

“The Voice of the Lord”
 Pastor Sam Richards
 2 February 2025
 Texts: Deut. 4:10; Psalm 29

The Voice of the Lord in the Storm.

A Psalm of David.

**29:1 Ascribe to the Lord, O [a]sons of the mighty,
 Ascribe to the Lord glory and strength.
 2 Ascribe to the Lord the glory [b]due to His name;
 Worship the Lord in [c]holy array.
 3 The voice of the Lord is upon the waters;
 The God of glory thunders,
 The Lord is over [d]many waters.
 4 The voice of the Lord is powerful,
 The voice of the Lord is majestic.
 5 The voice of the Lord breaks the cedars;
 Yes, the Lord breaks in pieces the cedars of Lebanon.
 6 He makes Lebanon skip like a calf,
 And Sirion like a young wild ox.
 7 The voice of the Lord hews out [e]flames of fire.
 8 The voice of the Lord [f]shakes the wilderness;
 The Lord shakes the wilderness of Kadesh.
 9 The voice of the Lord makes the deer to calve
 And strips the forests bare;
 And in His temple everything says, “Glory!”
 10 The Lord sat *as King* at the flood;
 Yes, the Lord sits as King forever.
 11 [g]The Lord will give strength to His people;
 [h]The Lord will bless His people with peace.**

Footnotes

- a. Psalm 29:1 Or *sons of gods*
- b. Psalm 29:2 Lit of *His name*
- c. Psalm 29:2 Or *the majesty of holiness*
- d. Psalm 29:3 Or *great*
- e. Psalm 29:7 I.e. lightning
- f. Psalm 29:8 Or *causes...to whirl*
- g. Psalm 29:11 Or *May the Lord give*
- h. Psalm 29:11 Or *May the Lord bless*

I never met my maternal grandfather. He met my grandmother when she was working in Washington during the war effort (WWI) something that my mother copied when my Dad was in the navy (WWII)! What I had to remember James

Ntceros with was a photograph. In this one he was wearing a military uniform. He was also a wounded veteran, losing half a lung to mustard gas while in the trenches in Europe. I want to suggest that Psalm 29 will serve as a photograph, a portrait of God which we can hold up and use as a focal point to direct our prayers heavenward. It is not the only picture of God that Scripture affords; but it will suffice. The image, the memories, associations and stories about James all hang together—powerfully evoking a sense of the person behind the photograph.

So, let's suppose that, following the pastor's advice, we turn to Psalm 29 to jump start our prayers. Like a picture on the mantle! **Ascribe to the Lord** are the first words we read. What does ascribe mean? It means to describe, designate, attribute something to the Lord—in this case: **glory and strength**. Factually, we cannot confer anything upon the Lord. We cannot add to, or detract from God. Saying "You are mighty, or glorious" doesn't make God any more splendid, or more powerful than He is. Therefore, we are praising God, naming His attributes, describing Him. We are affirming true and good things about Him. And this is apt, appropriate in a psalm addressing **the voice of God . . . the voice of God, depicted in the storm**. So, the glory and strength the psalmist has in mind is painted as "natural" in nature. The psalm espouses a natural theology. Nice. Voice attributes to God speech capacity—he is able to express himself, as well as to manifest, or reveal himself. Remember John the Baptist, **I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness?** His self-designation echoes that of God according to Psalm 29. Consequently, we are ascribing to God as someone who can speak, a **voice in the storm**.

Psalm 29 expresses these things as something preferential, or honorable—reserved to Him alone. When we address God this way, we are ascribing *might and power, glory and strength* to God in a manner due Him, and exclusive to Him. That praise is appropriate and truthful because **God can cover, protect and provide; grant sanctuary, safety and shelter His own**. In ancient times, the conquest of another people group wasn't complete until the conqueror had toppled their gods, broken down the altars and destroyed their temples—the ultimate act of subjugation was the defeat of alien gods (which deserved this treatment having proved too weak to defend their people). This practice, in modern times, continues. When the religion of humanism (or, better secular humanism) overthrows Christianity—which some lament as taking God out of public spaces, or prayer out of schools—it turns out to be something both broader and deeper (ie subjugation! an act of conquest). It is "justified" in the name of "separation of church and state," or, somewhat loftier, as a show of tolerance for minority views (pagan, atheistic views) but, let's not sugar coat an act of subjugation, or conquest as something more benign. The culture wars are still wars! Either we are "one nation under God," or we are not.

Well, if we believe God to be **the true and actual source of all power, glory, splendor and honor**, the distributor, or dispenser of such things—then first-place honor goes to Him. So, to bow, do homage to God, as the King of kings, is right! One should underestimate Him not!—exclusive prerogatives, according to Psalm 29,

belong to our sovereign God! Our terms of address should align with our faith. As you believe, so pray; if God is God treat Him as God.

And, furthermore, some identification of those who are being admonished to give this glory and strength, is found in the phrase **ye mighty ones**.

Those *whom God has made mighty, powerful and influential*, given elevated statuses, are those (lords, ladies, nobles, and elites) in view although I am quite sure that those of lesser social status/standing, or importance are not excluded. And the reference may be to “the saints” more generally. We should honor Him with our crowns, guns, swords, weapons and rockets. Let **the mighty** designate Him the Mighty One. It’s not our armies, our hosts, our navies or air force that accrues pomp to world leaders—their days pass, and their glory fadeth—their ideologies either reboot, or fade away. All things worldly are subject to decline and deterioration. *Our warriors age, grow weary and weak; but His warriors never do.* Let every coat of arms declare the livery of the everlasting God! All heraldry, every color and favor cry “Almighty!”

Besides all are called to **worship (God) in the beauty of holiness!**
(v. 2)

With v. 3 we are introduced to the **voice of God upon the waters, many waters** The natural reference is to a storm at sea, a particular nighttime terror there, where masts were struck with lightning in sailing ship days, where the **voice thunders—the loudest of natural sounds apart from volcanic eruptions!** (Of course the roar of Niagara Falls was outside the biblical world in Old Testament times.) **The voice** (of God) is everywhere, **powerful and majestic—full of majesty . . . it breaketh the cedars of Lebanon . . . they skip like calves, young wild oxen.**

Yet the storm is subject to God’s will, control and command, **as Jesus emphatically reminds us in His calming of the waters in the gospels.** Instant in instigation, sudden in cessation! At his command, His word, **Peace, Be still** it stops. The storm on the Sea of Galilee was both a natural occurrence and a demonic opposition, a hindrance to deliverance and the spread of the gospel. (See Mark 4) If our God is this God, the forces of nature are subject to Him and if subject to Him, prayers regarding storm and floods are in order! If God is not God of nature, the psalmist asserts, He is not God.

We may have forgotten this, but electricity instructs us—*it can do nothing of itself.* Nature is not merely a matter of godless laws and dumb, blind forces. Electricity must be collected, channeled, corralled and sent on its errand—otherwise it is inert, insensible, independent of God! **Thunder is therefore no mere natural thing!**

When my mother sent me home from church to shut the shutters of our home, they watched me drive home into the advancing storm. They saw the lightning strike a huge boulder and heave it split a sunder over my car into the field just to the right of my car—everyone was astonished by the rock-hurling act of God they had

seen. It was a powerful demonstration of nature, and of divine protection! I could easily have been crushed and killed, but I wasn't. It was divine interposition for sure. If that rock were Satan's attempt to assassinate me, he missed.

The voice of the Lord divideth the flames of fire. (v. 7) refreshes the natural setting. We are witnessing a lightning storm at sea! However, **the shaking of the wilderness**, coming next, immediately broadens the context: the wilderness is not the sea, certainly not the **wilderness of Kadish** (v. 8) Causing the **hind to calve . . . and the hewing down of forests** as well as **in the temple speaking of his glory** are all terrestrial images related to **the voice of the Lord**. Yes the arm of the Lord does rule the sea, safe, and surely God sits as King of kings over all the earth.

Seeing this for what it is, having the glory and strength of the Lord so framed for us, in natural and accessible terms (who has not experienced the awesomeness of the storm??) either puts us in the right frame of mind to pray by bringing us to our knees in astonishment and wonder,

"With listening fear and dumb amazement."-(James Thomson, "The Seasons" 1726-1730)

Or have we missed the invocatory nature of Psalm 29. Give to the Lord glory, worship Him.

Amen.