

Scriptures for sermon 'Even greater things'.

OT Reading (Balaams donkey) **Numbers 22 v21-31:** ²¹ Balaam got up in the morning, saddled his donkey and went with the Moabite officials. ²² But God was very angry when he went, and the angel of the LORD stood in the road to oppose him. Balaam was riding on his donkey, and his two servants were with him. ²³ When the donkey saw the angel of the LORD standing in the road with a drawn sword in his hand, it turned off the road into a field. Balaam beat it to get it back on the road. ²⁴ Then the angel of the LORD stood in a narrow path through the vineyards, with walls on both sides. ²⁵ When the donkey saw the angel of the LORD, it pressed close to the wall, crushing Balaam's foot against it. So he beat the donkey again. ²⁶ Then the angel of the LORD moved on ahead and stood in a narrow place where there was no room to turn, either to the right or to the left. ²⁷ When the donkey saw the angel of the LORD, it lay down under Balaam, and he was angry and beat it with his staff. ²⁸ Then the LORD opened the donkey's mouth, and it said to Balaam, "What have I done to you to make you beat me these three times?" ²⁹ Balaam answered the donkey, "You have made a fool of me! If only I had a sword in my hand, I would kill you right now." ³⁰ The donkey said to Balaam, "Am I not your own donkey, which you have always ridden, to this day? Have I been in the habit of doing this to you?" "No," he said. ³¹ Then the LORD opened Balaam's eyes, and he saw the angel of the LORD standing in the road with his sword drawn. So he bowed low and fell facedown.

John 14 v1-17 "Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God^[a]; believe also in me. ² My Father's house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? ³ And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. ⁴ You know the way to the place where I am going." ⁵ Thomas said to him, "Lord, we don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way?" ⁶ Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. ⁷ If you really know me, you will know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him." ⁸ Philip said, "Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us." ⁹ Jesus answered: "Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? ¹⁰ Don't you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you I do not speak on my own authority. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work. ¹¹ Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least believe on the evidence of the works themselves.

¹² Very truly I tell you, **whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these**, because I am going to the Father. ¹³ **And I will do whatever you ask in my name**, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. ¹⁴ You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it. ¹⁵ "If you love me, keep my commands. ¹⁶ And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever— ¹⁷ the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be^[c] in you

Sermon – ‘Even greater things’

A first time parachutist jumps out the plane, finds a chord and pulls it. Nothing happens. He finds a second chord, pulls that – nothing. He is hurtling downwards when he sees another man hurtling upwards towards him. He shouts out “Do you know anything about parachutes?” The man shouts back “No. Do you anything about Gas Ovens?”.

It’s risky jumping out of a plane. Its risky if you’re a DIY enthusiast doing gas plumbing.

It can be risky following Jesus, if you want it to be.

Stand up if you believe in Jesus. Stay stood up if in your life so far, you have done miracles on the level that Jesus did or even better ones. If you asked for an honest answer to that question form the 2 billion Christians today, I don’t think many would stay standing, though there would be some.

Jesus when talking to his disciples said these incredible words. **“Whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these”**.

The Bible is not a book of lies, it’s the book of life. Jesus is God is truth. There is no query over our translation being wrong, so we have to take these words of Jesus as being true. Yet it is not a statement which we have any evidence to support from most of our lives, or those who have gone before us. So either these words were meant for some-one else and do not apply to us, or there is something that we are all supposed to be doing but are not.

So today we will first look at the context in which Jesus spoke these words, and see if they impact us or not.

Jesus was a Rabbi

Jesus spoke these words as a Rabbi addressing his closest followers, his disciples. In Jewish educational terms the Rabbi was the elite of the elite. Both the other religious leaders and the common folk all recognised Jesus in this role of Rabbi and treated him as such. The gospels have Jesus addressed formally as Rabbi by a wide range of people including Pharisees, Sadducees, teachers of the law, Herodians, the disciples of John, and by the common people. He was treated as a normal Rabbi, which is shown by the questions people asked of him.

Rabbis lived a wandering lifestyle and took on followers called disciples (or talmidim) who lived with them most of the time. The disciples lived in community serving each other and their Rabbi for a number of years. They would have already learnt the scriptures before they were 13 ready for their Bar Mizvah. The teaching from the Rabbi was on how to put into daily living what the scriptures say, so you would be continually looking at them, debating and interpreting them.

The rabbis had a yoke. In agriculture, yoke is a wooden crosspiece that is fastened over the necks of two animals, such as oxen, and attached to a plough. The yoke can be heavy, and often links a new ox to a more experienced one who will take the lead, and show the other animal the right way of doing things. The rabbinical yoke referred to their method of interpreting scripture, and how they rated the importance of different laws. A disciple agreed to **totally submit** to the rabbi’s authority in all areas of interpreting the Scriptures for his life. For the rest of his life, he has agreed to submit his career, his desires and motivation, his ethic’s and values, his ego and attitudes, all over to the authority of his Rabbis teachings. In this way he becomes bonded to his Rabbi.

Jesus however had an authority beyond that of other Rabbis. This was not just the most amazing teacher of scriptures ever, but his life was accompanied by shows of great power. When John's disciples asked Jesus if he was the 'one' – Jesus replied, "*Go back and tell John what you are hearing and seeing: 'the blind can see, the lame can walk, those who suffer from dreaded skin diseases are made clean, the deaf hear, the dead are brought back to life, and the Good News is preached to the poor.*" (Matt 11v4-5).

Being a disciple of Jesus did not just involve learning how to understand God's love and how to live a better life through understanding the scriptures, but it also involved *demonstrating* God's love through healing and other miracles. This was part of the 'yoke' of Jesus. If you were bonded to him, if you were a disciple of Jesus, then not only did you pass on his teaching verbally but also you passed it on in practice by yourself demonstrating his power in miraculous ways. It took the disciples a while to get to that stage, but the day came when Jesus could send them out in pairs. They went out both teaching and telling people to turn away from their sins; but to show the authority of their words they also drove out demons, rubbed on olive oil and healed people (Mark 6 v12). While Jesus was with them, they could draw on this power from their Rabbi, following his example from close quarters. This was an exciting life-style for them. It was great fun, then things changed.

Things change

In probably the third year of their discipleship they get a shock. Jesus tells them he is going to his death. He'll be killed, but that he will only be away from them for a short time. He will rise up on the third day. They cannot go with him, because they cannot go where he is going. They were confused, upset and stressing about it.

What would become of them without Jesus. A flock without their Good Shepherd. He had been their Rabbi, teacher, friend, guide, strength, and inspiration. Without him they will be easy prey for those that will come after them. Jesus had a surprising number of enemies amongst the ruling classes and religious hierarchy. When John the Baptist was killed, his disciples were sought out by Herod. Some found refuge with Jesus. But where would they go? Who would give them refuge?

They had taken on the 'yoke' of Jesus, having bonded themselves to his teachings and his way of living, until they themselves die. So the big question now was, how on earth were they going to carry on living out this commitment to Jesus, when he is no longer with them. They could pass on his teachings but where are they going to get the power from. How can they plug into the power he gave them. How can they continue to do the miraculous things that Jesus expects them to do, alongside their teaching.

This is the context in which Jesus speaks the words in our passage.

Double assurance.

The chapter John 14 starts with a command; an imperative. Do not be worried and upset. In the Gospels, Jesus says this **21** times – Fear Not, Have courage, don't be afraid. It is, far more than any other imperative. The next most frequent recorded **8** times is "love your neighbour". It's a great combination. Step out in love, and don't be afraid because Jesus is with you.

He then wants to reassure them. First he tells them that their long term future is secure with him. They will be at the final banquet and inherit eternal life. He tells them that his Father's house (i.e. in heaven) has many rooms, and he is going there to prepare a place for them. He will come back for them, and when they die they will have a place with him in heaven. This would have been a great comfort to them.

He then addresses their short term future. What he does not say is that they will be safe, but he does tell them that the power they have got from him, will still be available to them so that they can continue to both speak words of love accompanied by powerful deeds. It will be business as normal if they carry on believing in him.

“Whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing”. (Jn 14v12). These works are leading people to God (in repentance), teaching them how to live God's way, and performing life changing miracles.

So with these words, he shows his love for his disciples and tells them not to be worried. He has their short term future and long term future in his hands. In the short-term they can carry on doing his work, and his power will still be available, and in the long-term they will have a place alongside him in Heaven.

How is this even possible?

How without Jesus, could the disciples carry on relentlessly under his yoke, doing his work, performing miracles in his name. How is this even possible? Certainly not in their own strength.

Jesus tells them how. “you will do even greater things ... because I am going to the Father ... And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever’ (Jn 14v12,14).

That is how. Jesus is going back to the Father, and he is going to send the disciples a helper, the Holy Spirit. It is through this helper that they will still be able to carry his yoke and use his power.

Even greater things

Jesus goes on to say to his disciples, that not only would they do the things that Jesus has done, some of which they have already emulated, but they will go on to do *even greater things*.

This does not take anything away from the greatness of Jesus, because everything miraculous that they do, will be done in the name of Jesus. It is done with his authority and power, not their own. So if anything, it is building Jesus up, not showing him up. It magnifies the power of Jesus because he has not only done the miracles himself, but he has given power to others to do so too. But did this come true? Did they do ‘even greater things’?

Yes they did. Scriptures and Church is witness to that. Here are a few examples from his first disciples.

Jesus spoke in his languages of Greek and Aramaic and came mostly for the lost people of Israel. He reached very few non-Jews. However at Pentecost, the disciples spoke in many languages and God's truth reached thousands of people of many different nationalities through these tongues.

Christ did miracles for two or three years in one country, but his followers did miracles in his name in many countries over many years. Most of them preached and died in faraway countries. Strong evidence places Andrew's death in Greece, Philip in Turkey, Peter in Italy (Rome), Thomas in faraway India, Bartholomew in Armenia and Matthias in Georgia. With less evidence, we think Simon the Zealot may have died in Iran, and the ex-Tax collector Matthew in Africa's Ethiopia. The disciples took God's message much further than Jesus did. They travelled far and spread the word world-wide.

But what about the miracle stuff. Jesus for example healed a lady from a bleeding disorder with the hem of his garment. That's a great miracle (Matt 9v20-22). Peter healed sick people who were lying roadside on their mats, just with his shadow as he walked by them (Acts 5:15). Paul healed sick people and drove demons out of them when they came into contact with his handkerchiefs or work aprons ([Acts 19:12](#)).

Crazy stuff. Imagine this scene as one man goes back to his village:-

“Hey blind Bob – guess what I pinched off the Apostle Paul – it’s his work apron.”
“So what’s he going to wear tomorrow when he wants to make tents?”
“Never mind that, brace yourself, I am going to whack you with it”
“Ouch –No way - I CAN SEE !”

The Truth – for his disciples

So these words of Jesus are true in context of his relationship to his disciples. I do not even think that this is an expectation that he lays down on his disciples, it is not something for which they can feel guilty if they don’t achieve.

He has looked into their future and he knows that once the Holy Spirit has come to them they carry on doing the miracles they are used to doing and more besides.. He had trained them up personally to do this. They knew their scriptures inside out, they knew what his will was, and they knew how to ask for things in his name. He knows they will ‘do greater things’ so he is telling them that to encourage them.

What about us – Are we off the hook?

The big question is, as his believers and followers today, does he have the same expectations on us. Is this a prophetic word for all believers. Has he looked into our futures and seen us doing greater things. I would have to say ‘**no**’ based on the evidence we see and on those that have gone before us. These words cannot be literally true for all our lives. If they were then we would see more evidence. Its just not there.

Nor should we feel guilty about not doing what Jesus and the disciples did. Jesus came to take away our guilt at the cross, not to burden us with more.

So I have drawn my conclusion, that there is not an **expectation on us** but there is an **opportunity for us**, to do greater things

How is this even possible?

It is possible because Jesus has gone to the Father and send us a helper, an encourager, the Holy Spirit. The very same Spirit there was sent to the disciples.

It is an opportunity for us to experience more of God, more of his love, and more of his power i.e. to lead people to Christ, to teach them his ways, and to heal them in his power. The desire or willingness to take on this yoke can only come out of our love for him, and through him, for others.

Our opportunity comes with the availability to us of the Holy Spirit, who is is there, ready and waiting for us to plug into this incredible power. There is a learning curve on how to use this power, but it is an exciting opportunity and one that we can immediately get started on.

Tried it once – it didn’t work!

Many people are put off of spiritual activity, because of bad experiences. You may have prayed for a neighbour before asking them to Church, and was told to get lost. You may have once prayed for someone who had a cancer but they still died. So you have come to the conclusion that it is must be beyond

you, and only for people who have particularly been blessed with the gifts of evangelism and healing. You may conclude - This spiritual stuff is not for me.

Why can't we just wake up in the morning, plug ourselves into the Holy Spirit, and effortlessly see the answers that we want to all of our prayers. Then we will suddenly see all of our non-Christian friends give their lives to Jesus, and every sick person we see, is healed by our shadow as we walk past. .Wouldn't that be great. So why doesn't it happen? To help explain this, I want to use a new metaphor for the Holy Spirit.

I am well aware that the Spirit is a person, but we usually use symbols to represent him, Fire, Water, Wind, Oil and a wild rock dove. So here is my new one – the Holy Spirit as a computer game.

I am going to call it – Holy Spirit 1 – New life dawns. The gamers amongst you are already getting excited at the prospect!

Computer Software – Holy Spirit 1

Development – Alpha & Beta: Holy Spirit I has been in pre-production with God for a long time., after brooding on the earth during creation the alpha test version sees the Holy Spirit is released to a select audience of some Jewish rulers and Prophets. Through the Spirit they are prophesying, got power of nature e.g. turning staffs into snakes and parting oceans, and also have power to heal such as healing leprosy and bringing a widows son back to life. That was withdrawn for a few hundred years, then the Beta version arrives with Jesus. It has more exciting features. The disciples plug into this power from Jesus. It is like a Local Area Network (LAN) with Jesus as their server They plug into him for a while, then go out empowered, to teach and heal.

However just when they were reaching exciting levels of game play, they hear that the server is being taking away along of course with its software. So Jesus leaves and takes the power of the Spirit with him, but he promises them they will get it back, and the gaming will continue. They will have to connect into Holy Spirit 1 by a new route. This time God is going to download it from the cloud.

Release version

With all testing finished Holy Spirit 1 is ready for its full release date at the single location of Jerusalem with a Go Live date set by Jesus as Pentecost in the year approx. 30AD. It has an immediate impact and is downloaded not just to its original users but through them to thousands of others, who then take news oh Holy Spirit 1 to new gamers throughout the known world. This production version continues to spread through a community of excited gamers, and over the last 2 millennia has achieved a global web release that has now been downloaded by many millions of Christians. When we became Christians, Holy Spirit 1 was part of the introductory package available to us. I think it works best when you download it every morning. The activation code stays the same C-O-M-E-S-P-I-R-I-T.

First step: Download it

A new Christian will take on board the love and forgiveness of Jesus, and fellowship with other believers, but part of the freeware when you commit to Jesus is Holy Spirit 1. Like when you get a new computer some of the free software you don't bother with, and it's no dis-benefit, but as Christians if we don't download and activate Holy Spirit 1 then we **do** miss out.

Another mistake is to censor it to younger members, and stop downloading it. There is only one version of Holy Spirit 1. It is available to all people of any type and age. Some people think that there is a 15+ or 18 certificate on it, because of its incredible life changing power – but no it's a PG certificate, your pre-teens and younger

can still download Holy Spirit 1 and enjoy an incredible gaming experience, though it may need some Parental guidance!

Second Step: Start and practice

You can download it, and activate it, but there is no value to you in a game unless you actually start playing it. You don't get better at a game, and become successful in it, until you put some hours in.

Why do teenagers always beat their parents at computer games ? It is not because they are more intelligent, or naturally better at games. It's because they have put the hours in. They have done the tutorials, spent hours on their own playing in, gone on live and played it with their friends learning from them. Even done internet searches to pick up expert tips. They get better and better, go up the levels, and find new landscapes and features to enhance their game play.

My lad was playing a game called Dota2 and found a gameplay character Chen that he thought I would love to play with. Chen has attacks like Holy Persuasion, Test of Faith and Hand of God (in which you could heal all your fellow team players). The Dota2 game play is in two opposing teams and he wanted to me to join in with him and his teenage friends on-line. I knew I couldn't just log in and play because it was quite complicated and I am a slow learner but I wanted to please him, so the next bank holiday I said I would commit to doing 10 hours of tutorials on Dota 2, then with tips from him I would give it a go. I did, I was still poor but I enjoyed it, and I knew enough to at least get into the game. I could have made plenty of excuses about being too busy, too slow on the uptake, and both were partly true, but no – I gave it a go and I got into the game. I was not very good but my son loved the fact that I had put in the effort in to become a player. We might not end up being very good, but Jesus will love us putting the effort in and having a go.

Many children average as many hours on computer games a week as they do in lessons. 5 million gamers in the U.S., in fact, are spending more than 40 hours a week playing games? What would the world be like if 2 billion Christians spent 40 hours a week engaging with Holy Spirit 1 !

Feeling unworthy:

A lot of people in our Churches think that this Holy Spirit stuff is not for me, and make up lots of excuses, all of which are partly true. I am too weak, I am too unsure of myself, I get too nervous, I am slow on the uptake etc. They might seem to you like valid excuses not to get stuck in, or to ask for spiritual gifts and have a go. We doubt our credentials, we doubt our ability, we doubt our worthiness, but it seems to me that the first things that Jesus looks for is **availability not capability**. When he says 'Who shall I send?', who replies 'Send me Lord'?

I was speaking to a Christian lady at a wedding recently about healing ministry and she said that she thought that 'healing' was for people who are specially gifted with that ministry. I had never thought of it that way before. I don't know if it's true or not, but that doesn't stop you asking for that special ministry yourself. I have been to a number of meetings over the last 2 years where people have prayed for me to receive the gift of healing, just because I have asked them too, or responded to altar calls where that was on offer. I have read books on it. I watched others do it and learn from them. I have been up to Christians who have an obvious anointing in that area, and said 'I want what you've got - will you pray for me'. In computer terms , I asked for a software upgrade.

The Holy Spirit makes himself available to all Christians, so why would you not get engaged with him. It is a part of us experiencing life to the full. None of us are too weak, too useless or too stupid to be blessed by the Holy Spirit. How do I know that because the Beta version was tried out to good success on a donkey! Balaam was trekking with the Moabite officials when his donkey stopped 3 times and refused to go on, to which Balaam beat the beast each time. But here we see donkey is blessed with two cool spiritual gifts. The first is the gift of being able to see into the Spiritual Realm. One of my friends has this gift and it's a great one. The donkey saw an angry looking Angel of the Lord with a drawn sword ready to give Balaam a good smiting! The other gift the Holy Spirit gave the donkey, is the more common spiritual gift of speaking in tongues, i.e. rather than communicating in his native tongue consisting mainly of brays, grunting, snorts and hee-haws, he could now speak fluent Hebrew (or whatever language Balaam spoke), and started to reason with Balaam about how he was being mistreated. So if a donkey gets two spiritual gifts which presumably he didn't even pray for, then how much more is the Spirit going to give you gifts that you ask him for. No matter how low your self-esteem, you probably rank yourself more worthy of Gods gifts than an old donkey.

Worried about looking stupid?

His two greatest imperatives to us: Step out in love, and don't be afraid. Yet we are often afraid to step out and try ministering in the power of the Holy Spirit, because if God doesn't do anything then I will look foolish. That is true. Abrahams wife Sarah looked foolish at 90 getting her maternity wear. Dave looked foolish with his slingshot against the armoured Goliath.. Peter looked foolish getting out of a boat in the middle of a lake during a storm. Jesus looked foolish to some as he hung naked on a cross. All stepped out in love and were not afraid. God showed up. Sarah gave birth to Isaac, David killed the giant, Peter walked on water to Jesus, and Jesus died, so he could go back to the Father and send us his Holy Spirit.

I like the story of a lady who was driving away from a Christian conference in Atlanta Georgia, saying to God that she was available to do anything for him, anything. Then she felt a prompt in her mind to drive in a different direction and followed these promptings to a small supermarket where she parked and went in. Then she waited for another prompt in her mind, and it wasn't what she expected. 'Go up to the shopkeeper and do a handstand'. Really - Are you sure God ? But nothing else came – the Holy Spirit is not a bully and won't force you into things. How many of us would have got back in our cars at that point. But she waited until others had left the store, and went up to a pillar in front of where the shopkeeper was, and said 'Hey –look what I can do', and she did her headstand. When she looked up again he was crying. What's up? "About half an hour ago I was sitting here working and I said to God, if you are real then get some-one to come into my store and do a headstand". She led him to Jesus in the store, and he has been going to her Church ever since.

Lacking Courage

I think some of us want to give it a go, but it's a bit like the first time you stood on the edge of a 5m diving platform. You climb up the steps, you go to the edge of the platform, you look down. You want to be able to jump, but you just can't do it, and eventually walk back down the steps, only to do the same thing 10 minutes later. I have seen children stand for about 20 minutes on the edge of the platform then go back down the steps. I want to go up there myself and push them in. Next time you are on the edge – JUMP – just do it.

Step 3 – Fail and learn. When you start a new game, most of the time you are making silly mistakes and your lives don't last long. With Holy Spirit 1, when you do make the jump and give it a go, then it may go well, and it may not! Jesus has given us permission to fail, like he did with his disciples. If things weren't going well for them i.e. the healing wasn't happening and a village wouldn't let them stay, they were to

shake the dust off their sandals and go to another village. Try again. Your role is to be available and obedient, if he comes up with what you pray for then great, if he doesn't then that's up to Him, you have done what you can, under the current circumstances.

Step 4 – Accept small gains

Two weeks ago I arrived at the New Wine Christian Festival and after meeting the team I was working on, I headed for the Food Court. It was busy, and with my Ham, Cheese and Pineapple Crepe I sat down at a picnic table, near a man, who I'll call Andy, who was in a wheelchair drinking a can of coke. He looked happy to chat, so I asked him if he worked and what he did? He told me that he had been a car mechanic and had a rescue service business, but then he has a stroke. He told me how he had once been prayed for and he got back some of what he had lost. As he was speaking to me, the word shoulder came to mind, it was faint, but kept coming. I tried to listen to what God was telling me, and felt there was an issue particularly on his left side. I am engaging with Holy Spirit 1. I am in play. I'm at the bottom step of the diving platform! At this point, I could just ignore this impression on my mind. Instead I say "The effects are worse on your left side". There is no visual evidence of this, but he says I'm right. I think Andy is now sensing its game on. I carry on up the steps, by asking him what is the deal with his left shoulder? He tells me that he has a lot of pain in it and not much movement. I ask him to show me how far up he can move his arm, and he rotates it up from his side about 90 degrees but can't rotate it any more or lift it any more. I do this because if God does heal him then its easy to compare the before and after.

At this point, in the diving board analogy, I am standing on the edge of the board, I haven't done anything risky yet, and at that point I could simply change the conversation or finish my crepe! This is the risky bit, but I'm getting used to this now, so I jump!

I ask Andy if I can pray for his shoulder because God wants to heal it. He'd love me too. He probably thinks Gods going to move because I mentioned his left side and his shoulder. So he has some level of expectation which isn't always needed but often seems to help.

I give it my best prayer. There is no formula but I have picked up a few good practices on the way. I claim the authority given to me by Jesus. I pray directly to the sickness, so tell the shoulder to be healed, and I do it in the name of Jesus. I also pray the blood of Jesus over both me and Andy, so that we are forgiven for anything we have done wrong and our sins don't hinder the spirit flowing. I ask the Holy Spirit come, wait a little, then ask for more love and power to flow into Andy. My eyes are mainly open (though I still find that hard) looking for any signs then ask Andy what's happening. He tells me that he can feel heat in his shoulder. That's a sign that the Holy Spirit is doing something. So I tell him that I am going to go for it again, and give him my best prayer a second time. Not for long, but I feel I can stop. Then ask Andy to see how far he can move his arm now. He moves it up with complete joy on his face, it rotates a further 20 degrees and he lifts it a few inches higher. I finish my prayers by thanking Jesus for what he's doing, he must get all the glory. Seal the healing in his name, so it doesn't reverse, then pray that it will continue to heal. Andy is now late and leaves excited leaving an undrunk can of coke behind.

Did I succeed or fail? He went off in the wheel chair still suffering from stroke symptoms. Did I do the things that Jesus or greater things – No. If I had been the Apostle Peter he would have probably said to him get up and walk and Andy would have been completely healed. With his level of experience that's what you get. With my level of experience, although I love to see full healing, on big stuff like strokes, I count that as success. If he had got that result from 12 weeks of expensive Physio he would have been delighted. Jesus did it for free in a few minutes, because I got in the game.

RISK

It can be risky following Jesus if you want it to be.

So what happened to the parachutist? He was getting worried as he hurtled to the ground then his parachute automatically opens. The DIY Gas man goes up then starts coming down. Against the odds the parachutist manages to grab the other man as he is about to plummet past him, and the two of them embracing each other, descend safely to the ground. They are both Christians. One was doing his freefall to raise money for Aids orphans and the other was part of a church team renovating an old building for use with the homeless. They give thanks to Jesus for their lucky escape. Then one says, "We should do something together". The other says ' Yeah how about we do a children's outreach at the local crocodile farm !"

I made all of that up of course, but what is true is that 98% of your community is lost without Jesus. Without the Holy Spirit working in and through you, they will probably stay lost.

Jesus has told you that your long term future is assured. He has a place for you in heaven.

In the meantime he has gone to the Father so that he can send you his Holy Spirit so that you can be about his work, out of love for him. Whilst he may not **expect** great things from you, he offers you the opportunity to do great things like him, even greater things, or at least get started doing more amazing things for him. It's not always safe, you won't always succeed, and it might sometimes be embarrassing, but nothing will happen unless you join the game, unless you jump into it.

His two most popular commands ring as true as ever. Step out in love, and don't be afraid, Jesus through his Holy Spirit is with you.

Amen.

'Even greater things' – John 14v1-17

Bullets

Joke. Believe? Done greater things?.

Jesus the Rabbi – yoke, bond

Show must go on (need power source / vulnerable)

Double assurance – 21/8 -

Even greater things – languages, countries, shadows etc

How was this even possible? Advocate – sees their future

What about us? Expectation or opportunity.

Holy Spirit 1 – development

1. Download it

2. Start & Practice – Dota 2 – 40 hours a week

[Unworthy Balaam / Feel silly – headstand /
Lack Courage – diving]

3. Fail and Learn

4. Accept small gains – Andy stroke

Risk: 98% lost

Opportunity to do greater things

Step out – don't be afraid.

Downpour lyrics:

God: I hear you say “ I'm right here”; So lay down your stress and fear ; Put all your trust in me; Let go of doubt and lean.

Us: I love, I love your presence

God: Behold I make all things new; I see all your faults but I still choose you and I won't let you fall through. I carried the cross now I'll carry you.

Us: I stand right here and face these fears. Through pain and tears Lord I wont back down.

I'll stand restored in your downpour. Now I surrender Lord I won't back down.

I love, I love your presence.