

# The Voice of Glory

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] Well, I want to add David's welcome to you and to Bishop Rennes, and it was so good to hear him talk about glory in his greeting, because we're talking about glory in this series on the Psalms, this short series that's going to end in a couple of weeks.

They are Psalms of glory in which we've been exploring God's glory deeply. We heard in the first reading from Psalm 8 about the majesty of God, and last week we heard about the creation belonging to God, showing his glory, the glory of God being shown because he is holy, but he is also personal as well, the holy God loving us and saving us, and that he has the power to save.

He is the Lord of hosts, the one with all power and authority to actually bring his saving, delivering work into our lives. And the thing that we are seeing as we're going through this is that there is nothing like God's glory that comes out of the world.

God's glory attracts us because it is about beauty, it is about goodness, it is about power and love far beyond our ability to imagine or what we can hope for.

And our world wants to make God small, one of many gods, or something that's a personally held opinion, or one who will serve a cause.

[ 1 : 3 3 ] The assumption of many is that God is something that we create, but we see in the Bible that God's glory demolishes this idea. There's a weightiness about God's glory that's far beyond what humans could think up or that anyone has seen.

So it's important to know this because it is what moves us to trust God, to worship him, and this fulfills our life. This is what brings true life to us as we see and experience the glory of God.

And Jim Packer, who, as you may know, is turning 90 in a couple of weeks, and we're going to announce a way to celebrate this later, but he wrote a little book called Knowing God that you may be familiar with.

And he said that the way to form the right idea of God's glory is done through the Bible. The Bible does that in two ways to show us what God's glory is.

First, it removes from our thoughts limits that would make God small. It removes limits that would make God small. This is what the Bible does.

[ 2 : 4 4 ] And secondly, the Bible compares him with powers and forces which we regard as great, to help us to begin to see the greatness of God.

And this is what David does in Psalm 29. He does the second step. He writes a song that shows how God's glory is revealed in the power of God's voice.

And he compares that voice to a mighty thunderstorm. And I'd like you to look at Psalm 29. We'll just go through these in the next few minutes. I don't know if you've been in the midst of a thunderstorm before.

We don't get many real powerful thunderstorms in Vancouver. They tend to be very weak, short-lived affairs. But I remember walking in Whistler.

A number of years ago, our boys were quite small. And suddenly, one of those mountain thunderstorms came up. And we quickly took cover under sort of an awning of a hotel that was nearby.

[ 3 : 44 ] And this strong wind came. And then there was a huge lightning flash. And almost simultaneously, this crack, this bang, it sounded like an explosion right next to us.

And then it just started pouring rain. It was over very quickly. And I sort of turned to my sons nonchalantly as they were huddled near me. And I said, there it was, your first thunderstorm.

That wasn't so bad, was it? But I was really struck by the immensity of the power of that. And they never forgot it either. You can't just explain it away and say, you know, it's gone, don't worry about it.

An incredible, powerful effect that that storm has. And this is what David is comparing God's voice to when he says that the voice of God thunders.

He's talking about that kind of violent thunderstorm. And his glory is seen in the immense power of God's speech, his words.

[ 4 : 48 ] This is one of the wonderful things that defines God, that he speaks to his people. And there is power in that voice. And to bring that glory home to us, David says three things about that voice.

And we'll go through those. The first thing that he says about that voice is that it comes from heaven. So look at verses 1 and 2. He says, Now do you see what David is doing here?

He is calling on heavenly beings to give God glory and strength and to worship him. To literally kneel down, bow before him in the splendor of his holiness.

We don't know what those heavenly creatures are. In fact, they could have been the gods that were around Israel that the Israelites may have been tempted to worship. They may have been the heavenly beings that cry, holy, holy, holy to God.

But the point that David is making is that if those creatures in heaven, those exalted creatures that you are tempted to worship, are meant to bow down and worship God, then we are.

[ 6 : 11 ] Then we most certainly are called to do that as well. And if God's voice comes from heaven with that kind of authority, then there are implications for anyone who hears this voice.

And that includes us who are gathered here this morning. And here's what the implications are. Isaiah 55, I think, helps us the most here. Because God speaks and he says, For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts are higher than your thoughts.

This is what it means that God's voice comes from heaven. That his voice, his words, his ways are higher than ours. And this contradicts the world around us.

Because what the world wants to say in every generation is that we need to muzzle God's voice. We must make it conform to the present day of thinking in order to have any kind of good effect on the world.

But the glory of God's voice is that it is from heaven. The one who has brought all things into existence. The one to whom all in heaven and earth are designed to worship.

[ 7 : 24 ] That one speaks to us. So it isn't a word from earth to heaven. Or a word from earth to earth. This is what is unique.

God speaks from heaven to us. And to creation. And there is an incredible powerful effect. His ways are higher than our ways.

His thoughts higher. Which means that his wisdom is much wiser. His justice is far greater. His love is immeasurably stronger. And three times David says, Ascribe glory to God.

And he does that because he wants us to listen. To listen humbly and obediently to a voice that comes from heaven. Without argument.

And without objection. Because his holiness. His goodness. Comes to us through that voice. So that's the first thing he says. The nature of God's voice is it comes from heaven.

[ 8 : 28 ] But secondly, David says what the effect of that voice is. What is the effect of it? And he says that in verses 3 through 9. And in here, David is a bit of a storm tracker.

You know what storm trackers are? They follow tornadoes. They follow thunderstorms. Because they want to be part of the action. And this is a dangerous occupation. And there's been movies made out of it.

But David is following the path of a storm. And it starts out over the Mediterranean Sea. And you see this in verse 3. The voice of the Lord is over the waters.

And there the God of glory thunders. The Lord over many waters. The voice of the Lord is powerful. It's full of majesty. And as I mentioned last week.

Those waters are symbolic. They symbolize all that is chaotic. All that might be arrayed against God. It symbolizes death as well.

[ 9 : 30 ] You remember the story of the great flood. And the Red Sea. They're both instruments of death. And fear. They cause fear. And they cause chaos as well.

But it's through those waters that Noah is saved. And that Moses and all his people are saved as well. And God's promise to both Noah and to Moses is that he would save their people.

And that promise thunders over those waters. And the waters part. And the floods recede. His word was far more powerful than the forces of fear and destruction.

And they are filled with the majesty that David talks about. Because it is out of the love of a king for his people that God saves them. And I think that image of the voice of God thundering over the water is very important for us this morning.

Because some of you may be facing fearful, chaotic waters that trouble your souls. You may even be facing death in some way.

[ 10 : 41 ] But there is a majestic and a powerful voice that promises to you. Makes promises that come from heaven. That thunder over your fears.

Over your uncertainties. And even over death. They actually burst out throughout God's words. God's powerful voice of promise. Just think of Jesus.

All the way through his teachings. Our thunderous promises. He says things like, This is the will of my father. That everyone who looks on the son and believes in him should have eternal life.

And I will raise him up on the last day. And then he says at the end of the gospels. Behold I am with you always to the end of the age.

David knew those thundering promises. He constantly heard God's voice drowning out death. And he said, Even though I walk in the valley of the shadow of death.

[ 11 : 38 ] I will fear no evil. He knew the thunder of God's voice. For you are with me. Those are powerful, majestic words of life for you.

That rule your fears. Your uncertainties. And the things that trouble your souls. God saves you every day by his voice. By those powerful promises.

But the thing that David writes about here. Is that God's voice doesn't just carry us through the things that trouble us. And rule those uncertainties in our life.

It also shakes up our world. It tears down pride and turns our life upside down. So look what happens in verses 5 and 6.

Because David follows the storm from the sea onto the land. And God's voice hits the land of Lebanon. Now the most impressive thing about that land around Israel to the north.

[ 12 : 41 ] Are the forests and the mountains of Lebanon. And the greatest of those trees. And maybe some of you have seen these before in your travels. Are called the cedars of Lebanon.

You can see it on the flag of Lebanon today too. They're massive strong trees. They go 120 feet high. They're 10 feet in diameter. They're long lived. They're very durable.

They don't rot. They had a sweet smelling resin. They were just beautiful powerful trees. And they were used to build the great palaces of the world in Egypt.

And we know that they were used to build the great temple of Solomon. And David paints a picture of God breaking those massive trees in verse 5.

And then he goes on and he takes Lebanon. And the mighty immovable Mount Syrian. Which is called Mount Hermon today. It's the highest mountain in that region.

[ 13 : 36 ] If you look at photos of it. It dominates the surrounding area. You see it for miles and miles. It's 9,000 feet high. It's snow covered year round. It's about the same distance from Jerusalem as Mount Baker is from us.

And he says God's voice makes that mountain skip. Lebanon skip like a young wild ox. The mountain jumps up and down.

In fact I think of my son Nicholas when I think of what he's talking about here. A wild ox skipping up and down. How can that massive mountain do that?

That is upheaval of a kind that we can't imagine. And then from there the storm moves down to the massive forbidding wilderness of Kadesh. And it shakes it it says like an earthquake.

And then finally it strips the forest bare. And interestingly in the middle of it all. You can see it there. God's thunderous voice makes a deer give birth.

[ 14 : 36 ] It's a strange thing to suddenly see in the midst of all that powerful shaking. A deer gives birth. His voice brings about new life in the midst of that upheaval.

So why does David use those pictures to describe the voice of God? Why does he do it? Well he is working in our imagination.

He is doing what Dr. Packer talked about. He is taking what is powerful and great and comparing God to that. So that we can begin to think of the majestic power of his word.

Our own pride can be as immovable as Mount Hermon. That massive mountain. It can be set against God's ways for us.

And we can think of ourselves as being as impressive as the cedars of Lebanon. We can also think of ourselves in the spiritual wilderness.

[ 15 : 32 ] That really needs to be shaken. I'm feeling dry. Completely out of relationship with God. And only God's word. His voice through the Bible.

Has the power to break through our pride. To crush our hearts of stone. And to make them living hearts. Like those new fawns that are brought into being by the storm.

Only the power of God's voice can make our hearts alive to God. And dead to sin. And it is the thunderstorm of God's voice that does this mighty work.

As I was reading this. I thought of the great 17th century English poet John Donne. And he prayed for that storm.

The storm of God's voice to come into his heart. And it's one of his most famous poems. He says this. He says, Batter my heart. Three person God. For you.

[ 16 : 34 ] As yet. But knock. Breathe. Shine. And see to mend. That I may rise and stand. Overthrow me. And bend.

You're forced to break. To blow. To burn. And to make me new. What a prayer. We don't often pray like that. Do we?

We pray. We ask for things that will benefit us immediately. But we don't ask God to batter our hearts. With the storm of his word. John does it.

John Donne does it. Because he wants God to overthrow his sin. And to make him new. Alive to God. God. And that, David says, is what God's voice does for us.

Now the question is, how can this happen? How can words that we read in the Bible, how can the message from heaven do this powerful work in us? Well, it can only be by God, the Holy Spirit, that Jesus taught us about in John when we just had this series.

[ 17 : 39 ] Because the Holy Spirit convicts the world of sin. He leads us into truth. He brings Jesus into our lives so that we know that we are daughters and sons of God, deeply loved by our Heavenly Father.

And he does this as he inhabits God's word. He makes it a living word that actually burns in our hearts.

That's the work of the Holy Spirit. That is his most powerful work that he does among us, is through God's word. Look back at verse 7. We see this fire.

The voice of the Lord flashes forth flames of fire. And literally, it says God's voice, in the original, God's voice is dividing flames of fire.

Does that sound familiar? Well, it's no accident that this psalm was used and still is used by the Jews in the Feast of Tabernacles, the Feast of Pentecost.

[ 18 : 43 ] So on that day of Pentecost, this psalm would have been read. And of course, it's on that first day of the Holy Spirit filling the church. On that day, the Holy Spirit filled the followers of Jesus.

And there was a sound like a mighty rushing wind. It divided tongues as a fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them. Here was the thunder of God's word, the storm of his word coming into them.

And what happened after, immediately, is that they all started talking, what? About the glory of God. And Peter immediately preached about Jesus and said that God had made Jesus the one the listeners crucified, both Lord and Messiah.

And when the people heard this, they were cut to the heart. They were cut to the heart. And they said to Peter and the others, Brothers, what shall we do?

That is the work of the Holy Spirit. That is his power to change hearts as they hear the voice of the Lord. It is in and through God's word that the Holy Spirit does this powerful, powerful work.

[ 19 : 55 ] That's what we see on that first day of the Pentecost. And the world has not been the same since. And so we come to the end of this psalm. And at the end of this psalm, in this storm, we've seen the source of God's thundering voice.

We've seen the effect of that voice by the power of the Holy Spirit. And from the end of verse 9, we see the goal of that voice. The goal of that voice. God has a purpose for this.

It's in the aftermath of the storm. Things have quieted down. And in verse 9 at the end, it says, All the temple cries holy. So God's thunderous voice has a purpose.

That we will see God's glory. To see God enthroned over the flood of our own lives and of the world. Enthroned as our own king forever.

King over sin and evil and death. King over all of our relationship. God speaks this way so that we will see and experience his glory. That it is a weighty goodness and greatness that is beyond this world.

[ 21 : 01 ] And that we see that glory as he reveals himself in his word. And particularly in Jesus Christ, the king of glory. Who rose from the dead. It is as we love that Jesus.

By obeying his powerful voice. That we begin to reflect his glory. As we know that God is our father. And begin to live more and more like Jesus.

This is how we cry glory. Because of the thunderstorm of God's voice in our life. And the wonderful blessing at the end of verse 11.

Is what happens because of that storm in our life. The voice of God, it says there, gives strength to his people. He blesses us with peace. Telling us that it is a strength that he gives us to live for him.

It's a peace between us and God and our relationships with each other. That Jesus accomplishes by the forgiveness of our sins. Here is the goal of his voice. It is strength.

[ 22 : 02 ] It is peace. And I want to come away from this psalm. By saying that there is an unusual thing about the nature of sin in our lives.

And that is that it can cause spiritual deafness. You can actually ignore this powerful voice of God that David has been writing about.

You can block your ears to this powerful thunderstorm of his voice. But Psalm 29 breaks through that deafness.

It calls you and it calls me today to really listen to God's voice. To read. To listen. To mark and learn.

Inwardly digest his holy word. So that God's voice thunders into your life. Breaking down your pride. But also giving you strength and peace that will fill you even in the midst of your darkest fears.

[ 23 : 04 ] And you will glorify God. You will cry glory. And that glory will be seen in the world. And so I end with John Dunn's words.

He not only wrote poems. He wrote sermons as well that he gave. And I close with his words. It's from a sermon that he gave on the conversion of Paul. And he said this. He said, Wherever I open Paul's epistles, I meet not words but thunder.

And universal thunder. Thunder that passes through all the earth. Paul was struck blind and all the world saw the better for that. Those are the words of a poet.

And it calls us, I think, to with Dunn, John Dunn, to meet not words but thunder as we read all of God's word.

So that we cry glory to the one who has loved us and saved us forever. Amen.