

**John 14:12-24**  
**Trading Places With Jesus**

A sermon delivered at Calvary Chapel DC Metro  
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I watched a lot of TV growing up, and also read a lot of books, but I remember observing something even back then as I took in a steady dose of sit-coms, cartoons, and after-school specials – it was that there are recurring plot lines. You see something happen in one show and then a while later, you see something very similar play out among the characters of another show.

The basic themes of the plot don't change much, it's just now this group of characters are going to deal with it. Literary scholars even debate how many basic plot lines there are; the main camps are 1, 3, 7, 20, and 36 and all stories whether written down or acted out are just variations on these elemental themes. One storyline is particularly relevant to the passage we'll see this morning. There's no particular name for it, at least that I could find, and I even asked some friends who are literature professors, but it's the storyline where two people, one greater, one lesser, trade places.

This is the idea behind Mark Twain's *The Prince and The Pauper* where the son of King Edward V, a prince, trades places with a young boy from a very poor family - a pauper - and each experience what life was like for the other. You have movies like *Freaky Friday* which was originally a book and which has been remade as a movie several times, where a teenage daughter suddenly switches bodies with her mom. Countless TV shows and others have picked up the idea and run with it – so now you even have *Barbie and the Princess and the Pauper*.

These are similar to, but different from what I'll call promotion stories – things like *Cinderella*. *Cinderella* doesn't trade places with anyone – she starts off as a good person but then her mom dies, her dad remarries, and she gets stuck with the wicked stepmother after her father dies too. But, a little magic enters the scene via a fairy godmother, and suddenly Prince Charming is able to realize what a wonderful woman she is – no one traded places with her, she just got a little help and it all worked out.

And then you have similar stories where people are promoted but it's because they have good character, hard work, and take advantage of a sudden break – the underdog goes on to become the top dog. A few years back one of the greatest examples of this was Will Smith's movie, *The Pursuit of Happyness*. The central character battles against homelessness while he fights his way through an internship with an investment firm. And though there are many twists and turns he eventually pulls it off, gets a coveted spot in the firm and goes on to make heaps of money. Hard work and determination, plus a shot at opportunity were all that were needed to change his life.

Promotion stories are different than trading places stories because in promotion stories the central character *earns* what they have, or finally gets the chance to be recognized for what they always were – they *belong* on top. In trading places stories, we realize that the lesser person should *not* be in the place of the greater person, and a big part of the drama is watching to see how things are going to turn out when the lesser (now thought of as the greater) is confronted with a situation the greater is expected to handle. How will the lesser person, who has no experience in these situations pull it off? How will the teenage daughter who has swapped places with her mom do when she has to make the big presentation at work as mom?

And that is much closer to what has happened to us in Christ. God sent His Son to earth, to take our place, so that we could have a place in His Kingdom. We don't deserve it, we didn't earn it, there's nothing in us that is good enough and simply needs a chance to shine through, we can't work hard enough to prove ourselves qualified for a big break – we need Jesus to offer to trade places with us.

And He did. On the cross He took our place as sinners, and offered us His righteousness in exchange. He never deserved to be treated like a carpenter or like a criminal, and we never deserved to be treated like sons of God – the God whom we have rebelled against – but we have been given the opportunity to trade places by placing faith in Christ.

And that's what Jesus is trying to explain to the disciples in the Upper Room here in John 14 where we pick things up this morning. You remember that He has been telling them what He is about to do – how He is going to leave them to prepare a place for them, but they can't come yet, and that He is the only way to get to the Father because there aren't many roads to Heaven, there is only one, and it's Him. And last week we talked about how He did many miracles to help people understand and believe what He had said, but those miracles and the ones He does in our lives, serve to force us toward decision points where we have to choose – do I trust God or not?

Well, this morning we see things take a turn, and we begin to see what happens if we do. If we trade places with Jesus, asking Him to take on our sin and allow us to be covered by His righteousness, how will that all play out? We find our answers beginning in verse 12:

[12](#) “Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater *works* than these he will do, because I go to My Father. [13](#) And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. [14](#) If you ask anything in My name, I will do *it*.

The first thing that happens when we trade places is that God gives us the ability to do greater works. Now, we could easily misunderstand this, so let's break it down into a few parts so we can understand it better.

Jesus was able to say great things and do great things because of who He was and because of His relationship with His Father. But now, He says that we will be able to do many of those things as well *because of our relationship with Him*. And we certainly see that play out

in the lives of the disciples. Though they all run and scatter after His arrest and trial, they come back together and pray. And then, on the Day of Pentecost, fifty days later, the Holy Spirit comes down in power and we see what happens in the early chapters of the book of Acts.

Luke picks up the story from there and tells more about how the early church grew and we see Peter and then Paul performing numerous miracles. Both of them were used by God to heal people, both were miraculously delivered from jails, both were used to bring someone back to life from the dead. So we see that they definitely did do the works that Jesus did as they experienced the Holy Spirit working in their lives.

But we have to make a few notes here about that – we don't see that happening with all of the apostles. Maybe it was, maybe it wasn't, but we don't know – we only have the stories of these two men. And, while we do see God doing amazing things through them, the history of the book of Acts spans a couple decades – these were only the highlights. So, it wasn't like they were healing people every single day, or raising countless people from the dead. But, for some reason, God wanted to do something very special at that moment using those men, so they did miraculous things – things Jesus did.

But did they do “greater” works than Jesus? Well, how can you do something greater than raising someone from the dead physically? The answer is helping them to be born again spiritually. When the Holy Spirit was poured out on Pentecost, 3000 people were saved under Peter's preaching. That's more than were saved during Jesus' entire ministry because people couldn't experience the benefits of salvation without His death, burial and resurrection.

And, Jesus never really left the area of Israel during His adult life and ministry – He focused on starting the message in Israel, but then He charged the disciples to take it all over the world. So, their work, and our work, is greater not in the sense of doing more spectacular miracles, but in the work of spreading the gospel and seeing the eternal destiny of men and women changed forever.

You remember we said that no matter how great a miracle God does in your life, it will not sustain you – every thing you have will one day be taken away or left behind. Even if you are brought back to life, you will still die again. So don't think of doing greater works as working neat miracles – think of greater works as the things that will last forever.

But what about us? Can we see miracles? As I shared last week, I believe miracles still happen, and I believe God still uses men and women in amazing ways as we pray and serve Him – I have no problem believing God could use any of you to do the miraculous, but when He does, I believe that it will be, as we see in verse 13, “that the Father may be glorified in the Son.” When God uses you to do great works, it is always for His glory and if you try to step in on that glory and take it as your own – watch out, your days are numbered.

But if you see a need, why not step in – ask God to do a great work “in Jesus' name,” but remember that the greatest work is salvation. Are you praying for any one right now? Are

you praying for their salvation? And are you inviting them to come to a Bible study with you or to come to church with you? God might want to use you to bring about the greatest thing that could ever happen in their life as they surrender to Christ. But, you'll miss out on the opportunity if you don't ask Jesus for it and then takes steps towards it.

The last thing to remember here is that part of trading places with someone is making sure you act like they would. In the Prince and the Pauper, the young poor boy Tom doesn't understand much about what he is supposed to do as a prince, and the palace staff thinks he has suffered from an illness that is affecting his memory. Bottom line: if you're going to be a prince, you need to act like one.

Well, something similar could be said about the promise made to us here – on the surface it seems rather sweeping and powerful, “If you ask anything in My name, I will do *it*.” Anything? That's what it says. But it also says “anything **in My name**.” And that is very important, and very limiting. Because, that doesn't mean to ask for anything you want and then tag it with “in Jesus' name, Amen.”

Do you ever play that little game where you ask someone,  
“What do you call that thing that hangs down in the back of your throat?”  
“Oh, your uvula?”  
“Yeah, how do you spell it?”  
“Uh, I think it's u-v-u-l-a?”  
“No, how do you spell it?”  
And then you round and round until you finally tell them you meant, “how do you spell i-t?”

Well, some people think that's what meant here by praying “in Jesus' name.” As if you have to add that tag line to everything or it doesn't count. That's not what it means. Jesus means whatever you ask *in His character*. You have to ask for the things that He would ask for. Sometimes, that's the reason our prayers aren't answered – we're not asking for stuff Jesus would ask for. We're asking for our own stuff – so, our selfish motives can get in the way. It's a good practice to sit down every now and then and really think it through – am I praying for things that I can see Jesus asking for? Is this the kind of thing that would glorify the Father if it was given?

Fortunately, we are given someone to help us answer those kinds of questions – keep reading with me:

[15](#) “If you love Me, keep My commandments. [16](#) And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever— [17](#) the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you. [18](#) I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you.

We're going to look more at our relationship with the Holy Spirit next week, but we'll make just a few observations here. In the trading places stories there is often someone who helps the transformed characters “remember” what to do or how to do it. Maybe the best friend of the teenager who swapped places with their parent, or the secretary of the parent

– they help the transformed character ‘remember’ what’s going on as they try to fake their way through a situation.

Well, far better than that, Christians receive the Holy Spirit to lead us, guide us, strengthen us, direct us, help us and comfort us. And He is promised to abide with us FOREVER. You need to underline that word in your Bible. Again, we’ll talk more about this next week, but you need to know, if you are a Christian, the Holy Spirit – the third member of the trinity, has come to reside in you and He will never leave you!

Jesus is telling the disciples He has to leave them for a short time, but then, through the Holy Spirit, He will come back to them forever. But this is only true of true believers. Only those who are born again in Christ can lay a hold of this promise. No one else has the promise that God will ‘always be there for them.’ The world CANNOT receive the Holy Spirit. As we said a few weeks ago, Christianity is a very exclusive relationship with God, it’s not automatically given to everyone, BUT, anyone who wants to can receive it.

And throughout this passage Jesus tells us how.

[19](#) “A little while longer and the world will see Me no more, but you will see Me. Because I live, you will live also. [20](#) At that day you will know that I *am* in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you. [21](#) He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him.”

If you want to trade places with Jesus, if you want to go from being a peasant to being a king, if you want to go from being a spiritual criminal to a citizen of a Heaven, you need to keep His commandments and love Him.

What commandments? Well, remember, someone came to Him and asked, “what is the greatest commandment?” And Jesus replied, “the greatest Commandment is that you would love the LORD your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength and the second is like it, that you would love your neighbor as yourself.” If you’re keeping both of those, you’re good.

So, if you’ve always obeyed God, always looked out for others, never hurt anyone else, never lied or stolen, or wanted something that someone else had, if you always do what is best for others even when it costs you something yourself, maybe you’re doing alright.

But most of us aren’t. We’ve blown it and we know it. Actually, all of us – whether you know it or not, we are all guilty of breaking God’s commandments, and we are all guilty of not loving Him at times – because we choose ourselves instead.

But do you recognize that? Do you admit that? Have you asked for forgiveness for that? And do you hope and desire to grow more toward this ideal with God’s guidance, forgiveness and strength? Are you showing Him your love for Him by returning to Him every time you blow it and asking Him to forgive you again and to keep you from doing that

again? If so, He loves you, and that means the Father loves you – and you can know that love as He manifests Himself to you. You ought to be able to know the love of God. Do you?

[22](#) Judas (not Iscariot) said to Him, “Lord, how is it that You will manifest Yourself to us, and not to the world?”

[23](#) Jesus answered and said to him, “If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him. [24](#) He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine but the Father’s who sent Me.

Jesus says that if you trade places with Him, everything is going to change. The Holy Spirit will come and abide with you forever, and the Father will love you and He and Jesus “will come to you and make their home with you.” You will be adopted in forever.

The Prince and the Pauper ends with King Edward V dying and the court trying to make young Tom (who they think is the prince) king. Tom doesn’t want it and tries to resist. Fortunately, the real prince Edward VI comes back and proves himself to be the rightful heir. And what about Tom, the pauper? Is he sent back to a life of poverty? No, he is appointed a place in the royal court and remains there for life.

Now, there is nothing perfect but God, and that’s not an absolute match for what Christ has done for us, but perhaps it helps you get your mind around it a bit. In Christ, God is offering you the chance to change everything about your life. He’s offering you the chance to change your destiny. He’s offering you the chance to be pardoned from sin. And He does it all, not by encouraging you to work hard, study hard, and show your decent character. He doesn’t tell you to keep an eye out for lucky breaks. He doesn’t see something good in you and turn your pumpkin into a coach so you can dance with the prince like you really deserve.

No, He offers to take your place – to suffer for your sins on the Cross and to allow you to be seen under the cloak of His righteousness. He gains nothing by what He does, and you gain everything. This is the God we worship, and the God who calls you out by name. Do you hear His voice? Have you heard His voice? Are you keeping His commandments? Do you pray in His name?

You have a chance to get everything straight with Him right now. If you’ve never taken Him up on the offer, this is your chance. We’re going to pass out the elements for communion and while we’re doing that, admit to God that you need forgiveness, ask Him to take your place and ask Him to let you into His kingdom. If you haven’t done that, then let the communion elements pass you by – this is a royal meal, and it’s only for those who have been given a place at the King’s table.

If you have a place, tell Him thank you once again for all He has done and ask Him how you’re doing. Take this moment to connect with the King.

And if you have any questions about anything or you just aren't quite sure about something, let's get together after the service and talk. I and the other pastors would love to be able to help you in any way we can.