

Psalm 29

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- [0 : 0 0] Perhaps at first glance, reading Psalm 29, it struck you as being a run-of-the-mill ordinary psalm, if we can say such things about God's word.
- It's all special. None of it is actually just bland and plain. But at first look at Psalm 29, you may not have thought there was anything particularly unusual or different here that sets it apart from the other 149 divinely inspired songs and poems of this book.
- But this is actually a psalm that in many ways contains multitudes. On one level, if people who know Hebrew say, it's a great example of beautiful Hebrew poetry.
- But not only that, it is a psalm that is deeply in touch with the history of God's people. So if you look with me, the voice of the Lord over the waters in verse 3 reminds us of when God's spirit is hovering over the waters in Genesis 1-2, before the earth is created.
- We get this great depiction of great destruction that comes from a storm, followed by the presence of a flood in verse 10. And that might make us think of Noah.
- [1 : 2 7] This is a deeply Noahic psalm. One of the commentators even links it with God's people passing through water as Israel passes through the Red Sea in Exodus.
- And how this psalm, in a lot of ways, mimics the songs sung by Israel after they've passed through the Red Sea and are freed from the Egyptians. So it's deeply in touch with Israel's history.
- But, on another hand, another thing that makes it unique is that if you notice, unlike many psalms, there are no direct petitions from the author to God.
- A lot of psalms are the psalmist, therefore us, reading these words, crying up, crying out to God. In those cries, there is joy mixed in with some pain and suffering and trial, along with the works of God.
- And a lot of times, ending with some sort of exhortation to remember God's goodness, declare that God is still true. He is good and He is a loving and faithful God.
- [2 : 4 1] It ends with a pastoral reminder to still, yet, wherever you are, whatever you're experiencing, trust and find shelter in this God. But notice, none of that is found in this psalm.
- What we have in Psalm 29, actually, is just a straightforward command to worship. It's a psalm that's consumed with the reality of God's majesty and strength, and therefore, then, how we should respond.
- Psalm 29 is a powerful psalm about our great and powerful God. And it impresses upon us the understanding that worship is a weighty matter.
- It's an important matter. Worship, what we're doing here today, specifically, is a big deal. It's an unmatched gravity to it.
- And, of course, this applies to what we do, right? A topic of much debate and opinions. What kind of songs should we sing? How should we sing them?

[3 : 51] How many of them should there be? What should the order of our worship look like? That's the what we do. But before we think about, before we go to the what we're to do in worship, and worship should be rightly ordered, right?

It shouldn't be absolute chaos and a free-for-all. But before we think about the what, we first must consider the how. How are we approaching coming together in worship to worship the holy and sovereign God of the universe?

Are we preparing our hearts before we come here today? Do we know or have we even thought about what we're really getting ourselves into during this hour or so together?

Again, Psalm 29, it impresses upon us the weight of worship. How significant it is that you and I, that we get to come together into God's presence and praise his holy name.

It gives us a little glimpse into why this should be the very highlight of our week. It's my prayer that together, we will see, and we will not only just see, but come to a deeper understanding of what worship is.

[5 : 15] But most of all, even with that, we'll come to see God's glory more clearly through exploring today's passage. Seeing what worship is, how significant, how wonderful, how important it is.

But most importantly, coming to delight and be in awe of God more as we explore Psalm 29. Now, the first thing that we're going to look at today is sort of, as we consider the weight of worship is its nature.

And I believe, and I want to propose to you, that Psalm 29 actually, in brief, gives us a pattern that should help us better understand what exactly is happening as we gather here together.

And I want to break it up into three headings or sections. So the first heading, which we find in verses 1 and 2, we'll call Adoration. Verses 1 and 2 is Adoration.

Verses 3 to 9 is Revelation and our response. And finally, verses 10 and 11, we have Benediction.

[6 : 25] Adoration, Revelation, and Benediction. This is a brief pattern of worship given to us in Psalm 29.

Now, Adoration. I believe that when it comes to this part of worship, that what is being described for us in these first two verses, that if we miss this part, if we miss the first step, right, we're not going to get any of the other steps right.

You know, if we step off the path with our very first movement, the direction we head in is not going to be the right one. We'll miss the whole point of worship completely if we do not get this Adoration part right.

How we understand worship shapes not only this time together, but then remember this. If we miss this step, we're not just getting things wrong as it were on Sundays, but worship is to shape our lives in total, right?

So if we miss the first step, we not only miss the point of what we're doing here together, but the point of what it means to be a person, a child of God.

[7 : 35] There are two things commanded of us in these verses, and together they describe our role and our place in worship. And if you notice, if you take a quick glance through these 11 verses, they're actually the only two actions in the psalm that have anything to do with you and me.

It's the only thing that we are called to do in this psalm. Though we participate in worship in a variety of ways, right, we stand, we sing, we pray, we hear, we listen, we respond, at the end of the day, all of those things, as it were, fall under these two commands that David gives us here in these first two verses.

To ascribe and to worship. Now, ascribe, not necessarily a word. It's not in my day-to-day vocabulary. I'm guessing it's probably not one you're readily whipping out whenever you can use it.

So what does ascribe mean? Ascribe simply means to give or to devote or to dedicate. Already, you can see that any self-idolatry that we have in our hearts, and there's always some of it there, is already starting to be challenged.

The culture we live in, the world we live in, is all about what? Self-fulfillment. And this culture, this idol, easily creeps its way even into our worship of God.

[9 : 08] Both in explicit and implicit ways, right? We're loud and proud about what we want worship to look like and to feel like. And if we're not, sometimes we leave on a Sunday, and we're like, well, if I were in charge, we'd be doing it differently.

We'd be doing it better. But Psalm 29's first command, one that's repeated three times in only two verses, is for us to give to God.

It's not about us. We are here to give to the Lord. And what is it that we're told that we're supposed to give Him? We're supposed to ascribe or give to the Lord glory and strength.

The glory due His name, what He deserves. Simply put, we're just solely here to honor God and God alone, and to give Him what He alone is due.

The second thing that we're called to do is worship God. Ascribe, right? Not necessarily in our vocabulary. Worship, much more familiar part of our vocabulary here in church and as Christians.

[10 : 19] So it's definitely a term that you're familiar with. But it means more here and in Scripture than just the action of what you and I are doing right now, what we're doing here together.

Literally, the word that's being used here means for us to bow down. This is to get on your knees and even to lay flat on your stomach, prostrate before God.

To lay flat on your belly with your face in the ground as we come before God. It's language, it's about position or what our posture should be in worship.

This isn't a literal command, at least in our sense right now, but this is how the way our hearts are supposed to be ordered and again, postured as it is in worship.

And what happens when you put this posture together with the command to honor God and to give Him everything He is due? You put these things together to ascribe and to worship.

[11 : 32] Well, what happens is that together these commands establish for us that as we come and worship God, we're doing something that is completely unique and completely set apart from anything else in the world.

There's nothing else like worship of God because we're entering into the presence of a completely holy and eternal God. There's nothing else that you should be giving all of yourself to, no person, no thing, and there's nothing else in this world that your heart, the attitude of your heart, should be on your knees or flat on your face before.

Nothing other than our completely holy and eternal God. Again, we're not here for ourselves. So that means we're not here for a spiritual pick-me-up or to fill our tanks up at the holy and religious pump until our tank empties, until next Sunday we come again.

We're not here just as a social club. We're not here just to have fun. We're not here because we all happen just to have this one special interest in religion or God or in Christianity.

We're not here to be intellectually stimulated. We're definitely not here to be entertained. We're here to come and to testify, or to witness, that our God, maker of heaven and earth, is all glorious, all power, eternal, and transcendent, that he's just completely beyond anything, unlike anything in his world, that he is the one whom all things are completely dependent on.

- [13 : 13] We're in acknowledgement of the reality that there is no one nothing like God, that he is unmatched in worthiness, that he alone is our God. There is no other, therefore we have no other.

And we come to give him all this honor, we come to do it with humility. Because we recognize just how great, how wonderful he is, and we recognize how small and unwonderful we are in comparison.

We're to come before God with this posture of heart. It's a posture of complete weakness, isn't it? It's a posture of complete vulnerability.

When you take, again, that time to consider who God is and who you are in relation to his greatness, I'll ask you this, what else is there that we can do?

What other right response is there for us, then, again, to get on our knees and worship him? He is glorious, we are not. He is infinite in all things.

- [14 : 22] But for us, there's always an end to our strength, to our abilities, and to our lives. He is perfect. We are sinful. So when we come to worship God, notice that we're stepping into something completely extraordinary.

Something significant, something with eternal weight to it. Since this is the case, then, here, another question for you to ponder.

How do you prepare to come here? Think about it another way. If you're getting ready to go on a date or something, what do you do?

How do you dress? How do you prepare? Do you shower beforehand? Do you wear your pajamas to go out on a date with your wife or your significant other, your husband or your spouse?

You're getting ready for a big fancy dinner party. If you ever get invited to one of those things, if you do, let me know how that happened. I would like to be invited to one someday. But, do you wear your nicest pair of basketball shorts or your track suit or whatever it is?

- [15 : 39] No. You dress well. You dress for the occasion. You prepare yourself well. Or, think about an athlete. Does an athlete just show up to a game or a match without putting in the time and the preparation necessary to excel in competition?

Right? All of these things demand a degree of intentionality. Worship demands the greatest degree of intentionality.

So, how does your approach to worship compare to those levels of purpose and intentionality? You'd all nod your head and say, yes, it'd be as silly for an athlete to never practice, to not warm up and show up and expect to be great.

They have to prepare. It demands preparation. But how does our approach to worship compare to our understanding of the level of purpose and intentionality for those other things?

Commenting on these verses, Augustine, a Christian from thousands of years ago, encourages us to worship the Lord with sanctified hearts and he does this for two reasons.

- [16 : 50] The first is that we are God's regal and holy habitation. Okay, so think about what we've just said, that we're coming before God who is greater than we are, who is better than we are, who is more holy and more righteous, who is infinite.

We are none of those things and yet, if we are his people, he calls us and we are his regal, so his royal and holy habitation.

Right? So sure, you're not God, you don't hold a candle to God, you never will, you are lesser than God, but God still calls you worthy and brings you into his presence.

So yeah, it's not about us, but God lifts us up as it were as he calls us into worship. God has chosen us, God dwells with and in us by his spirit.

So that's the first reason we're to come with prepared, sanctified hearts into worship. Augustine says that the second reason is that he encourages us in this way is because he knows that all things are a matter of the heart, meaning what or who we love.

[18 : 06] If we love God, we'll put in the time, right, just like if you love your husband or your wife or your spouse, your boyfriend or girlfriend, whatever it is, you'll put in the time to prepare for a date, a dinner for their birthday for an anniversary because you love them.

What you love, who you love, shapes what you do. God's greatness is the exact reason why we meet. He's the exact reason why we work hard to make sure that our time is well-ordered, undistracting, but these measures won't address the issue of our hearts.

You can have all of the framework, right, this is what Jesus talks about the Pharisees, right, like you're a whitewashed tomb, you're clean on the outside but dead on the inside. These sorts of measures don't change the fact that we remain sinful, that we require, it requires a daily taking stock of our condition.

Each and every day we have to wake up and reckon with the fact that we are sinners, that we need to come before God and reorient our hearts, our minds, our bodies back towards Him.

Because here's the thing, you were made to love God and love Him only. That's where your truest self is found. That's what people are made for. But our loves get all mixed up, they get all disordered, right?

[19 : 33] We ought to love God with all of our hearts, we ought to be completely focused and dedicated on Him and our worship, but our sin of pride always just keeps getting in the way every day.

And so friends, closing this part of adoration, this thing that we are made to do, to give to God, to worship Him, I encourage you, do not come to worship without doing the necessary work of examining and preparing your hearts.

Right? Worship of God demands and David demands and David commands that in declaring God's glory, might, and majestic holiness, essentially just to redirect everything that he's already shown us, push it all back to Him, say yes, this is true, we must come to a proper view of ourselves.

Don't take this time lightly. Consider what we're undertaking and do so by immersing your hearts in the glory of God as He has revealed Himself to us.

that leads us to our second point, revelation. We come to adore God, to declare His holiness in song, prayer, every article of our worship, but remember that we don't do this blindly.

[20 : 54] Right? The serious call to worship and to a reverent nature have basis in the fact that God has revealed Himself to us.

So worship is a response to God revealing Himself to us. Verses 3-9 show us depictions of God's glory and strength.

But once again, notice that there's repetition here as well. We have a scribe, a scribe, a scribe, verses 1-2. Verses 3-9 is also full of repetition. Though a storm rages, does incredible damage, right?

Notice that David's not actually writing about the storm. Because what he's witnessing is the voice of the Lord.

The voice of the Lord. See, again, we're not here without reason. We do not follow the voice and leader of a charismatic preacher.

[21 : 59] We don't follow a strong leader. we don't follow the voice of a particular ideology and culture. We respond to one voice only.

We respond to and obey and follow the voice of the Lord. The Lord is he's shown to us and speaks to us in Scripture. The Lord is he's intimately experienced in prayer and communicated to us when we look at baptism and we look at communion, the Lord's supper.

forever. This is what God's people have always done. We follow the voice of God. Remember, this psalm would have resonated deeply within the religious imagination of David and Israel.

It's a reminder of God's power and creation, but most of all, it's a deep reminder of God's judgment of sin and the preservation of his people, both with Noah in the flood, but also as Israel crosses through the Red Sea.

So as they're singing this psalm, as they're going over it, the people of Israel are being reminded about how again and again God has shown up and shown himself to his people, that they have seen God, that they have heard God, that they have met and experienced God, and it just reminds them that you have every reason to worship God because who he has shown and proven himself to be again and again.

[23 : 36] Now, in this moment, as we're looking at these verses, you might be thinking to yourself, you might pause and say, wait a minute, I'm supposed to be reading about this storm, and I'm not supposed to be coming away with absolute, a feeling of absolute terror because if you think about this storm, it sounds absolutely terrifying, doesn't it?

It sounds absolutely devastating. Which then may lead you to question, how can I worship a God who is causing so much destruction?

You say God is good, that he is right in all that he does, but how can I worship a God who has done something so devastating as the storm depicted here?

And that's fine, that's a question we have to consider, because the might of God's voice depicted as the storm is quite intimidating, it's very intimidating. God's voice thunders, he shatters cedars of Lebanon, which in the ancient world were trees that were famous for being strong and big and tall.

You would build, the temple was built out of cedars of Lebanon, it was the best, strongest wood you can buy, but God breaks them as if they were just tiny little toothpicks.

[25 : 04] His voice is like flashing flame of lightning and fire. He strips the forest bare in an instant. The storm covers everything from Lebanon in the north of Israel to Kadesh, which is south of Israel.

Imagine for a second just standing in the middle of a thunderstorm like this. What's the feeling you would be left with? You'd be left with absolute terror.

It'd be incredible, but you'd also be full of fear. The lightning's going to get me, the trees are going to fall on top of me, the flood is going to sweep me away. You'd be full of fear.

fear. So how can someone depicted as being so mighty and powerful, so destructive in judgment, how can that then yield cries of glory at the end of verse 9?

Cries of glory instead of cries of terror. There's a general disconnect in our modern mind because what tends to be thought is that a good God could not do these sorts of things.

[26 : 17] A good God wouldn't scare us with such a storm. Not only that, but he definitely would not be worthy of our worship, would he? A God truly worthy of worship wouldn't call us to fear them.

This kind of criticism, the people who hold it to them, God doesn't sound good, he just sounds manipulative. In order to get out of you what he wants, the worship, the giving of the glory, he's going to scare you into doing it.

Maybe you've heard this before, maybe you've come up with, heard this criticism of God before, but you should know that there is no reason to fear these critiques and doubts because there is a real difference between coercion on the one hand, which is being described by cynics, and compulsion, coercion and compulsion.

coercion. Remember, God cannot be compared to anyone or anything. There's no one like him. What we as people are typically used to experiencing then when it comes to power is coercion.

Right? That is not what God is doing here. Coercion is being forced to do something under threat, being intimidated into obedience. Coercion actually comes with a lack of revelation.

[27 : 43] It's sort of a do so just because I said so. Right? You're just supposed to do it because you're told. It's unnatural and it leads to captivity and it leads to oppression.

What we're witnessing here in Psalm 29 is compulsion. Compulsion is a response to revelation and the experience of one's character.

So it's a natural response. Right? It leads to liberty, to freedom. The kind of fear that we are brought to in experiencing God's might, God's work, and God's judgment even is not a response of dread but one of awe and of wonder.

That's why glory is said at the end of verse 9 instead of oh no, get me the heck out of here. Awe and wonder. Once we had the opportunity of my wife and I going to the Grand Canyon which is the most jaw-dropping thing I've ever seen in my life.

It's a massive canyon as it says. It's very grand. It just goes on for miles and miles both in depth and in length. It just looks like it covers the whole landscape.

[29 : 02] As you approach it, you honestly get scared as you come towards the edge and not really because you're afraid of falling into the Grand Canyon because it's not just like a steep drop-off.

You'll be stopped by a couple rocks before you reach the bottom or something but as you approach the ledge and even the railing you start to be filled with fear because it just keeps getting bigger and bigger and bigger and you start feeling smaller and smaller and smaller.

You're in awe. You're scared in a way because you are in awe. This is the kind of fear that makes you, you can't get your jaw up off the floor. Your jaw drops when you see it.

This is what's being described for us in this storm. When you witness what God has done by the power of his voice. You think that he's created all of the things you see, all of the world by speaking.

If you think of the fact that he saved you from your sin, though you were dead in it, and unworthy of his love and his grace, just because he spoke a word and said, they are mine.

[30 : 18] You cannot help but rejoice and tremble at the same time. Because it is good, it is pleasant, but also there's nothing else like it.

God's power described here is not an empty display of threatening power, it's God's action in the world which awaken us to his glory. And we need to be woken up a lot of times to God's glory and his work, don't we?

So often, depending on what's going on in our life, we're like, where is God? What is God doing? Is he present in my life? Is he present in this church? Is he present in this country and in this world?

And we miss all the little ways in which God is moving, which his kingdom is advancing. So we need to be waking up sometimes to see God's glory. This isn't threatening power, which is why we adore God.

Because what he has shown us is not that he is a distant threatening, that he isn't abusive or tyrannical, instead he's shown us that at the same time he is to be reverently respected, honored, given what he is due, but that he is the God who also saves us, who preserves us, that loves us, that sees us through to the end, who is always faithful to us.

[31 : 37] He brought Noah and his family safely through the storm of judgment. He guided Israel through the Red Sea and destroyed Pharaoh's armies in it. He went before his people Israel into the mighty Jordan River and dried it up so they could all cross over into the promised land.

Jesus Christ was baptized in that same river and in doing so foreshadowed the passing of judgment that would come upon him at the cross. Today we're baptized with water, signifying that as God's people united to Jesus in his life and death that we will pass through judgment unscathed and safe in the arms of our Lord.

David is captivated by the voice of the Lord because through it God is declaring that all things and people belong to him, that he will have dominion, right?

Which leads one man called James Montgomery Boyce to say, the power of the voice of the Lord is also revealed as he calls in grace to draw sinners to himself. God's voice is shattering the greatest trees the world has ever seen.

It thunders, it flashes like lightning and fire but that is the same voice that calls you. the same voice that saves you, the same voice that judges and destroys the evil one, the kingdom of darkness and sin and of death.

[33 : 05] The voice of the Lord displays his righteousness in judgment. Because think about this, God cannot be truly good and righteous without judging sin and evil.

It would be a pretty pathetic God for us to follow, making us pretty pathetic people, wouldn't it? to follow a God who either will not or is incapable of judging evil in the world.

But we must remember that just as the voice of God split the cedars of Lebanon, so did the word of God, Jesus Christ's son, die upon a tree.

Justice and salvation, these two things, they meet at the cross. grace. And if we are in Christ, our fear of the Lord leads to immeasurable blessing.

We ought to be in awe of what God has done for us. Worship is our adoration of God because we have clearly seen who he is.

[34 : 09] We worship and adore God because of who he has shown us to be, what he has done. And worship ends finally in benediction or blessing.

Notice that this chapter begins with us giving glory and ends with God's gracious giving to us. Right? Verse 11, the Lord gives strength to his people, the Lord blesses his people with peace.

The exhilarating shout of glory in verse 9 is predicated by how God has revealed himself. How he reigns. But then it's followed by the fact that God gives you peace.

Earlier I mentioned briefly that worship is not about what we get out of it. But we must also realize at the same time that God does bless you in worship. That he blesses us in worship.

We're reminded the same God who is mighty and just and capable of such displays of holy power is also the one who upholds you, who cherishes you, who strengthens you, who holds you tight in his loving and fatherly arms.

- [35 : 21] It reminds us that God alone preserves his people. That God alone blesses his people with peace that we may grow in our joy of the Lord. And again, if God was being coercive, he wouldn't actually bless us, would he?

He would just get everything he wants and then keep us in that place where we can do nothing but just give and give and give while he takes and takes and takes.

But no, our God is a God of blessing. God's power results in goodness. God's power results in life. God's power results in flourishing.

And it results in salvation. It results in his perfect rule. The Lord sitting enthroned his king forever, his perfect rule and reign.

So friends, to conclude, we are extremely blessed that we get to come together before the throne of God week after week and praise his holy name.

- [36 : 22] There's nothing else like this in all the world. Nothing so glorious, nothing so rich, nothing so wonderful, nothing so good for you and your soul. You were made for this.

to give all glory and everything back to God, to hear his voice, to see his power, and to be blessed by him as one of his.

That's what you were made for. Our encouragement then from this psalm is to live like we're doing the exact thing we were made to do. To shape our weeks by it.

To mold our rhythms by the worship of God. To realize that together we are being shaped into the image of Christ even as we sit here now.

We're called in Hebrews to not neglect the task of meeting together. So please don't neglect the task of getting yourself ready to do so. To prepare your hearts and minds for it.

- [37 : 25] A theologian called John Murray once wrote, the fear of God is the soul of godliness. I think that is a pretty good summary of our approach to God and worship.

And how our God shapes us here together. If you want to be godly, if you want to be truly good, begins with fearing the Lord.

Begins with realizing that worship is weighty, yes. But it is not a burden. It is a glory. It's a beautiful foretaste of the glory that is to come when every knee will bow, every tongue confess, and every creature acknowledges that Jesus Christ is Lord.

Just as Psalm 29 reminds us. Let us pray. Lord, we thank you that you alone are holy. That all of your people of creation do indeed adore you.

That you are enthroned over the flood. That you are enthroned as king forever. And Lord, that as we come here to give you everything that you are due, our lives, all honor and glory, our desires, our wants, our needs, Lord, as we lay every single thing down at your feet, including our very selves.

- [38 : 44] Where we also remember that in doing so, you promise to bless us, your people. You promise to be our strength. You promise to give us peace in a world that does not know peace.

Hope in a world that is dying for hope. And a future in a world where the future looks bleak. God, may we continually cling to you and what you have shown us about yourself.

Your work throughout all of history culminating in the cross of Jesus Christ, his death and his resurrection. Lord, may that be in the forefront of our minds and of our hearts day after day.

May we come to worship you knowing that we come to do something awesome and important. the greatest thing in all of the world worship is and you've called us to do that.

So Lord, may everything that we experience throughout the week and day to day be subject to worship of you. Be done with an eye towards your holiness. Be done remembering that you are great, that you are glorious, that you Father, Son, and Holy Spirit sit above all things as our good God, our loving Father and Savior, that you are always with us.

[40 : 09] Lord, as we end our time of worship here together, may we remember that in you alone do we find ourselves. In you alone is peace and satisfaction and hope in life.

Lord, may that truth never leave our hearts. It's in your holy name we pray. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.