*“No matter how many promises God has made, they are "Yes" in Christ. And so through him the "Amen" is spoken by us to the glory of God. Now it is God who makes both us and you stand firm in Christ. He anointed us, set his seal of ownership on us, and put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come” (2 Corinthians 1:20-22).*

And so, we’ve got to stop listening to the naysayers, and stop allowing ourselves to be surrounded by the skeptics, so that we’re not driven by the agendas of others but being led by the Spirit of God.

Some of you have been saying, “Amen” to the voices of the world, the values of the world, and today you need to stand in agreement with the Lord. You see, everybody says “Amen” to something, and some of you have become comfortable coming into agreement with things of this world. And today you’ve got to listen to a different voice, it’s the voice of our Father in heaven, because all those other voices change us, restrict us, silence us, and bind us to things of this world. And so, we don’t want to be driven by something on the outside, we want to listen to the voice of God, we want to be directed by the Holy Spirit. We don’t want to be driven by the opinions of anyone, but we want to tune into what God is saying, that is the greater things that he speaking over our lives.

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