

The Voice of Glory

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[0 : 0 0] So we're in week three of a series. We're looking at the glory of God in the Psalms. Now the word glory, it literally means weightiness, heaviness. If something's glorious, it has great substance to it. My wife's opinion has more weight than any of your opinions in my life. She is more glorious than you. So when Jesus says glorify the Father, glorify the Father's name, he's praying, Father, make your name weightier, make your name more important, make it more significant than anything else. So we're looking at Psalm 29 and the glory of God as it's expressed in Psalm 29. And just a couple of introductory thoughts here.

People have said that there's one of the problems with modern sort of evangelical Christianity is that there's too much stress laid on the idea that God is personal. And that leads to the mistake of thinking or the impression that God is a person like us, like a super buddy, perhaps. And in stressing our closeness to God, the critique has been that we've lost sight of God's majesty. Now, we should never downplay the idea that God is personal and close to us. But if that's our sole focus, we will forget that God is very other. Church buildings are designed in such a way to remind us of this. This building here, we have a cross to remind us of the work of Christ that's central. And because of the work of Christ, we can have a personal relationship with Jesus and the very life of God in us, in the Holy Spirit. But have you ever wondered why churches often, there's so much kind of like wasted space. I mean, we could put offices up there, a gymnasium if we put the ceiling there or something. But no, churches are made like this with these huge vaulted ceilings to remind us that yes, God is close, but God is also far. God is also very other. God is not like us. God is not limited like we are. He is not limited in His wisdom. God is not weak. God is not confused about good and evil. He is eternal, infinite. God is never ineffectual. So the psalm we have today to look at, Psalm 29, written by David, it does a tremendous job of bringing the majesty, the otherness of God back into focus for us. So let's have a look at it.

It starts, as you can see there, if it's in front of you, it's helpful if it's in front of you, with a call to worship, verses 1 and 2. A call to worship the one true God. And in summary, it says, give to God glory. Give to the Lord the glory. He's due. So it's calling us to worship the Lord, and not just people. It's calling the heavenly beings to worship God. Now, if you look at the second half of verse 2, it says, worship the Lord in the splendor of His holiness.

[3 : 3 3] It's the context in which we worship God. Now, we're not really used to sort of splendor, holiness, majesty. These are not words we throw around daily in our daily life just to describe things generally.

So it's hard to get this idea of cross, you know, of the bigness of God, the majesty of God. So I thought what I'd do is I'd take us to a picture the Bible gives us of what the holiness of God is like. And that's Isaiah 6. And a lot of you will know this passage. Just the first five verses. Let me read them to you. Isaiah 6, 1 to 5. And one called to another and said, Holy, holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts.

And the whole earth is full of His glory. And the foundations of the threshold shook at the voice of Him who called. And the house was filled with smoke. And I said, and this is Isaiah, And I said, woe is me, for I am lost.

I'm a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips. For my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts. So the year King Uzziah died, the Israelites, they weren't in great shape.

[5 : 1 2] They were comfortable in their sin. And that year, God spoke to His prophet Isaiah, and He called Isaiah to speak to His people. But before He did that, He He gave Isaiah a glimpse of heaven to see into the throne room of God.

And in that throne room, we see here, there are angels. And these creatures, despite how amazing these creatures are, they still covered their faces in the presence of God.

These creatures who had been around since at least the beginning of creation, who had always been in God's presence, were still overwhelmed by the holiness of God.

And what do these angels say to one another? Holy, holy, holy. And when the Bible wants to emphasize something, it usually says it twice in a row.

Like when Jesus is trying to really get people on board with His sermons in the New Testament, and He says something like, verily, verily, I say to you, or truly, truly, I tell you.

[6 : 25] But here, God is not just holy. He's not just holy, holy. He's holy, holy, holy. It's the only attribute of God mentioned three times in a row in the Bible.

That's the greatest emphasis that can be put on anything or anyone in Scripture. And it's telling us that this is the most important thing about God, that God is holy, holy, holy.

holy. And what is Isaiah's response to the holiness of God? Well, I love the King James Version. Isaiah says, woe to me, I am undone.

Back to Psalm 29. 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. Folks, God alone is worthy of our worship. Worship. And then David calls us to worship here.

[7 : 24] And then the passage moves on. So the first section there is the call to worship. And then most of the rest of it is the actual worship itself. That's verses three to nine.

So David praises God. And the way he does that is really, really interesting. In the book, Knowing God, by Dr. Packer, chapter eight.

It's great. Read it. He talks about the majesty of God. He doesn't mess around. He says things like this. He says, the lack of the sense of the majesty of God is the key reason why our faith is so weak and our worship so flabby.

It's a great line, isn't it? And at the end of the chapter, he makes two suggestions for rediscovering the majesty of God. And the second one, very interesting, the second one, he says this.

He says, we should compare God with powers and forces which we regard as great. We should compare God to powers and forces which we regard as great. And this is exactly what David does here in Psalm 29.

[8 : 26] He's trying to describe the undescribable. So what he does is he zooms in on the idea of God's voice, just God's voice. What God, it could also be translated the sound of God.

What does God sound like? And what does he say God sounds like? A storm. God is a storm. He is a devastating storm. God is a devastating storm.

God is a devastating storm. God is a devastating storm. I don't know if you've ever been in a really crazy storm before, but this one time I was in Alabama, and you know it's going to be a good story, right?

So any story that starts this one time in Alabama, so anyway, so this one time in Alabama, I'm with my wife Amy. We're at a conference, and you can check this story with Amy.

I will tell it. She's shaking her head at me, but this is exactly what happened. So we're for a conference. We're being billeted at someone's house. They had this big mansion sort of on this hill, and we had the top floor there, and all day people were talking about a storm's coming.

[9 : 30] Like they're saying, a storm's coming. Have you heard about the storm? What are you going to do tonight? Because the storm's coming. And in that part of the world, and I'm from New Zealand, so we have storms, but they're kind of, kind of just sort of, you take photos of them, and you stand out with a large sheet of corrugated iron on the top of a hill looking at the storm.

You know, like we don't take them too seriously. But in this part of the world, in Alabama, yeah, really bad storms. People die. Homes are destroyed in these kind of storms. So everyone's talking about it. Anyway, so we go to sleep that night.

Everyone's thinking about the storm. I'm sleeping quite happily. Around midnight, the storm hits Birmingham, Alabama, which is where we're staying. So I'm sleeping upstairs with Amy. I wake up, to her leaving the room when the storm hits.

And she's running down the stairs. And I kind of wake up, and I go, where are you going? And she goes, we're all going down to the bunker, to the basement, to get away from the storm for safety.

And I said, did you think you should wake me up for this, for this excursion? And she goes, I tried to wake you up, but you just wouldn't wake up, so I just left you.

[10:43] Now, this is a true story. In her defense, we were quite newly married, so we weren't, she wasn't that attached to me, I guess. A hundred percent true, that story.

Anyway, back to the passage. So David, he describes the storm, he describes the voice of God like a storm. And it's a storm that starts out over the water, over the Mediterranean, verse three, the voice of the Lord is over the waters.

The God of glory thunders, the Lord over many waters. So the storm starts on the water, and then it moves onto the land. And you see these, these geographic markers. And they mention places that are in the far north and the far south.

So it's Lebanon, Syria, and Kadesh. So it says, when the storm hits land, it spans the nation of Israel. This is a big storm. It hits land, and the things that the Israelites regard as unmovable, and powerful, and strong.

Those things are shown to be weak. The voice of the Lord breaks the cedars, splits trees in two. The cedars were the strongest and the most spectacular of trees in the Mediterranean.

[11:59] They're the trees used to build the tabernacle. The voice of the Lord snaps them. Verse six, he makes Lebanon to skip like a calf and Syrian, like a young wild ox.

It sounds a bit playful, like something kind of fun happening in the midst of this. No, it's talking about a mountain being moved. It's talking about a mountain skipping there. It makes mountains shake and jump, the voice of the Lord.

Verse seven, eight, nine, the voice of the Lord flashes forth flames. The voice of the Lord shakes the wilderness. It strips the forests bare. So you see, I mean, we could go through each of these here, but you see the picture.

The point's clear. Nothing can stand in the path of God's voice. And the climax of the praise is this in verse nine. In his temple, all cry glory.

Single word, glory. It's the right response. It's a response of joy. It's a response of humility. It's a response of fear.

[12:57] It's a response of understanding what they're dealing with there. And I just think there's not a whole lot you can say, really, that can add to the impressive testimony that God has given of himself here.

Glory is the right response. You just agree with it, don't you? God's glory is on display in a devastating way.

Verse 10, almost the end of the psalm, it says this, the Lord sits enthroned over the flood and the Lord sits enthroned as king forever. So the opening of the psalm takes us to God's throne room, surrounded by heavenly beings and at the end of the passage, we're back there again.

But do you see, do you see what we're reminded of? We're reminded of the flood right at the end. It's a throwaway line there. This is the only, the word flood is very telling there.

It's the only usage of the word flood outside of Noah's flood story in Genesis. So at the end of the psalm here, we're reminded again of the unmatched power of God.

[14:14] So the God who rules over the storm, we're reminded, has used the storm to judge his people. So you know the story. God in Genesis is so grieved by the evil of the world that he destroys it.

He gave people breath and he has the right to take that breath away. But he saves the family, he saves the animals. And it's, I mean, it's an amazing and sobering story that shows us the power of God and the judgment of God and the hope of God.

Verse 11. The final words of this passage are a benediction. They're a prayer. May the Lord give strength to his people. May the Lord bless his people with peace.

So this holy God who is all powerful in whom there's no corruption, who is not confused about good or evil, whose voice is like a storm that can destroy forests and make mountains jump, what does he do with all this power?

This God. What does God do with this devastating power? He gives people strength and he gives them peace.

[15:32] Folks, this God who is untameable and uncontrollable and all powerful and fearsome, he is also good. He is very good.

And he wants to bless you, his people, with the strength to live faithfully in this world and he wants to give you peace in the midst of chaos. I'll finish up here.

What has this all got to do with Jesus? This powerful voice of God, what it does is it points forward to Jesus who is himself described as the word of God.

God. And like God the Father, as I mentioned at the start, we can fall into the trap of kind of domesticating God.

We can sort of domesticate Jesus a little bit. Like we have, you know, in the Trinity, we have, we like Jesus because we feel like he's the nice one, you know, he's the nice guy.

[16:33] Well, I want to finish by reading just a section from Revelation 19 to you, which, by the way, is the series we'll start in the fore. Revelation 19, 11 to 16, it describes the judgment to come which Jesus will enact on the enemies of God.

It's a judgment that we will be free from because of the cross, because of our faith in Christ. So hear the words of John describing what it'll be like when Christ returns.

Revelation 19, 11 to 16. Then I saw heaven open and behold a white horse and the one sitting on it is called Faithful and True and in righteousness he judges and makes war.

His eyes are like a flame of fire and on his head are many diadems and he has the name written that no one but himself knows.

He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood and the name by which he is called is the word of God and the armies of heaven arrayed in fine linen white and pure were following him on white horses.

[17:43] From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations and he will rule them with a rod of iron. He will shred the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty on his robe and on his thigh he has a name written King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

This is our Jesus who will come again and make all things right. Folks, our God is pure and he is just he is other he is immeasurably powerful.

And if our hearts are closed to this idea two things will happen. One we will be a people who are just quite comfortable in our sin and that's a disaster.

The second thing that will happen is this is we will never experience the deep sense of safety and trust that comes with knowing that the creator and judge of the universe loves you.

And this being we just talked about is for you and wants to bless you and wants to direct all of that power towards you and give you life.

[19:04] Amen. Amen. Amen.