

Worshipping God

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 04 August 2024

Preacher: Keith Holburn

[0 : 00] If I said the word worship to you, what do you think about? What's the first thing that comes to mind? Is it what we've been doing this morning sitting here in the building, even at home if you've been watching at home. What is worship? Our culture, our modern culture, has got some interesting takes on worship. Such as this one. Have you ever seen at sports events where people have done something brilliant and the crowd all start bowing down like this? Well, this was a goal by Messi in the World Cup a couple of years ago and if you can see on the picture there, there are people in the crowd with their hands up, bowing down, worshipping him and I thought the headline was quite interesting saying Godlike figure Lionel Messi. They're worshipping.

Or what about this?

I have to praise you, baby.

I have to praise you. You've heard the whole of that song now in that less than one minute clip. That's all the words of the song. If you didn't know what I said, it's called Praise You by Fatboy Slim. It was a hit record a few years ago. The verse is repeated maybe once more, but almost all the way through that song.

[2 : 10] That line, I'm going to praise you like I should, constantly, constantly repeats. It becomes almost like a mantra. He's talking about a relationship. He says, we've been through the hard times.

I'm going to celebrate you, baby. I'm going to praise you like I should. He's referring to a relationship, something that's important to him. He's worshipping. He's praising. Or did you see this story on the news today, this week?

It caught my eye on Friday. This guy was called to, he was a court case on Friday. And in court, if you're giving us a witness, you have to swear, as you know, an oath.

Historically, he's got a Bible. Now you can do it on a secular one or on a holy book, which is not the Bible, the Koran or whatever. This guy brought in a vial of water from a river.

Now, the case was about pollution on the river that he was actually as a witness on. And he brought this in. And the reason he gave to the judge was what caught my eye. This is a quote from the BBC website.

[3 : 19] Mr. Pounslund explained that his devotion for the river, which includes planting trees along its bank, removing litter and campaigning against water pollution, is like a religion.

I told him the river was effectively my God and that I hold the river to be sacred. Our culture worships sports stars and celebrities, relationships, nature.

There's two pastors that I've, one I knew personally, one that I have heard and speak. My pastor in Edinburgh, when I was a teenager, wrote this book.

It says we're created to praise. Paul Tripp, talking about this Psalm 29 we're about to look at, says that we are hardwired to worship. It's built into us to worship.

Worship is when we give our full attention to something. It becomes the centre of our life. In this case, this guy was the river. We all do it.

[4 : 22] We all do it all the time, whether we realise it or not. The question is, what or who are we worshipping? Psalm 29 was written by David, King David.

And in it, he gives us the purpose of worshipping God as the ultimate. If you have your Bibles with you, can you open to Psalm 29?

And we're going to go through this Psalm together. And understand three key reasons why Paul gives us, Paul, David, gives us for worshipping God.

We worship God, firstly, because for who he is. Verses 1 and 2.

Ascribe to the Lord, you heavenly beings. Ascribe to the Lord glory and strength. Ascribe to the Lord the glory due his name. Worship the Lord in the splendour of his holiness. He pitches straight

in and he asks us to worship God.

[5 : 24] He tells us to worship God. And the opening scene, the first two verses, are in heaven. He's addressing the heavenly beings. Those who reside in heaven. Who are in God's presence continually.

And you would have thought that being in God's presence continually, being in heaven, the place where God is, they would be worshipping God. And they probably are. But here, he commands them.

He instructs them. He exhorts them to ascribe, to give to God glory and strength. What does that mean? Why is he doing that?

Isn't God glorious and strong already? Why do you have to ascribe and give him to something he already has? Well, of course not. But David is reminding us and the people and heavenly beings he's addressing here, that we should be worshipping God for who he is.

As it says in verse 2, the glory due to his name. Now, glory is a difficult word to translate. Its root in Hebrew means heavy, weightiness, importance.

[6 : 35] One way I was thinking to try to illustrate it was the fact that back in the 60s and 70s, the sort of hippie culture, epitomized by one of the characters in *The Young Ones*, when someone said something that was really deep and meaningful, he would go, heavy man.

That's what it means. It means heaviness. It means weightiness. It means something that is worth thinking about and worth having. We all know what it is. If you've been watching the Olympics, you've been watching it and hearing it and talking about it this week.

People striving for glory. You know what glory is. Sometimes it's difficult to put into words. But in God's context, God's glory, it's about his awesomeness, his greatness, his majesty, his immenseness.

I'm running out of words to try and describe it. But also specifically, as we'll come on to see in a moment, it talks about him dwelling with his people. Tabernacling with his people.

That he was with them. And they were to ascribe to him the glory in the old, in the tabernacle. The glory, we'll see in a moment, filled the temple.

[7 : 48] And the fact that he was with them. But it's not just his glory. It was the glory due to his name. Names are important in Hebrew culture, particularly in the Old Testament.

It describes who you are. When Diane was pregnant with our daughter, we were talking about names. And she suggested a name to me, which I said, no, no, I'm not having that name.

Because that name was somebody I'd known, or somebody I'd known in the past when I was a child. And she was a very precocious, bossy, bit of a madam. And I always associated the name Abigail with that.

Until I discovered what it meant. Abigail means her father's delight, or her father's joy. And that changed my mind. And we called our daughter Abigail.

And Diane will tell you, I'm the only person in the world who calls her Abigail. Everyone, she calls herself, everyone calls her Abby. I call her Abigail, because it always reminds me what her name means. That she is my delight.

[8 : 56] But she's meant to be. Her name is important. We give names because they're important. In the Old Testament, people were given names that are important. Abraham, which means father, was changed to Abraham, which means father of many, because of what he was going to do.

Moses means drawn out. He was drawn out of the water. Joshua means the Lord saves. And then you have Jesus, which is the Greek version of Joshua, in the New Testament, which means the Lord saves.

And he was also called Emmanuel, which is God with us. Names are important. They describe who somebody is. And God's name describes who he is. You'll notice in verse, well, you'll notice all the way through this psalm, but in the first two verses, the name Lord is in capital letters.

It's a particular word, Yahweh. It's the name that God gave himself. It's his revealed special name. It's the name he gave him when Moses asked him.

Moses said to him in Exodus 3, suppose I go to the Israelites and say to them, the God of your fathers has sent me to you. And they ask me, what is his name? Then what shall I tell them? God said to Moses, I am who I am.

[10 : 10] Sometimes translated, I am who I am. I will be who I will be. I was who I was. It's a sort of a continual thing. It's God's existence. This is what you are to say to the Israelites.

I am has sent me to you. God also said to Moses, say to the Israelites, the God of your fathers, the Lord, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob has sent me to you.

This is my name forever. The name you shall call me from generation to generation. It was his revealed name. And in this psalm, it's repeated 18 times if you count them.

In the Old Testament, it's repeated 5,321 times. It's an important name. It's the name of who God is. It stresses his unchanging nature.

I am. I have always existed. I will always exist. I am existing now. I am unchanging. Particularly to his people. So in Psalm 29, they're told to ascribe to the glory due to his name.

[11:15] And then he addresses all creation. And he encourages us all to worship him. And he said, worship him in the splendor of his holiness. This is a phrase that again refers to not just the presence of the Lord, but it's best seen in three other brief passages which we'll quickly look at.

In Exodus, where the tabernacle, as I said, comes down. And the glory of the Lord appears. And I made the tabernacle. Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting and the glory of the Lord filled the temple.

Moses could not enter the tent of meeting because the cloud had settled on it. And the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. In 1 Kings, when Solomon built the temple, when the priests withdrew from the holy place, the cloud filled the temple of the Lord.

And the priests could not perform the service because of the cloud, for the glory of the Lord filled the temple. And then finally in Isaiah. Isaiah looked in chapter 6.

And in the sanctuary, he sees God. And he meets God. And I won't read the whole passage, but it says, the train, he was high exalted, the train of a robe filled the temple.

[12:28] And it said, at the sound of the voice, the doorpost and threshold shook. And holy, holy, holy is the Lord almighty. The whole earth is full of the glory. And Isaiah said, woe to me, I am ruined, for I am a man of unclean lips.

God's glory. God's glory is his presence with his people. And it talks about his presence with them and helping them. And did you notice in all three, God's glory is represented, is characterized by either cloud or smoke.

That it gets everywhere. If you sort of blow some smoke into a box, it just doesn't fill a corner. It just expands to fill the whole box. It reaches every nook and cranny, around every corner.

And also the people in these cities could do nothing in God's presence. Moses couldn't enter. The priests couldn't form their duty. And Isaiah became aware of his sin before this holy God, when the glory of God was shown.

What's our reaction to God's glory? To his name? To his presence with us? Do we stand in awe and wonder? Do we bask in the beauty of his perfection?

[13:42] Out of his holiness? Do we stand back and go, wow, what a great God he is? What an amazing God he is.

Just in his being. No more than that. Just the fact that he exists. He is immense. But then, scene shifts from heaven.

In the next few verses in Psalm 29, the scene shifts to earth. And specifically, we're asked to worship God because of his great strength and power in verses 3 to 9.

He is the only one who's truly worthy of our worship. These verses poetic describe God's power as if it was a storm.

We know the natural phenomena in storms can wreak immense havoc. We've seen it ourselves in the news, in floods and in storms, wildfires, etc.

[14:45] around our world. I don't know if you caught any of the storm on Thursday. I heard rumblings in the distance but didn't see much else. But we know the immense power of storms. I remember once at university, there was a storm late at night and I went up to the top floor of the Hall of Residence which looked out over East London and it was coming in from the East and it was dark and I remember sitting there in the kitchen watching the storm and the lightning flashing and lighting up the sky.

It was just awesome to watch. Or have you ever watched a thunderstorm approaching? Well David here describes one. And if you have seen one you can understand the power of it.

David may well have experienced it himself and seen it and he's recalling something maybe when he was in the desert looking after the sea we don't know. But he recalls this storm and he thinks about the storm and interestingly he follows the track.

If you follow this let's read verses 3 to 9. The voice of the Lord is over the waters the glory of God thunders the Lord thunders over the mighty waters the voice of the Lord is powerful the voice of the Lord is majestic the voice of the Lord breaks the cedars the Lord breaks in pieces the cedars of Lebanon he makes Lebanon leap like a calf Syrian like a wild young ox the voice of the Lord strikes with flashes of lightning the voice of the Lord shakes the desert the Lord shakes the desert of Kadesh the voice of the Lord twists the oaks and strips the forest bare and in his temple all cry glory.

The track of the storm starts over the sea. It then tracks over the north of Israel. John was praying earlier on for the land of Israel and actually hits somewhere up in the north in Lebanon.

[16:29] And then it follows down the country, down to Kadesh, which is in the south. So this storm basically covers from the Mediterranean in the north then down and then out over the south again. But interestingly, although he's talking about a storm, he uses the storm as a picture to describe God and his power.

Because repeatedly through this one, it's not just the Lord, but the voice of the Lord is repeated seven times. It's Hebrew poetry is best, where the subject is repeated time and time and time again to ram home the point, to make you notice that it's the voice of the Lord he's talking about, nothing else.

Yes, it is describing a storm, but it's the voice of the Lord he's talking about. Look at what the effect the voice has. It thunders over the water.

Water in the Bible depicts sometimes restlessness and unruly forces of devastation and floods. But God rules over them. He rules over the floods of the water in Noah.

And Jesus, as God on earth, ruled over the storm and calmed the storm. He rules over the waters. He breaks cedars and oaks. Two great trees.

[17:46] Last week, during our service, Mike Roper reminded us of the California redwood trees, these huge trees that grow. But here, the voice of the Lord shatters cedars.

It breaks cedars of Lebanon. Now, cedars in biblical times were the redwoods of their day. They were the big, tall, magnificent trees. And yet, the storm shatters these. Have you ever seen the lightning hit up?

Have you ever seen the after effects of lightning hitting a tree? The tree is just completely splintered. No human can do that with a chainsaw. It's just completely shattered. That's what the voice of God does.

It shatters trees. He talks about Lebanon leaping like a calf and Syrian like a wild young ox. The meaning behind these words is not one leaping in joy, but leaping and running away.

Scared. Terrified. Animals get terrified of loud noises. And that's why it runs away. There's flashes of lightning. And then the last verse, it shakes the desert.

[18:50] One of my wish-to lists, which I don't think I'm going to get to, is to watch a rocket launch live. And I've been told, if you're ever actually near, you can only ever get about two or three kilometres from the launch site.

And I've been told when you see it, you can see the smoke appear, and then the noise hits you and the ground shakes. We were fortunate enough to be at Kennedy Space Centre, and we were in a simulation of the rocket launches in the control room.

And they simulated it by noise, and the room was shaking to try and simulate what it was like. It wasn't near it. It was a simulation, and it wasn't near what it was like really watching a rocket launch.

And it would be nothing like what this would be like in terms of God shaking the desert. God is powerful and strong. And he twists oaks and he strips for us bare.

What a powerful God. His voice does this. He's not just the creator of the world, but he's the powerful ruler of the world as well.

[20:03] And he's the one whose voice can sustain it or destroy it. He is that powerful. And David is also using this to contrast the God of the Bible with the God of the pagan worlds around him.

Many of the religions around, and interestingly, on the news on Friday, people saw gods in nature, in rivers, in sea, in floods, in mountains, in whatever.

And they saw the forces of nature that were so powerful. There's the gods being angry. These were gods you feared and ran away from. Because in their rage and in their anger, they could destroy you.

But David sees these expressions as the power of the true God and the one which draws us to raise our heads and our hearts and our voices who prays and worship to the one who has this power.

Not to cower and run away, but the one that makes us go, wow, what a powerful God. And that brings us back in verse 9.

[21 : 16] Brings us back full circle. He started in heaven, he went through this powerful storm depicting God's power, and then in verse 9, at the end of the verse, he said, And all in his temple cry, glory.

All the people just sit there and see this. And if all in wonder, not in fear and trembling, they just cry glory.

And they worship. We should worship God because of who he is and his presence with his people. We should worship God because of the great strength and power he has. And we should also worship God for the things he's done for us. The last two verses of Psalm 29, The Lord sits enthroned over the flood.

The Lord is enthroned as king forever. The Lord gives strength to his people. The Lord blesses his people with peace. The scene shifts back again to heaven. But it's a different end, and it's a surprising end to this psalm as well.

[22 : 20] After all this powerful activity, the Lord is seated on his throne and reigning as king, which you'd expect because he's powerful. But then it says, the result of God reigning gives two gifts to his people.

Did you notice that in the last verse? He gives strength to his people and he blesses his people with peace. Now strength we can understand. We've just talked about the power of God and he gives strength to his people.

Strength to hold us up when times are hard and difficult. Strength that keeps us trusting when times are confusing. The strength to keep going when we feel like giving up.

But peace? Isn't that a bit surprising? After all the fury of the storm, all the description of this power and might that he's just displayed? Peace?

How did he do that? Well, David is speaking prophetically here. Because this psalm points forward. It points forward to David's greatest son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

[23 : 25] David speaks of him enthroned over the flood. We talked about waters being restlessness, but floods in the Bible, and particularly in the big flood that we all know of in Genesis.

It spoke of God's judgment. It spoke of God judging the people and flooding the world and clearing out the world, as it were. It was a judgment of God on the people of Noah's day.

And here he sits enthroned over the flood. And it speaks of Jesus sitting and removing the punishment and God's judgment from us because of what he did.

That he is enthroned over the flood and he reigns as king forever. Because through his sacrifice at Calvary, Jesus has not just brought in peace, but he's brought in eternal kingdom.

And with that, he can bring peace to his people. Jesus through his sacrifice doesn't just shatter trees.

[24 : 30] He shatters sin and death. And through that, he brings peace to the heart that will say, you are my savior. In John 14, Jesus says at the end of his life when he's about to leave his disciples, he says, my peace I leave with you.

My peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid. I have overcome the world.

Psalm 29 is a psalm we need to know. It's a psalm we need in our lives. It calls us to worship God. It calls us to worship God and to glorify this God, this personal God, who isn't just a God out there in power and authority as he is.

He's a God who's with his people. He's present with his people and he wants to bless his people. But if we're honest, we can sit there and listen to this and we can go, wow, what an amazing God.

And we've had all these reasons to worship God, but sometimes, maybe quite often, we don't. And David knows this because in verse 1, he commands us, he says, ascribe to the Lord glowing strength.

[25 : 51] He's commanding us to do it because he knows that what one commentator says, Paul Tripp said about this psalm, there's a worship war going on in our hearts.

We can see all these things about God, that he is an amazing God. We can see his power and his display and the voice is displayed. We can hear the story of how he brings peace through the cross. And yet, we sometimes don't worship because there's this war going on in our hearts that's pulling us away from it. We've seen it at the beginning.

As I said at the beginning, people want to worship. We have this hole in our life to worship. C.S. Lewis called us this God-shaped hole in us that wants to worship something.

And if it isn't God we're worshiping, we'll worship something else. And that war that's going on in our hearts is pulling us away from God. What draws your heart in worship?

[26 : 56] What's important to you? What's the one thing? It may not be celebrity in sport. It may not be relationships. What is it? What is it? Is it maybe somebody or something?

Is it power and control? Is it financial success? Is it material possessions? Is it the affection of a certain person?

Is it physical beauty and attractiveness? Or health? What is warring in your soul to draw you away from the worshiping the one true God that we should be worshiping?

What war is going on in your soul and in my soul to draw us away from God? Because these things never satisfy. They said there's this hole in our lives that we will fill it because our culture has rejected God generally speaking.

They fill that hole with something else as we've seen with other things whatever they are. But these things never satisfy. They just addict us and want us to come back with one because they never satisfy.

[28 : 04] Only God truly satisfies. Only worshipping God truly satisfies us. And as we worship and praise God only that will actually fill our lives.

These things are good things in themselves mostly. But sometimes they pull us away and they're pointers they're signs that should point us to God but instead they point us to those things and we run after them rather than God.

And sin has this perverse ability to blind us to the glory of God. John Ross last week was talking about Psalm 19 and he talked about the silent voice of nature.

We've seen the power of God in nature but the silent voice of nature is saying that people are without excuse. Nature is there. The beauty of nature. The intricacy of nature.

You look at Snowflake everyone's individual. Everyone's different. There's immense intricacy in it and it should point us to God but sin has this perverse desire that pulls us away to blind us to the glory of God.

[29 : 10] What is taking your heart? What is taking your worship? Is it God? Or is it something or someone else? And maybe it's because you don't know him.

Maybe you are a Christian and you've been diverted onto these things and you're following other things. Maybe it's because you're not a Christian. Maybe it's because you've never known Jesus. Maybe it's because you've never come to him.

And you've never seen him in his beauty and his glory and his majesty. Do you know him as your saviour rather than just creator and sustainer?

Have you been given his peace through the forgiveness that he gives us through the cross? Can you truly say that he blesses you with peace? Are you drawn to worship him more now because we read Psalm 29?

Are you drawn to worship God more because of who he is? To worship him more because of his power and strength that he gives you? To worship him more because of what he's done for you?

[30 : 15] Giving you peace and saving you? Do you bask in his glory? Do you stand out and walk outside into the sunlight and look up at the sun and just go, is that what you do with God's glory?

Do you worship him and truly say, wow, what a God, what a saviour. Let's pray. Amen. Father, we thank you for the fact that you are such an amazing God.

Human words, my words, cannot express how great you are. Fill our hearts, Lord, with that sense of who you are and your power, your strength, and what you've done for us.

Help us to bask in your glory. Forgive us when the war that goes on in our hearts draws us away from you. Help us to turn to you, to use the things you've given us in your world that are so amazing, that point to you.

Help us to use them to go to you and not run to them. Forgive us when we don't, Lord. Cleanse us, we pray. Help us to know in our hearts once again that we can truly worship you.

[31 : 56] We are truly free. We are truly created to praise and to give you glory and honour. In Jesus' name we ask. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.