

The Voice of God

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[0 : 00] Sometimes familiarity, I hope it doesn't ever breed contempt, but it breeds sometimes laziness and a kind of forgetfulness in which we lose sight of the importance and the significance of what we're doing when we are worshipping.

And it's helpful always to go back to a definition. What are we doing when we are worshipping? Professor John Frame says this, worship is the work of acknowledging the greatness of our covenant God.

Worship is the work of acknowledging the greatness of our covenant God. That means that in his words, there are two things. There is both action and there is adoration.

It is something that we do, and yet in that something that we do, we are honouring someone greater than ourselves.

We're honouring the greatest of all beings, the Lord himself. Worship is action and it is adoration. Man's chief end, the catechism tells us, is to glorify God and to enjoy him forever.

[1 : 21] And there are many ways in which we can do that as Christians. In fact, the Bible tells us that the whole of our Christian life must be one in which we enjoy God, glorify God and enjoy him forever.

And in fact, it's one of the most searching questions we can ask about something that we are doing. Does it glorify God and is it something in which I can enjoy God forever?

And one of the ways, of course, in which we do that is specifically is in our worship. There is a sense, of course, in which our worship encompasses our whole lives.

Is there anything, if we're followers of Jesus today, is there anything that we do in which we are not serving God? I hope not. The Bible tells us that whatever you do, whether you eat or drink, do it to the glory of God.

And that means that there's a sense in which we're worshipping God when we're washing the dishes or vacuuming the floor or working at the office or cleaning or whatever. We are doing it because we are serving God.

[2 : 29] And we're doing it not as men pleasers, as Paul says, but we are doing it as pleasing and as to the glory of God. But what we are doing today is that special act of worship in which we are gathering together in obedience to the command of the Bible.

Because Jesus has, his death and resurrection has resulted in the gathering of a people together. You remember Acts chapter 2 tells us that as a direct result of Jesus' death and resurrection, they were all together in one place.

And that was the moment when the Holy Spirit came upon them and they began to speak in tongues. That was the day of Pentecost. And they went out from that day and there they preached the gospel. And the result of the gospel was people gathered in the places where the gospel was preached.

And churches were established as gatherings of God's people. And they were established in order to spread the gospel. But they were also established in order to worship God.

And the apostle puts it this way, that we show forth the praises of him who loved us and called us into his kingdom, into his marvelous light rather.

[3 : 44] We are showing forth. That is what we are doing when we are worshiping. We are expressing the praises of God. And we do that first and foremost with hearts which have been changed and cleaned and renewed and have come to faith in Jesus Christ.

And it's one of the most marvelous things that I can never lose sight of is the fact that what we are doing today is the same as what other people are doing, not just in Stornoway or in Lewis or in Scotland or England or in Europe.

But other people are all over the world. They are worshiping, perhaps in slightly different ways, but they are worshiping the same Lord Jesus. They love the same Bible.

And they're gathering together in his name as we are doing. And we are worshiping. And it's amazing to think that right now, even taking the time differences into consideration, that there are people of all different tribes and cultures.

And that number is growing. There are more Christians today than ever before. And as the gospel is spread all over the world, that people's lives are being changed.

[4 : 51] And what's the result? The result is a worshipping people. A people who are not just different in themselves individually, but they're gathering together and to do something on the Lord's Day that they've never done before.

And that they've come to know Jesus as their Savior and Lord. And they've come to be included in the family of God. And the expression of that is on our Lord's Day we come and we worship.

We express the worship of God. That's what worship means. It means the worship of God. In other words, when we open our mouths to sing God's praises as we do so today, we're expressing what God means to me.

And if God doesn't mean anything to you, if God doesn't mean everything to you this morning, then you're not worshipping. You may appear to be worshipping. And one of the most awful things about sometimes the way we worship is that we can give off the right impression.

We can do all the right things, tick all the right boxes. On the outside, everything appears to be so right and proper and exact. But on the inside, it's possible for our hearts to be far away from God and for us to have actually no interest.

[6 : 05] And sometimes our consciences, and so they should, they bother us when we're going out the door and when we think, well, how much of my heart did I really put into either singing or joining together in prayer or listening?

Because as we're listening, we're actively doing something as well. As we're praying, we're actively doing something as well. We're praying for what the leader is praying for, for what I'm expressing.

You are agreeing with me and you're praying for the same things for ourselves, for the world. That's what we're doing when we come to worship.

We're joining with the rest of the world. Now, we are, what we're doing is we're also focused, we're focusing first and foremost on the glory of God.

And that's the theme. There are two themes that run all the way through this psalm. There's, first of all, the glory and the majesty of God. And that is what we want every time we gather to worship.

[7 : 04] We want to focus on the glory, the power, the might, the grace of God. And that's, of course, where God's glory is seen by us in his grace in the Lord Jesus Christ.

He that has seen me, said Jesus, has seen the Father. And we come today in Jesus' name and we focus on the glory of God in Jesus Christ. But we also focus on the voice of the Lord.

That's why the Bible takes the central place in our worship. In everything that we do, the Bible ought to be the center of our attention here this morning.

We preach from the Bible. We sing from the Bible. We pray from the Bible. We, everything that we do revolves around what the Bible tells us. And if there's anything that we do here that is not what the Bible tells us, then we need to think again.

Our worship is God-centered and our worship is word-centered. And that's exactly what we have in this psalm. And the glory of God is what the psalmist wants.

[8 : 09] And he wants to see. And he wants to grow in his understanding of it. And the voice of the Lord is something that is so obvious to him, even in something that is so natural.

Now, I want us to look at this psalm this morning in three respects. Just simply working our way through the psalm. And I want us to notice that there are three different connections within this psalm.

Three separate and different and yet related connections within this psalm. In an attempt to try and understand what we're singing and how it relates to ourselves.

You probably read the psalm with me. And perhaps you wondered, well, how this is all very poetic. It's all very descriptive. And it describes the power of God.

But what encouragement is there for me in the psalm? How does it relate to my life in the 21st century? How does it relate to the gospel?

[9 : 14] How does it relate to Jesus? A description of the power of God in nature. Well, I hope that will come out, particularly towards the end as we want to make our way and work our way through the psalm.

Three connections then. First of all, there's a connection between heaven and earth. Particularly in worship. There's a connection between heaven and earth.

The second connection I want us to see is the connection between, and this is a bit of a mouthful, but I hope you understand. The connection between the seemingly random destructive power of nature in the storm and the sovereignty, the kingship, the rule of God.

That's the second thing. And the third thing I want us to see, I'd like us to see this morning, is the inseparable connection. The unbreakable connection between God and his people.

So there's a connection between heaven and earth. There's a connection between the storm and the sovereignty of God. And there's a connection between God and his people. So let's work our way through these three connections then within this psalm.

[10 : 42] First of all, there's a connection between heaven and earth. Look at what he says as he opens the psalm. Ascribe to the Lord, O heavenly beings.

Ascribe to the Lord glory and strength. Ascribe to the Lord the glory due to his name. Worship the Lord in the splendor of holiness. That's the first part of the psalm in which David's eyes are looking upwards.

And there's a sense in which he's calling to the angels. That's what heavenly beings means. O heavenly beings. I know that our psalms translated it as sons of God.

Well, that doesn't mean children of God as in human beings. It means sons of God as the angels. The angels, one of the titles that are given in the Bible to angels. That angels are a separate order of being that God has created separately for his own glory and to carry out his will.

Now, the Bible is full of angels. In fact, it's a very intriguing and a mysterious subject. You can actually take it up as a subject by itself. I should have mentioned it before.

[11 : 53] And I certainly don't want to get distracted at this age. It would be very easy for us to get distracted. We do get sidelined into speculation. And even not speculation.

Even what we know about angels. The different kind of angels. The seraphim and the teraphim. And the archangel and Gabriel and Michael. And all that the Bible tells us about the angels.

The angels that were climbing up the staircase that Jacob saw between the earth and the heaven. And the angels that are in Revelation. The angels that take the form of beasts in Revelation.

And in Daniel. And in Ezekiel, for example. There are all kinds of references to angels in the Bible. Angels are there.

They exist to glorify God. To praise him. To worship him. Just as the angels did. That Isaiah saw in Isaiah chapter 6. When he saw them.

[12 : 51] Calling out. Holy, holy, holy. Is the Lord of hosts. But they're also there. Hebrews tells us. To be ministers. And that means to serve. And right away there is a connection.

Remember the connection between heaven and earth that Jacob saw. The ladder where there were angels ascending and descending. And the Bible goes on to tell us that there is a connection. I don't understand what that connection is between angels and God's people.

And God's will on this earth. And I don't want to go into it. But there is a connection. But there is also a connection in worship. There is a connection in worship.

I said before. That what we're doing today. Is the same as what millions of people are doing all over the world. Who love Jesus. But what we're doing today. Is even more intriguingly.

Something that is going on in heaven. And David sees that connection. He sees that link. And it's almost as if God takes his mind above this world.

[13 : 54] And he's able to see. That what he wants to do. In praising God. The angels want to do as well. And there's a sense in which he is. Giving some kind of encouragement.

It's hard to think of what encouragement. He could possibly give to the angels. Who are worshipping God in perfection. They never sinned. They never fell.

They never disobeyed. And everything that they say. They never go wrong. And anything that they do or say. They don't know what it is like to sin. And to have guilt.

And here is David. And he is a man who knows what guilt and sin is. And he's been restored.

To fellowship. And to friendship with God. And as a result of that. Not only does he want to praise God himself. He wants to join with the angels. And he wants the angels to join with him.

[14 : 51] That's quite intriguing isn't it. It's quite mysterious. How that link can possibly operate. And yet it does. You see that link in Revelation chapter 4 and 5.

When John joins with the heavenly beings. Around the throne. And he joins. Not only does he watch what's going on. But he joins with them in their song. Now I'm not saying.

That the heavenly beings are. Those who have left this world. And have gone to be with the Lord. They are included. I believe that with all my heart.

That they are included. In that heavenly congregation. But I'm not saying that. As some people try and suggest. That there's a sense in which they look down.

Upon what is happening here. Many people. They try to suggest that. That those who have died. Are able to look down. And sort of join with those who are still in the world.

[15 : 46] In some sense. I don't believe that. And the reason I don't believe it. Is because. The Bible gives no indication. That that takes place.

All the indications are. Is that the souls of believers. Those who have been taken from this world. And are now with the Lord. Because they lived and died in Jesus. They are around the throne.

They're gazing at God. They're gazing at the Lamb. And what he has done. For them. No doubt they remember. There's a sense in which they remember.

Their life in this world. And yet there is a massive breach. In which all the focus is upon heaven. And upon what's taking place there. But.

The angels are different. The angels. There is a direct connection. Between what the angels do. And what we do. I'm not going to go into that in any way.

[16 : 41] But I think it's intriguing. Isn't it? That right now. As we gather for worship. We are joining. With. The. With.

The. With heaven itself. In that. Innumerable company. Company that no one can number. Of. Beings.

Who want to focus upon. God. In that case. Is. Why does David. Call to the angels. Should it. Surely it should be the other way around. Surely the angels. Should be giving him encouragement.

And that's a very interesting question. Isn't it? And I believe the answer to it. Is that there is a sense. In which God. Is worth. Something to David.

That he is not worth. To the angels. Now I didn't say the angels. Were imperfect in any way. I didn't say that there is any blemish. In them in any way. They're not. They were created to be. What God made them to be.

[17 : 38] And to do what God made them to do. And they're doing that. Perfectly. Around his throne. But. We have a relationship. To the Lord. That the angels don't. We have a saving.

Relationship. To God. In which. Christ. Died. For us. And we can come to God. Today. And we can say. I love him. Because he.

Loved. Me. And gave his son. To be the sacrifice. For my sin. Now angels can't say that. God didn't send Jesus into the world.

To be the sacrifice for angels. He sent Jesus into the world. To be the sacrifice. For my sin. And your son. If you believe in him. And that produces. Within us.

A form of worship. An energy. And a passion in worship. That the angels don't have. There is a sense. In which. God is worth. In the.

[18 : 35] In so far. As he is my savior. That he has died. For me. And I want the angels. To know that. Paul speaks in Ephesians. Chapter.

Two or three. I can't remember. About the word. Being preached to angels. Why is the word. Being preached to angels. Because we want them. To know. We want them. To understand.

What God. Has done for us. Oh heavenly beings. Ascribe to the Lord. Glory. And strength. Now I want to leave it at that. Because there are areas here. Of course. Which are very mysterious.

And just. These are just some thoughts. I want to go on to the second connection. Which is. The connection. As David progresses. Between the seemingly. Random. Destructive. Power of nature.

In the storm. And the sovereignty. Of God. Most of this. Psalm. You'll notice. Is a very poetic. And a vivid picture. Of a storm.

[19 : 31] And I'm quite sure. It was a storm. That David experienced. He stood there. And he watched it. From start to finish. He perhaps stood. On some high place. And he watched. Beginning at the coast.

They tell me. That over there. The storms begin. Out at sea. And the storm. Gathers. And you can see. You can see. The pictorial. Description of that. The voice of the Lord.

Is over the waters. That's the waters. Of the Mediterranean Sea. And the glory of God. Thunders. He can see. The thunder. Taking place. As the storm. Gathers. The voice of the Lord.

Is powerful. Is full of majesty. The Lord. And as the storm. Develops. And arrives. At the land. It breaks the cedars. It breaks the cedars. Of Lebanon. Rather like.

The kind of storms. Many people come here. At this. Time of year. To Lewis. To enjoy the peace. And the tranquility. Of this place. Quite rightly so. Being a remote place.

[20 : 24] And being an island. Then there is a certain. Measure of peace. And tranquility. About it. And if the weather is good. Then it doesn't get better. Doesn't it? With all the beaches. And with the loveliness.

Of the place. And the countryside. And the remoteness. And the quietness. But anybody who. Wishes to see Lewis. At its wildest. Needs to come here. In October.

And possibly. February. And if you do. You will see. A very different picture. Altogether. And it's hard for us. People who live here.

To think of. A storm being any wilder. Than it can possibly be here. Because we have seen. Some storms. Gales. And sometimes. They last long times. And sometimes.

They last short times. And sometimes. It can be a transformation. Between. A day of. Of. Stillness and calm. And within a few hours. The whole thing. Has erupted.

[21 : 18] Into a destructive. And really quite frightening. Experience. I'm sure. You'll know yourselves. Those of you. Who have lived here. For long times. That. The destruction.

For example. That a storm. Can do. In the castle grounds. Where trees. Are uprooted. And broken. And I'm sure. You've gone to the castle grounds. After a storm. And you've been amazed. At the.

The destruction. That one storm. Can bring. Well. That's the kind of scene. That David. Is describing. Here. He's watching the storm. And as you go through the psalm.

You can actually. Geographically. Trace the storm. From the north. Of Palestine. All down through Lebanon. And all through Syrian. And down to Kaddish.

Which is in the. In the south of the country. And there is where the storm. Comes. To an end. David knows all about. What it is to live in a fallen world.

[22 : 12] And he knows that the weather systems. Are all part of. Living in a fallen world. Where the weather can be as unpredictable. As anything. But yet. He knows.

That behind the seemingly. Random. Destructive power. Of that storm. Stands. The God. Who has not left this world. He has not abandoned his creation.

But he is continuing to rule. Over. That world. Lord. And that fills his heart. With encouragement. And with joy.

Furthermore. David also knows. That the storm. That he is witnessing. The seemingly. Random. Chaotic storm. Is a picture.

Of the kind of. Events. That take place. Sometimes. In his own life. In which. Things happen. That he didn't expect. In which. One day.

[23 : 10] He can be enjoying. And things. Could never get better. The peace. And the tranquility. Of a life. In which. Everything is going well. And the next day. It's chaos. His life has turned.

Upside down. And he's left. Saying. Where did all this. Come from. What has brought. All this. Perhaps.

Even saying. Why me. Why has all this. Happened to me. And why is this. Happening to me. The whole thing. Seems so pointless. And so.

Destructive. And so harmful. And so chaotic. I have no control. Any more than any one of us. Has any control. When we stand. And watch the sea. Crashing over the cliffs.

Down at home. Or wherever. Or in Ness. Or wherever. You have no control. Over it. It's the same. With some events. That take place. The unpleasant. Unpredictable.

[24 : 03] Events. That take place. In your life. The kind of event. In which Jesus. Was with his disciples. Crossing this lake of Galilee. In which the storm came.

And he was asleep. In the. In the. In one end of the boat. And they came to him. And they said. Don't you care. If we drown. And that's sometimes. What we feel. As Christians even. Even the fact that God.

Is near to us. Is of very little help. Because. It appears. That God. Doesn't care. Well that's what it appears like. And I'm sure that there were times. In David's life.

When he must have wondered. Where is the Lord. In all of this. How near is the Lord. And what is the Lord. How. How can the Lord. Be in this. And what purpose. Can he possibly have.

In these things. That are taking place. And yet. As he looks at that storm. He's able to perceive. That God. Not for a moment. Loses control. He is sovereign.

[25 : 02] The voice of the Lord. Makes the deer. Give birth. And strips. The forests. Bare. And in his temple. All cry. Glory. The Lord.

Sits enthroned. Over the flood. The Lord sits enthroned. As king. Forever. And it's the same. Today.

As we. Look at this psalm. Brings the same comfort. I hope. The same great. Unending truth. To those who love the Lord. And who serve him.

That God rules. He rules. For his own glory. And for his own purposes. But he rules. For his own people. As well. You might well. You might say. Well. It's one thing.

To think about the power. And the. Sovereignty of God. With. I agree. That the psalmist. Is descriptive. Of that. And it's a. It's a beautiful description. A very vivid description.

[25 : 56] Of that. But where do I come in? How does the psalm. Speak to me? Well. The answer to that question. Is found in the last connection. In the psalm. And that is the.

Inseparable. Connection. Between God. And his people. Verse 11. May the Lord. Give strength. Give strength. To his people. That same strength.

With which he broke. The cedars. And with he. Which he made the wilderness. To skip. And to shake. And with he. Which with which he made. The calf.

To give birth. That same. Sovereign. Unstoppable. Power. May he give strength. To his people. That's the prayer.

Of the psalmist. Now. The prayer of the psalmist. Is a prayer that God has put into his heart. To be written down.

[26 : 50] Not just for himself. Or for Israel. But for every generation of God's people. And a prayer that God gives to the psalmist. Is a prayer that God has put in.

In order for himself to answer. So that when David say. May the Lord give strength to his people. God will give strength to his people. And when David says. May the Lord bless his people with peace.

God will bless his people with peace. Let there be absolutely no doubt about it. This is a certainty. Because it's the inspired word of God. And we can take hold.

Of this great truth today. And we can. We can see that in this statement. Is a connection. That is inseparable. Between God. God. And his people.

Who live by faith. And follow. Jesus Christ. Who worship him. And serve him. In Jesus Christ. And that's where the gospel comes in. David looked forward.

[27 : 47] To the coming of Jesus Christ. In faith. We look back. To the coming of Jesus Christ. The same person. The same son of God. And we can lay hold upon these.

Timeless words. Because the same truth applies. That God has a connection. There is a connection. That no one can separate. Between God. And his beloved people.

Who he came to save. And who love him. And follow him. In truth. May the Lord bless his people. With peace. The gospel.

Brings a particular kind. Of peace. The peace. That the apostle Paul described. In Romans chapter 5. As resulting from our being. Justified by faith.

We have peace with God. Through our Lord Jesus Christ. Do you have that peace this morning? Are you able to say?

[28 : 43] That I know Jesus. He has found me. He has bought me. With the price of his own blood. He has died for me.

He has given himself for me. And therefore. Though I deserve his punishment. And his anger. I have been brought into his kingdom. I have come by faith.

To love him. And to serve him. And he is more to me. Than anything else. Than anyone else. In all the world. That is what worship is. Worship in what we do here. And what you do in private.

But your whole life. Is worship. Worship because you have come. To know the Lord Jesus Christ. As your savior. And as your Lord. There is an unbreakable connection.

Nothing. Says Paul. Can separate us. From the love. Of God. In Christ Jesus. And so we can take hold of this. And we can look at this storm. We can join together.

[29 : 39] With the heavenly beings. This morning. And know. That we are part. Of God's congregation. We can look at the storm. That depicts so much.

Of life in this world. From birth to death. And we can know. That because we are in Christ. That everything. Is ordered. In fact. Paul goes on to say. That God works out.

All things together. For good. To them. Who love him. And who are called. According to his purpose. And we can know. Thirdly. That there is a connection. That no one can sever.

In which. We are given strength. To face. The challenges. And the difficulties. Of the Christian life. In this world. And in which. God blesses. His people.

With peace. In many ways. This psalm. I just leave you with this. The time has gone. In many ways. This psalm. Is encapsulated.

[30 : 35] In the words. That. With which it begins. And in the words. With which it ends. And really. There is nothing.

Greater. Greater. Than. What the psalm. Begins with. And the psalm. Ends with. Because it's the gospel. How does it begin? It begins with. The glory of God. In the highest.

And it ends with. Peace. Towards. Men. What does that remind you of? It reminds us of. The great message.

That. That. The angels. Brought the shepherds. In the day. That Jesus was born. What did they say? Glory. To God. In the highest. And on earth. Peace. Upon all.

Upon who. His favor. Rests. I want to just. Close by. Inviting you today. To come and join. That people.

[31 : 32] Being here today. Doesn't automatically. Make you. Amongst. Those people. Doing all the right things. Taking all the right boxes. Doesn't. Automatically.

Qualify you. But coming. In faith. To Jesus. Is the only way. In which you and I. Can belong to him. And be saved.

By him. And truly know. What his worth. Is. Let's pray. Our father in heaven.

We want to come now. At the. The middle of this day. And day in which. You have set aside. In order to be worshipped. And we pray Lord. That we will. That we will pay close attention.

To what we do. When we gather in your name. And that every moment. May be a meaningful one. For us. We know that. We are often plagued. With distractions.

[32 : 31] Things that we've been thinking about. And things that we're planning. And very often. We don't give our hearts to you. As we should. And we ask Lord. That you will forgive us. For that. And that you will.

Cleanse us. From all our sinfulness. In worship. We pray that as we spend. The rest of this day. In. Enjoying. Your goodness. And in. Enjoying your word.

Towards us. We pray that all our attention. Will be given. Upon what you have done for us. In Jesus. We ask these things. In his name. Amen. Amen.