

See how the flowers of the field grow Part 3 - Asking

Psalm 8: 3-9 (NIV)

Which of you, if your son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him?

How do I feel about asking God for something I need?
Does the act of asking make me feel vulnerable, weak, exposed?
Do I hesitate because I fear being let down?
Or because I don't feel I have a right to ask?
Do I hesitate because I feel I am approaching God with a list of requests?
Can I talk with God, or with Jesus, about what comes up for me?

Praying

It doesn't have to be
the blue iris, it could be
weeds in a vacant lot, or a few
small stones; just
pay attention, then patch

a few words together and don't try
to make them elaborate, this isn't
a contest but the doorway

into thanks, and a silence in which
another voice may speak.

Mary Oliver

The Prayer of Hope

When it comes to prayer, it seems that we do more asking than hoping. This is not surprising, since we pray mostly when very specific and often momentary circumstances warrant it. When there is war, we pray for peace; when there is drought, we pray for rain; when we go on vacation, we pray for nice weather; when a test is coming, we pray that we'll pass; when a friend is sick, we pray that they will get well... Our prayer emerges in the midst of our lives and is interwoven with everything else which busies our day.

Our hearts are filled with many concrete, tangible desires and expectations... If we pray, and really pray, we can hardly escape the fact that our cares for the moment, big and small, will fill our prayer and often make it nothing but a long list of requests.

But the important thing is whether it is a prayer of hope or of little faith... The prayer of little faith makes us cling to the concrete circumstances of the present situation in order to win a certain security... When this prayer is not heard, that is, when we don't get what we wanted, there is disappointment, even hard feelings and bitterness... The concreteness of the wishes eliminates the possibility of hope...

When we live with hope we do not get tangled up with concerns for how our wishes will be fulfilled. So, too, our prayers are not directed towards the gift, but toward the one who gives it. Our prayers might still contain just as many desires, but ultimately it is not a question of having a wish come true but of expressing an unlimited faith in the giver of all good things. You wish that... but you hope in...

In the prayer of hope, there are no guarantees asked, no conditions posed, and no proofs demanded. You expect everything from the other without binding the other in any way. Hope is based on the premise that the other gives only what is good. Hope includes an openness by which you wait for the promise to come through, even though you never know when, where, or how this might happen."

From Henri Nouwem, *With Open Hands*, Ave Maria Press, 1972.

Suddenly

Suddenly after long silence
he has become voluble.
He addresses me from a myriad
directions with the fluency
of water, the articulateness
of green leaves; and in the genes
too, the components
of my existence. The rock,
so long speechless, is the library
of his poetry. He sings to me
in the chain-saw, writes
with the surgeon's hand
on the skin's parchment messages
of healing. The weather
is his mind's turbine
driving the earth's bulk round
and around on its remedial
journey. I have no need
to despair; as at some Pentecost
of a Gentile, I listen to the things
round me: weeds, stones, instruments,
the machine itself, all
speaking to me in the vernacular
of the purposes of the One who is.

R. S. Thomas

You become a person only when
you are capable of standing open to
all the gifts which are prepared for you.

Henri Nouwen



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Is there a gift I would like to ask for?
Have I received any gifts for which I did not ask?