

Ask, Wait, and Thank God

Խնդրէ, Ապասէ, եւ Շնորհակալ եղիր Աստուծմէ

Psalm 123, 124

Babies are helpless when they are born. They need help to survive. They do not have an understandable language to ask for something! They cry out, sometimes too much. That is their language to tell us as adults to reach out to them and give them what they want.

We grow up and we learn how to ask for things. And then we grow up more and we learn not to ask. I heard about an insurance company that studied to find out why accidents happen when people are lost. They found out that on the average every year each person drives 275 extra miles because that person is lost and refuses to ask for direction. This is before GPS was around.

It is a Biblical command to ask. **“Ask and it shall be given”** (Matt. 7:7a ESV). Let me ask you today, “Did you ask God for anything lately? What did you ask for?”
-We will examine **two psalms** this morning. The first one, **Psalm 123** which is about **asking**.

-Then there is period of silence between them, the period of **waiting**.

-Next, **Psalm 124** is a song of **thanks and praise** to God.

Therefore, **ask, wait, and thank God**. This is the rhythm of worship. We praise God by asking, waiting, receiving, and thanking...

We don't know what happened between the two psalms. We can only read one side of the conversation. It is like being in the room with a person who is talking on the phone, and you can hear only one side of the conversation. We know what was asked but we can't hear the reply. We know the psalmist's prayer was answered, and he is thankful for God's answer to his prayer.

I believe this is the way our life runs. We, as Christians, **ask God. He is our Father. He is our Maker.**

-Some of us have learned to ask;

-some of us ask with the wrong motivation;

-some of us never ask because of pride, disbelief, doubt or skepticism.

James says: **“When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.”** (James 4:3 ESV)

Some of you say, **“Badveli, we keep asking. But teach us how we can receive. Do not teach us about asking.”** Let us learn from the psalmist.

-How desperately you are asking?

To you I lift up my eyes,
O you who are enthroned in the heavens!
Behold, **as** the eyes of servants
look to the hand of their master,
as the eyes of a maidservant
to the hand of her mistress,
so our eyes look to the Lord our God,
till he has mercy upon us. (Psalm 123:1-2 ESV)\

The eyes are staring to God.

The word “eyes” appear four times in two verses.

The eyes of the psalmist, the eyes of the servant, and the eyes of the maidservant have something in common.

They are really **staring with full attention and expectation.**

Most of us have dogs. Just think about your dog.

Martin Luther: “Ah, if I could only pray the way that dog looks at meat.”

In the passage, **eyes are looking, gazing towards God.**

The psalmist gives examples which were applicable in their context.

(Between master and servant.)

I remember our teachers asked for our eyes, asking for full attention. **Looking up towards someone also means looking forward to hearing an instruction, a command, or a word of encouragement.**

Looking at God with full attention is something we cannot ignore. How passionate are your eyes when you communicate with God? How desperately you are coming to God?

Do we have the same attitude towards God? Do you raise your eyes towards Him saying as the psalmist did?

I lift up my eyes to the hills.

From where does my help come?

My help comes from the LORD,

who made heaven and earth. (Psalm 121:1,2 ESV)

When do you approach God? Just at the time of need? Don't come to God as spare tire when you need him, you go to him...

What is the psalmist asking of God?

-Ask for *Hanan* (mercy, favor, grace, consideration)

Mercy...*Hanan*.

It has different meanings: graciousness, favor, mercy, showing consideration, compassionate love...

In my words, "God, you want my full attention when I speak to you, **and I ask for your love towards me;** that you are on my side, that you love me, you have mercy on me, that you are gracious to me, you show your favor to me."

Here is another example how the word is used. God speaking to Moses and giving his blessings to Aaron and the people....

"the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you."

(Numbers 6:26 ESV)

"God be on my side; show me your favor; walk with me, O LORD."

Don't we have the same approach in our lives? We need to know if the people that we are encountering are on our side. Your spouse, your coworkers, your colleagues...

Now it is funny that in our daily life we try to win the other person's favor. We try to be nice to them, or use the right words. We just try to win their favor.

Not with God. **The psalmist did not start by trying to impress God. We CANNOT...**

The Psalmist comes to God with full attention, **not from above, but in humility**, like a servant gazing at his master. Then he wants God's favor, the assurance of God's presence, His love, compassion, His grace to walk with him. He knows he cannot earn His favor. We can ask, ask GOD.

Wait:

Now I will stop here in my sermon. I will give time to spend time in just waiting and -----examining your life and asking God.

Thank God.

In Psalm 124 the psalmist is thanking God for answering his prayers.

Now the psalm has three parts:

**If it had not been the LORD who was on our side—
let Israel now say—
if it had not been the LORD who was on our side
when people rose up against us, (124:1-2)**

Now when you see the word "if", you expect to see the word "then".

Then...

**then they would have swallowed us up alive,
when their anger was kindled against us;
then the flood would have swept us away,
the torrent would have gone over us;
then over us would have gone
the raging waters.(124:3-5)**

The psalmist gives a series of answers to prayer that God did for his nation:

Those are serious things: **Being swallowed alive? Flood taking them away.**

I don't know exactly what happened, but one thing is clear, **God kept them from a "monster" and from the "flood."**

Illustration from Bay Area:

My son's car alarm was going off on its own at night and bothering the neighbors and us. I took it to the mechanic to take care of it. We agreed to do something simple to fix it. Then the mechanic called me said that he was glad that the car was brought to him. The fuse box was in trouble and had we not fixed it, it could damage the car very badly, and even catch fire. We said to each other, "God showed his mercy and favor towards us."

While I was writing my sermon, I was praying in my heart, "God, I pray for Armenia, Syria, Lebanon, and the Middle East. I pray for the US. I pray for the world that you created." There is evil, a lot of evil. I don't know who is "monster" in your life, and what is "flood" in your life. I want favor from my God. Please keep us safe.

Then the psalmist finishes with a wonderful imagery of being rescued:

**Blessed (praised) be the LORD,
who has not given us
as prey to their teeth!
We have escaped like a bird
from the snare of the fowlers;
the snare is broken,
and we have escaped! (6-7)**

On August 4, 2020, there was a huge explosion in Beirut, Lebanon very close to the Armenian neighborhoods. It was one of the biggest non-nuclear explosions in history.

On the anniversary on the event, my dear friend Ani Boudjikianian (John Eleazarian's cousin) who survived certain death herself, wrote the following.

On August 4, 2020, a year ago, there was a blast indeed: many passed away, some new handicapped people were added to those of the Lebanese war. Demolitions, lost souvenirs, despair, ...

A year later, there is a huge generation boom of those who (will) celebrate the First Anniversary of their survival!

365 extra days of new opportunities to love, serve and witness. We haven't got yet any answer to our numerous questions, but we are confident that "God holds the whole world in His Hand" and will let us discover His plans day by day for this beloved country and amazing people at all levels.

"Lord make us Instruments of Your Peace" as we celebrate the renewal of our miraculous existence.

The psalmist is thankful. "Blessed, praised be GOD". The image of bird in a cage is vivid. The only way the bird can be freed if someone from the outside comes, opens the cage door, and frees the bird.

For us as Christians, **Christ is the one did that.** He came and freed us from bondage of sin and death. The best answer of prayer I have been received. THE BEST answer. How about you?

Illustration: two Sundays ago Melinda and I were praying and asking God for kids to attend VBS. We had only 12 people registered. We were wondering what was going on. On Sunday after the church service Melinda met with the helpers. She and I talked in the afternoon. Her spirit was lifted up. She came out of the meetings so thankful and full of praise. We were surprised, what happened? Then we said to each other, wait a minute, were praying for this...God is answering us. You know the result. 45 kids came and 15 adults. Unbelievable how God works.

I thank God. *Shnoragal yem*, in Armenian it means: "**I have received Grace.**"

Ask, Wait, Thank God.

Come in full attention, bring your eyes.

Ask humbly for *hanan*, His mercy and love, compassion, grace, favor

Wait silently....wait....

Thank God. He is faithful.

*the outline of this sermon is taken from Rev Paul Taylor