

# John 14:12-24

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[ 0 : 00 ] I want to start today by asking a question. The question is, where is Jesus? Where is Jesus?

! A child once spoke to his parents after a church service and said, Mummy and Daddy, is this my church? Mummy and Daddy said, yes, of course it is, you come here every week.

The child then said, Mummy and Daddy, is this your church? A bit perplexed, they said, of course you know this is our church, we come here every week. The child thought for a little bit and then said, Mummy and Daddy, is this Jesus' church?

Yes, of course it is, they said. The child said, well why does he never come then? Where is Jesus? The one thing that seems obvious, wherever he is, he is not here.

We have never seen Jesus, have we? We have never heard him speak. We know that reality with which Jesus tells the disciples in these chapters that we have been looking at in John, that Jesus in one very important sense is not here.

[ 1 : 17 ] He has been explaining to his disciples that there is coming a time when he will depart from them and from the world and they won't be able to follow him.

Jesus is going on, isn't he, after his death and resurrection and ascension. And today that is obvious. We haven't heard Jesus' footsteps in our homes, in our workplaces, in our churches. We've never seen Jesus out at the shops, have we? We've never shaken his hands or kissed his feet or given him a hug. The Bible tells us that Jesus, the man, is in heaven, sat at the right hand of God the Father, as ascended king, reigning over all things.

And our senses tell us that that Jesus is not here. Or is he? He is going on to heaven.

But in this section of John, he wants his disciples to know that whilst he is going to be physically absent, he is going to be personally present amongst his people.

[ 2 : 30 ] He explains he is going on, but his presence and his work and his fellowship with them is ongoing with and through his disciples.

Where is Jesus? Yes. Physically absent, but personally present. Very present. Now this is quite a dense part of the Bible, so we're not going to be able to look at it in every detail, but I just want to pick out a few key verses for you to get the gist of what Jesus is saying in this passage.

Three things really. He tells his disciples, I am going on from this world to heaven, but firstly, my work in the world will be ongoing.

My work in the world will be ongoing. If you look at verse 12, 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 also do, because I am going to the Father.

Now, so do you see the first thing there? That even though Jesus is going away, he's physically absent, his work, the things that he's been doing, will continue to be done through the work of his disciples.

[ 3 : 48 ] That those who believe in him will do the works that he does. Jesus will be present in the world as his works are continued to be done.

His physical absence in the world does not mean that he will cease from activity in the world. It doesn't mean that Jesus will no longer have anything to do with the world that he was in physically, or that he'll have no interest in the world that he was once in, or that because of his work being done in his death and resurrection and ascension, he will sort of be redundant, twiddling his thumbs with nothing to do.

And we know that Jesus is going to continue working through his disciples, but because, did you see how this work will be done? It will be done through prayer.

Verse 13, Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do. Jesus still says, doesn't he, I will do the work.

These works that the disciples are going to be doing will be done as they pray to Jesus. And Jesus still takes responsibility. The works are still his.

[ 5 : 10 ] Did you see again in verse 14? If you ask me, I will do it. And we see that happening in the early church, in the book of Acts, don't we?

You might remember that Luke begins the book of Acts, and he says, In my first book, I've dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach, until the day he was taken up and gave commands to the apostles.

That was in Luke's gospel, wasn't it? And so the implication is, at the beginning of Acts, this is a book about all that Jesus is going to do next, through his apostles. So after he has gone physically from the world, Jesus himself will continue to minister, he will continue to preach, he will continue to bring salvation into people's lives, through his disciples.

And Jesus will give them all they need to continue this work. So whenever someone hears a sermon, faithfully preaching God's word in a church, they hear not just a preacher, but Jesus speaking.

Whenever the good news is proclaimed by his people, it is Jesus. Whenever prayers are answered, it is Jesus.

[ 6 : 36 ] His work is ongoing. But there's a big question in this passage, and it's about what Jesus says in verse 12.

He says that work will continue, but he says that there will be a change in the work, doesn't he?

Verse 12. The question is, what does Jesus mean when he says, greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father?

The work that will continue in the world, that Jesus will do through his disciples, will be greater than the work that he's done while he was on earth. How can that be?

Well, one way of answering that is to think that Jesus here is talking about the quality of the work. Often people explain it by saying that he's talking here about the quality and the sort of impact of miraculous signs that he did.

And that his disciples are going to perform even greater miracles than Jesus did. That the quality of the work will be greater. But I don't think reading Acts and reading the rest of the New Testament, it can mean that.

[ 7 : 54 ] Because Jesus has done amazing things, hasn't he? He has raised people from the dead. He's healed people. He's cast out demons. It is very, very difficult to imagine something greater than that, isn't it?

And we don't see the apostles and the disciples in Acts doing greater things than those things. Well, there's another way of explaining it.

Perhaps he means greater in the sense of not quality, but quantity. That as the worldwide church kind of explodes all over the nations, Jesus' work won't be restricted to just one place like it was in Galilee or in Jerusalem.

As the worldwide church serves him, his work will explode onto the world stage. And in that sense it will be greater. It could mean that. I think there is a sense that that is true.

But again, as with a lot of questions like this, the clue to the answer is, I think, in a careful reading of the text itself. Look at what Jesus says in verse 12.

[ 9 : 06 ] Look closely. Greater works than these will he do. And here's the reason why. Because I am going to the Father.

And that is a really key thing. Jesus is saying there, simply, that the greatness, or the greatness, of these works that his disciples are going to do, has something to do with his ascension to the Father. And in John, we've seen that Jesus going to the Father is another way of him talking about ascending to heaven and sitting in fulfilled victory over his enemies and being crowned as king over all things.

He is going to the Father. It's like his coronation ceremony, isn't it? As king. And so his disciples will do his works, but they will do them in a way that Jesus himself has not, as they participate in a new age of his kingdom.

They will do the works that Jesus has done, but in the light of Jesus' finished work. Until then, all that Jesus has done in his ministry, in a sense, has been incomplete.

[10:27] And it's been provisional. But after his death and resurrection, there is a completeness. There's a new situation where these works are being done, where these works have a different context.

Now, I was trying to think of a picture to illustrate this. It would be, I think, a bit like doing work for the queen. Imagine you're a chef, or you're a butler, or you're a porter in Buckingham Palace. Now, I've never been any of those things, but I'd imagine there's a difference in being the chef before the queen is crowned compared with after she's crowned.

There's a difference in the prestige of the work before she's on the throne compared to when she is on the throne afterwards.

The first meal that the chef cooks in the palace after the queen sits on her throne, that meal, in a sense, will be greater. Not because it's better ingredients, but because it is done with the knowledge that the one he cooks for now is his crowned sovereign.

[11:41] And the kitchen, that was once like any other catering kitchen, now is in the place that houses his sovereign, his queen. All that stuff that he uses, the ovens and the equipment, they're kind of normal ovens, aren't they?

But when she is on the throne, they become royal ovens and royal whisks and royal pots and pans. It is a royal kitchen. He now cooks on royal turf in a way that before her coronation, he didn't. So it's not a change in the works themselves so much, but the prestige and the privilege and the greatness that they're invested with. That Jesus' disciples will continue his works after his coronation.

And the world in which they do those works is now his footstool. The work will be done on royal turf in a way that it wasn't before.

They will be the works that Jesus has been doing to bring glory to the Father in his teaching and his preaching and so on, but done with this backdrop of his coronation, of this new era of his rule in the world.

[12:59] And that is why Jesus can say to them quite confidently, in the work, whatever you ask of me, I will do it. Imagine the chef phones the queen and says, Mum, can I order more tea bags?

Or can I order more beef? Or more cheese? And she says, yes, because I'm the queen. You will have whatever you need to do the work. Whatever you ask, I will do it.

And we will supply it. If it's for the work of the palace, if it is for the work to glorify the sovereign, then you'll get it. No expense per it.

So in his physical absence, his personal work will be ongoing and it will be done in a greater way since he is now Lord of all and sits on the throne of all.

And he can afford anything for the work to be done. So his work will be ongoing. Secondly though, Jesus' ongoing presence amongst his people.

[14:02] Jesus' ongoing presence. It's not just that Jesus will carry on working in the world. He could do that via remote control, couldn't he?

Kind of fiddling around from a distance. We've got one of these robots in our church who sort of hoovers up after you've left the room. I'm not sure how good it is, but it's supposed to do the job. But that is not how Jesus works. He's not just leaving his disciples to it. He's not working through them through a remote control where he's at a distance and he's hitting buttons on a controller. He may be going physically, but his work and his presence with them will be ongoing. Now look at verse 16. I will ask the Father and he will give you another helper to be with you forever, even the spirit of truth.

And then verse 18. I will not leave you as orphans. I will come to you. Thinking about the word helper, he's going to give you and he will give you a helper.

[15:15] It's a Greek word. The Greek word is parakletos. And it comes from two words stuck together. Para, meaning alongside, and kletos, which means to call.

Something like that. So Jesus is going to send another parakletos, one to be beside them, to call with them. And this is about Jesus' ongoing presence with them.

We might get into what this word parakletos means more in chapter 15. But I want you to see for now something else important. It's not the word parakletos, really. But it's the word in verse 16 that he puts with it another helper or another parakletos.

Now he's talking there about the Holy Spirit. He calls him the spirit of truth. But Jesus first calls him another parakletos, another helper.

He's saying, isn't he, that this helper that he's going to send will be one like they've already had. He will be another helper to replace the one that they've already got.

[16:31] And so in a sense, this parakletos, this helper, will come and bring Jesus to them. Jesus is the one they've already got, isn't it?

And so whilst he's absent physically, this helper, the Spirit of God, will present Jesus to them. And Jesus will be present through his Holy Spirit.

The New Testament teaches us that the relationship Jesus has with his Spirit is so close and it's so tight that the Holy Spirit bears the imprint of Jesus himself.

And so as Jesus sends the Holy Spirit, Jesus himself is present. The ongoing work, the ongoing presence of Jesus through his Spirit.

And so thirdly and lastly, Jesus' ongoing fellowship with his people. Jesus' ongoing fellowship with people. And you may have noticed that the passage is full of descriptions of intimate, close fellowship with Jesus, isn't it?

[17:43] Between Jesus and his people and between Jesus and his Father, all united in the Spirit. And look at the end of verse 23, just near the bottom. Anyone who loves me, my Father will love him and we will come to him and make our home with him.

Or verse 20, in that day you will know that I am in the Father and you in me and I in you. There's a lot of language there of fellowship and dwelling and togetherness, isn't there?

And notice the word in. I am in the Father and you in me and I in you. Jesus is not just present but he is present in a deeper and fuller way through his Spirit.

Even though he is absent physically, Jesus is in his people. Not just near to them or beside them or next to them. Not even just present but dwelling in them.

He won't just move next door but he will move into the very heart of the home of your life and of your heart. He will be in you. Now as we close, it is important to see that this ongoing relationship and this ongoing presence and privilege work will not be for everyone.

[19:10] Not everyone will get to enjoy the privilege of working on royal turf or of knowing Jesus' presence or of having fellowship with and in him.

That is what Judas asks, isn't it? In verse 22. Lord, how is it that we'll get these things but not the rest of the world?

In other words, why isn't everyone going to get this ongoing relationship with you, Jesus? And the answer Jesus gives is the same for us now as it was all through John's day and when Jesus was in his earthly ministry that there is only one if.

There's only one condition to Jesus' ongoing presence in our lives. Look at what he says in verse 23. If anyone loves me, he will keep my word and we will make our home with him.

And this idea is repeated a few times, isn't it? The one condition is, verse 21, whoever has my commandments and keeps them. Or verse 15, if you love me, you will keep my commandments and you will know this ongoing work and presence and fellowship of Jesus.

[20:30] Now, Jesus is not saying there that my ongoing presence in your life depends on your law keeping or your moral behaviour or your performance.

As we've gone through John's gospel, that has never been how people have met with Jesus, is it? And have had fellowship with him. That is not what he means by commands here.

If you think actually about the commands that Jesus has given all through John's gospel, think about some of the words that he has given, some of the commands that he's spoken.

Follow me. Feed from me. Ask from me. Believe in God. Believe also in me.

Abide in me. His commands aren't so much a list of precepts that we kind of have to tick the boxes on, are they? But words commanding our trust and our faith and our love.

[21:40] And so not only in his presence then, his work and his fellowship are ongoing, but also his challenge is to today. Because this one condition is the same now in his physical absence as it always was in his physical presence.

The one condition, if you like, of him being present in your church and in your home and in your life, at the very heart of your life, whatever your life looks like, the one condition is that you have to want him there, is that you have to love him.

Even if that love is weak and it's poor, the one condition of him being present is not that he comes to us physically in a ceremony at church or in an experience, because there is another helper to bring Jesus to us in his spirit.

