

you ask when you pray, believe that you shall receive, and they shall come unto you" (Mark 11:24).

How is it, then, that people sometimes ask and do not receive? It is because they ask not as they ought. "You ask and receive not," says St. James, "because you ask amiss (4:3). "Quia mala, quia mali, quia male;" thus tersely does St. Augustine sum up the reasons for us. We do not get what we ask in prayer, either because we do not ask for the right things, or because we ourselves are not right with God, or because we do not ask in the right way.

What, then, is the right thing to ask? The words of Christ, so broad and unrestricted, would seem to signify that anything whatever we ask we shall get. And He repeats the same in another and even more solemn way: "Verily, verily, I say unto you. if you ask the Father anything in My Name, He will give it you" (John 16:23). But, as St. Augustine acutely observes. "Whatever is asked against salvation is not asked in the Saviour's name." "Seek ye first," says the Saviour Himself, "the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matt. 6:33). "I shall be thy reward exceeding great," said God to Abraham. This, then, is what we must ask before all else—God Himself, the One Good in Whom are all good things. As for these other good things, the same Augustine wisely observes, in a certain epistle of his (130 al. 121, n. 12), "Whatever it is right to wish for, it is right to pray for." The needs of the life that now is we may confidently ask God to supply, but not what is superfluous. Whatever we can't take with us into eternity we pray for conditionally, but the things that endure—grace, truth, love, purity, justice, without condition.

And there is no good thing, temporal or spiritual, but we may hope to obtain by prayer. God says, "Whatever," and His word never fails. In sickness, temptation, trial, sorrow, we should have recourse to prayer. In time of war and world calamity, such as the present, we should pray the more. Anything that we really need, anything that the world stands in need of, we rightly pray for, even if the grant of it should involve, or appear to involve, interference with the course of nature. "My Father worketh until now, and I work" (John 5:17). He is behind the veil of nature, working always. "Elias was a man, mortal like unto us, and with faith he prayed that it might not rain upon the earth, and it rained not for three years and six months. And he prayed again,