

Psalm 29

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[0 : 00] Again, our passage for this morning is Psalm 29. Please stand for the reading of God's Word. The Psalm of David.

Ascribe to the Lord, O heavenly beings. Ascribe to the Lord glory and strength. Ascribe to the Lord the glory due his name. Worship the Lord in the splendor of holiness.

The voice of the Lord is over the waters. The God of glory thunders. The Lord over many waters.

The voice of the Lord is powerful. The voice of the Lord is full of majesty.

The voice of the Lord breaks the cedars. The Lord breaks the cedars of Lebanon. He makes Lebanon to skip like a calf. And Syrian like a young wild ox. The voice of the Lord flashes forth flames of fire.

The voice of the Lord shakes the wilderness. The Lord shakes the wilderness of Kadesh. The voice of the Lord makes the deer give birth and strips the forest bare. And in his temple all cry glory.

[1 : 07] The Lord sits enthroned over the flood. The Lord sits enthroned as king forever. May the Lord give strength to his people. May the Lord bless his people with peace.

This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. You may be seated. Amen. Good morning.

It's a joy to be together. Marcus, who we prayed for in the congregational prayer, is actually here this morning. Can't seem to locate you, though.

But Marcus, thanks for being here. Your presence with us strengthens us. And we're glad that you're here with us.

Two other things. Firstly, this evening we will actually be in this space at 7.30 for our monthly congregational prayer time.

[2 : 26] It will be led by Andy, who led us in prayer earlier during the service. So come join us, 7.30 to 8.30. I will be there as well. And we'll be able to celebrate the Lord's table, take communion together.

So please join us, 7.30. And then secondly, at the conclusion of our time this morning, as usual, the second Sunday of each month, we receive a second offering, which goes to our deacon fund.

And the deacon fund, in summary, is a fund that the deacons disseminate based on needs and requests that emerge from this congregation.

And so don't be alarmed if that bag finds its way to you during the closing song. But we are in Psalm 29 this morning.

We've committed to staying in the Psalms. One, to set up Joe, who will actually open up Psalm 8 for us. And for the past, oh, I don't know, 15, 16 weeks, we actually were in the Songs of Ascents that we had just finished up last week.

[3 : 38] So today, this morning, we are in Psalm 29. But as we turn to the Lord, let us just pause to pray. Father, we say with the psalmist, the unfolding of your words give light.

It imparts understanding. And so, Lord, by your Spirit, would you unfold your word, that it would bestow upon us light, illuminate our lives, and give us understanding.

Go with us, we pray. We ask these things for Jesus' sake. Amen. Amen. Amen. Living in the

Midwest, one of the natural phenomena that we are able to witness is the thunderstorm.

Growing up in California, there was no such thing. We just get earthquakes and things. But at times, we view them from a distance, marveling at how lightning bolts illuminate the night sky, and maybe faintly hearing thunder at a distance.

At times, we're far closer, where the cracks of thunder occur soon after the lightning strikes. So close that the bass generated by the thunder can not only be heard, but felt.

[4 : 57] Property can be damaged. Property can be damaged. Medically documented cases of internal bruising or contusions, and even loss of hearing have occurred from nearby thunder.

These storms are fascinating, awe-inspiring, and at times, terrifying. And if they don't generate a sense of terror or fear in you, a turbulent flight through a storm will certainly change your mindset. It set me on a rabbit trail to figure out what thunder was actually. The cause of thunder came to scientific consensus in the last century.

From what I understand, when lightning strikes, it generates heat, causing a rapid expansion of the air around it, creating thunder.

Incidentally, the lightning is estimated to be about 5,000 degrees Fahrenheit. Now, if you're curious how hot that is, that is five times the heat emitted from the surface of the sun.

[6 : 08] To say that it is powerful is an understatement. And it should be no shock, pun intended, that the ancients tethered thunder and lightning to the gods.

It was entirely otherworldly. They could not explain it. Israel's neighbors, the Canaanites, attributed thunder and lightning to the god Baal. He was in the thunder and lightning.

There was a deification of nature, for it exceeded all explanation. Thunder was Baal in action. But for Israel, this was not to be the case.

For Israel, God would not be contained nor constrained by nature, but would sit above it. God would not be equated to nature.

Rather, He would rule and reign over it. He would be the God who sends and withholds rain. He would be the God who commands storms, like Jonah.

[7 : 12] And He would be the God who still storms, like with the disciples. It's reassured in this encounter that God had with a prophet named Elijah.

You might remember this story. Elijah just had a showdown with Baal and her prophets, his prophets. And Elijah was terrified, and so he ran and he fled.

And while he's in hiding, God shows up. And the first manifestation was a mighty wind. But the writer tells us God was not found in the wind that destroyed mountains.

Then came an earthquake that shook the ground. But the writer tells us again God was not found in an earthquake.

And finally, fire ravaged. And the writer tells us again that God was not found in the fire. And finally, a small whisper emerges.

[8 : 15] And there God is found. See, the Lord was not to be found in any of the natural manifestations. Rather, He was found in a low whisper.

He was the Creator, not the created. And the two must be distinguished. For God's people, He would never be equal with nature. He would be supreme over it.

Distinguishing Him from all the other surrounding gods of the nations. And for us, the Christian, we may revere nature.

We certainly admire it and study it. But we never bow to it. We may in wonder, admire it. But we ultimately worship the God who declares Himself over it.

And this morning's psalm reorients us. And directs all of our attention to the glory of the Lord.

[9 : 14] And it does so in an awe-inspiring way. This morning, I want us to see we are to give glory to the God of all glory. That's the tongue twister.

Give glory to the God of all glory. It is certainly the centering theme of the psalm. It's repeated in verses 1, 2, 3, and 9.

The psalm will show us two things about glory. Firstly, glory is demanded by God. Secondly, glory is demonstrated by God.

Two things. Those are the signs. Glory demanded. Glory demonstrated. In the first two verses, the psalm opens up with a three-fold summons. Poetically evident, even in the original language, but seen here in our English translations as well.

Ascribe to the Lord. Ascribe to the Lord. Ascribe to the Lord. To ascribe simply means to give or to acknowledge. The call is to give God glory.

[10 : 21] To give God glory. It's interesting that the call appears to be in the heavenly courts. You see that in verse 1. It's not a call to humanity, though there is one later in the psalms.

It's not a call to nature, though nature does give glory and praise to God. It's a call to heavenly beings. It's a little funny, because it's the psalm attributed to David, a human, who is now calling into the heavenly realm for the angels and the heavenly beings and the court to give glory to God.

David is calling possibly potential deities, rival deities, certainly the angelic host, to give God praise. To ascribe to the Lord glory and strength.

Glory that is due his name. It's quite astounding. Even in the heavens, God has no rivals. As the ancient world served a pantheon or array of gods, they were all to ascribe glory to the Lord of Israel. He was not only the centerpiece. He was the supreme peace. He was... The psalm is so focused on the Lord that his name is mentioned 18 times in these 11 verses.

[11:54] If you're curious where the glory goes, the psalmist wants you to know it goes to the Lord. To the Lord. God's glory would belong to no other.

He is the sole object of Israel's worship. He is the Lord. That is his name. And his glory he would give to no other. And certainly, if it's a glory demanded from heavenly beings, then surely it's a glory that would be demanded from us on earth.

But what does it look like to ascribe to the Lord glory and strength? See, glory, as Dave mentioned, for a mountain is its immensity, its weight.

For glory of God is... It's his weight. And that doesn't mean that he's heavy. But his weightiness. We are to ascribe to empower.

It's simply to acknowledge him for his power. We are those who worship the Lord and acknowledge his worthiness. And David here understands something about the nature of the human heart, I think.

[13:02] You see, the human heart and the human inclination is to ascribe glory to things. It's to ascribe glory to people.

We have a tendency to misdirect our glory. Possibly to others. Certainly to ourselves. We have a tendency to put weightiness in matters that aren't that significant.

That's why the first commandment acknowledges this. This very reality. We shall have no other gods before the Lord because our hearts want to put glory everywhere else but the Lord.

John Calvin says our hearts are little idol factories. We're manufacturing gods to worship. Give me something and I will show you how to worship it. Give me a hobby and I can worship it.

Give me an image and I can worship it. Give me an ideology and I can worship it. That's our tendency. We are idol factories.

[14:09] I don't have to teach you how to worship something. We do it because inwardly we're bent and crooked. Achievement, wealth, status, relationships, substances, things, ideas.

You show it to me and I will market it. We will give glory to a job, to a person, to a goal. And more and more we become those, even though we are those who bear the image of God, we desire to be God.

We make ourselves into idols, clamoring for self-exaltation. Give me the glory. And if your heart resembles mine in any way, there is a sinful gratification that I have when I receive applause.

Congratulations. What an achievement, Bing. What an accomplishment. Well done. And you, I, actually begin to believe that what I've achieved and what I've accomplished and what I've made, I've done on my own.

And there I am, metaphorically speaking, standing on the rooftop, looking out upon my great estate that I built and with my mighty power.

[15:29] See, this self-exaltation, this adulation, is my disposition, my depravity. See, the psalm serves as a polemic against the gods that were worshipped by Israel's neighbors, but it's a confrontation on our own hearts as well.

We are those who ascribe to ourselves far more than we ought. We are those who ascribe to ourselves glory and strength. For us to take this psalm to heart, we must be those who ascribe to the Lord the glory that is due His name.

When opportunity arises in the workplace, in the classroom, in home, or with a neighbor, and all these successes begin being attributed to us, what really happens is we rob God.

We take credit when it's not ultimately our accomplishment. We recognize it in the world, don't we? Plagiarism is wrong. Why?

Because I'm taking credit for what this writer did. Violating a patent is wrong. Why? Because that belongs to them, and I'm taking it as mine.

[16:48] stealing intellectual property is legally condemned. Why? Because there is no way I should receive credit for that person's work.

And so here we are, fallen humanity. Ascribe to me glory when God is saying, that is not yours. It doesn't belong to you.

It never shall belong to you. We are to be those who ascribe the Lord, the glory due His name.

God help us. Glory demanded by God is now leads to glory demonstrated by God in verses 3 and following. We are to give God glory, but we are also to understand that He is the God of all glory. That means whatever He does manifests His glory. We are to give glory to the God of all glory. And now David seems to reach into his life experiences and pens a demonstration of what God's glory must look like.

[17 : 56] And he comes up with the metaphor of the thunderstorm. The thunderstorm. The image is a mighty one, and it's tethered to divine speech. God's glory is displayed as he speaks, and you see it repeatedly in these verses.

The voice of the Lord. The voice of the Lord. The voice of the Lord. The voice of the Lord. Nearly every verse, seven times in total, begins with the phrase, the voice of the Lord.

God's glory is found in His voice, in His speech, in His communicative act. His glory is found in His voice, and His voice is majestically powerful.

Verse 4 highlights that. The voice of the Lord is powerful. The voice of the Lord is full of majesty. And it's compared with all of these natural phenomena that you find in a thunderstorm.

Over the waters. The tides and the waves and the currents that are generated from it. Thunder and lightning. Earthquakes.

[19 : 03] Earthquakes. Incidentally, as the ancients assigned gods to all of these, the god of the water, the god of the thunder, the god of the earthquake, we, in our day, we assign it not to gods, but to disciplines.

Whether it be oceanography, or meteorology, or geology, we understand that there is no one that is competent over all these fields.

And here the psalmist says, let me tell you one. It's His voice that shakes the cedars. These cedars were used to build Solomon's temple and palace.

His voice causes animals to skip in terror. His voice causes the earth to shake. The forests are stripped bare. And David goes on to identify it's not only in forests, but it's from north to south.

From Lebanon and Syria in the north to the wilderness of Kadesh all the way into the south. His voice not only has, it's not only at a specific location, it's all over. When God speaks, it is heard, seen, and felt.

[20 : 23] It's so unlike our speech, isn't it? When I speak, I'm hopefully heard. But that's disproven at home at times.

When I speak, sometimes it's felt. Perhaps it's an emotional relay or heartfelt conversation.

But when I speak, I never see inanimate objects move or respond. Yet when God speaks, I'll hear, I'll see, and I'll feel.

it's incredible. It's incredible. All of creation moves because His majesty has uttered a decree. It is the same speech that called forth something from nothing.

It is that voice that illuminated the darkness with light. It is that voice that filled lifeless earth and filled it with life. It is that same voice in creation that brought forth everything that we see.

[21 : 35] and it's that same voice that causes all that we see to shake. The impression we are to get is one of majestic awe, mighty in strength, glorious in splendor, spanning the land of the nation.

The glory is so evident that at the conclusion of the matter, you notice it, don't you, in verse 9.

Hithare, the temple on earth. Notice by awe the response is glory.

Glory. Glory. And so you have, it's an interesting, David calls out to heaven and says, ascribe to the Lord glory.

The Lord demonstrates His glory. And there, everyone in the temple, all on earth, respond. glory.

Glory. The single cry of glory. I want to make this assertion. When we hear the voice of God, we experience the glory of God.

[22 : 52] When you and I hear the voice of God, we experience the glory of God. Similarly to Elijah, we don't often hear of God in the wind or in the earthquake or in the fire.

Rather, here at Christ Church Chicago, it's our conviction that we hear God through the still, small voice that emerges from the scriptures. We hold this conviction that God still speaks today.

that we can hear from Him, that we can feel Him, that we can see Him at work. We claim it, we claim the Bible lives because God's active voice is in this book.

We claim that God's voice is heard when His word is preached. Now, the significance, I mean, I know this sounds weird because I'm standing up here doing it, but the significance of my position doesn't come from a title that I received or a degree that I earned or an experience that I had.

It comes from this. The significance of what takes place up here is that the Bible is opened, that God may be heard, that Jesus may be seen, and that the Spirit may be felt.

[24 : 14] It is my role to the best of my capacity to mediate that, mediate an encounter with God through His word, by His Spirit.

The day that this book is unmentioned and closed or overlooked is the day that God will no longer be heard. And so, the psalm concludes in verses 10 and 11.

A new image is brought forth, one that is a throne, and we find that this voice proceeds from a throne, a throne that happens to be situated over the flood.

The speech proceeds from one who is seated upon a throne forever. And here we're given an image of a rule that has no end and a rule that has no cosmic limitations.

Temporally, it will never end. Materially, all things are subservient to this throne, even the flood.

Incidentally, in verse 10, that word flood is only used in Genesis 6-11, referring to the cosmic flood.

[25 : 21] And here, we see the Lord of all glory sitting and speaking. The psalm ends with a petition or a request, a promise in the future.

May the Lord give strength to His people. May the Lord bless His people with peace. The comfort comes in knowing that the God who is enthroned over the chaos of the flood can give strength and peace to His people.

The Lord seated in a throne can actually bless His people with peace. The same strength that is ascribed to Him in verse 1 is now imparted by Him in verse 11.

The psalm has an incredibly poetic movement to it. From heaven to earth, at the outset, heaven is summoned to give glory to God.

At the close, the Lord is summoned to give strength and peace to His people. It should come as no surprise then when the angel of the Lord appears to the shepherds who are keeping watch over their flock at night, announcing the arrival of a little baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in the manger.

[26 : 39] And that angel makes the announcement and all of a sudden, if you, I think, I mean, you might have read this over Christmas season. All of a sudden, the heavens open and the angelic hosts show up and what do they say?

Glory. Glory to God in the highest and what? And peace on earth. It's as if the angels knew this song.

In heaven, what do we do? We ascribe glory and what will God do on earth? He will bring peace.

And imitating the form of the psalm, glory given in heaven, peace given on earth.

Why? How? How does this even happen? Well, I'll close with this. Because the one who was enthroned in verse 10 actually moved from his throne.

He stood from his throne. He put on human flesh, stepped out of heaven, proceeded past the heavenly hosts, now lay on a cradle on earth.

[27 : 54] The Lord who was enthroned in heaven now found himself encapsulated in a trough. And the angel, I mean, this is crazy. The angel's praises accompanied him. The one whose voice broke cedars and shook the wilderness now was giving off infant Christ.

You know what's staggering to me? God's voice brought forth all of creation.

Surely God could have declared it and forgiven us. He could have spoke the word and it would have been done. But instead, to secure our salvation, to give us peace, to strengthen his people, he determined it would not come through speech, but through sacrifice.

Could God have saved us by direct decree? Certainly. But in his glory he chose this. I will save them entering into history, becoming a human, laying down my life and suffering.

This is the great mystery of the will of God. His simple voice would have been adequate and sufficient, yet instead he chose to take on the nature of a servant born in human likeness, emptying himself in humility, becoming obedient, obedient, even to death on a cross.

[29 : 33] Why? Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and bestowed upon him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.

Why? to the glory of God the Father. God would be ascribed glory not only by the heavenly beings, but in Christ he determined it, that God would be ascribed glory on earth through the death and sacrifice and resurrection of the Lord Jesus.

Jesus, you know how glorious that is? You know why Jesus is glorious? He served in a manner that is greater than any of us will ever serve.

He suffered in a manner and a degree greater than any of us will suffer. He saved in such a manner that none of us would be able to save and therefore we give Him glory.

We give glory to the God of all glory for He demands it, He demonstrates it in nature and He displays it in the Lord Jesus Christ.

[31 : 15] Father, we attribute to you all glory and praise.

Would you make us a congregation that yearns to hear the voice of God knowing that when we hear the voice of God, we experience the glory of God.

Help us to that end. And Father, as we sing to you, would you receive our praise and adoration, our worship, because we are doing what we were made to do, ascribing you glory.
glory.