

Wednesday, October 7

Hello everyone! And welcome to our Wednesday Word devotion for today, October 7, 2020. Thank you so much for taking this time out of your day to focus on God and focus on your faith.

Today's devotion is the last in our three-part series on prayer, and we are going to talk about "Wow!" prayers today. And I have to lean on Anne Lamott's beautiful words to start this devotion. She writes in Help, Thanks, Wow, "The third great prayer, Wow, is often offered with a gasp, a sharp intake of breath, when we can't think of another way to capture the sight of shocking beauty or destruction, of a sudden unbidden insight or an unexpected flash of grace. 'Wow' means we are not dulled to wonder... When we are stunned to the place beyond words, we're finally starting to get somewhere. It is so much more comfortable to think that we know what it all means, what to expect and how it all hangs together. When we are stunned to the place beyond words, when an aspect of life takes us away from being able to chip away at something until it's down to a manageable size and then to file it nicely away, when all we can say in response is, 'wow', that's a prayer."

(pg. 71-73)

Wow prayers are prayers of wonder. Wow prayers are the ones our ancestors gave when they proclaimed to fear the Lord, that God can do big and huge and powerful things, often more complicated than just good or bad. They are prayers of awe for the world, of the depth and breadth of the experience of living as a human, within the Spirit and creation of God.

My most recent "Wow" prayers came in moments where I didn't quite have the words for what I was experiencing, which yes, may be a bit of a surprise, as many of you know how much I love words and pride myself on my command of the English language. I attended a virtual conference called "Evolving Faith" with presentations from some of my absolute favorite theologians and Christian authors, and group chatted with two dear friends and colleagues the whole time. And the absolute healing power of that conference, the conviction, comfort, power, praise, soul-centering and life-affirming experience I had was truly the feeling of "Wow". It was beyond good or bad, it was nothing more or less than the power of the Holy Spirit working within the community gathered and within my own heart. I will carry that experience with me for a very long time. And I sincerely pray that you all encounter the Holy Spirit in ways that nourish you with that "Wow", that help to heal what hurts you and sustain the joy that comes in the Lord as our strength. For the power of the Spirit in our world, we pray.

And so many of our forebears in faith were overcome by the works and power of God, and they wrote songs and poems about their "Wow" moments - what a gift that we can read them throughout the scriptures. One of my favorite descriptions and experiences of God's "Wow" comes in Psalm 139, which I will read for you today.

These are some excerpts from Psalm 139:

O Lord, you have searched me and known me.

You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you discern my thoughts from far away.

You search out my path and my lying down and are acquainted with all my ways.

Even before a word is on my tongue, O Lord, you know it completely.

You hem me in, behind and before, and lay your hand upon me.

Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is so high that I cannot attain it.

Where can I go from your spirit? Or where can I flee from your presence?

If I ascend to heaven, you are there; if I make my bed in Sheol, you are there.

If I take the wings of the morning and settle at the farthest limits of the sea, even there your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me fast.

If I say, "Surely the darkness shall cover me, and the light around me become night," even the darkness is not dark to you; the night is as bright as the day, for darkness is as light to you.

For it was you who formed my inward parts; you knit me together in my mother's womb.

I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; that I know very well.

My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth.

Your eyes beheld my unformed substance. In your book were written all the days that were formed for me, when none of them as yet existed.

How weighty to me are your thoughts, O God! How vast is the sum of them!

I try to count them—they are more than the sand; I come to the end —I am still with you.

This is the Word of the Lord.

And as we close our time of devotion today, please join me in a word of prayer:

Lord God, for all the moments when you are brought closer to us, when we experience things beyond words or explanation, we thank you for being with us. Thank you for hearing us. Help us to be open to the often disorienting yet life-affirming power of the "Wow" moments. With you truly all things are possible, the things beyond our knowing or comprehension, the things we never could have expected, the blessings beyond what we might deserve. Lord, we praise you. Help us to be open to your work in the world, and may your Holy Spirit truly guide, surprise, empower and sustain us. By your love and in the name of Jesus this life in you is possible. Thank you. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

Go in peace dear friends, have a beautiful day. Amen.