

What a Voice!

Psalm 29:1-11
Halifax: 12 December 2004

Introduction:

Today I want to present to you a new Psalm to use in conjunction with our series in Matthew's gospel: Psalm 29.

- In Matthew, we are currently studying chapter 8 and 9 where Matthew speaks about Christ's miracles.
- In the next few weeks, we will look at:
 - Jesus' authority over the storm at sea,
 - at His authority of demons,
 - and at His authority to forgive sins.
- In doing these miracles, Jesus allowed us to see that He is the One who possesses all authority in heaven and earth to redeem us.
 - The great advantage we have in seeing Christ's miracles is that it allows us to see in a very clear way that He is the One in control over all things...
 - He exercises that control in every storm,
 - He sends it, controls it, and ends it according to His purpose and will.
 - He was really just as much in control of it when it was raging as He was when He calmed it, but He did this to show His disciples His control of it.
 - He exercises that control over every demon possession,
 - He sends it, controls it, and ends it according to His purpose and will.
 - He has the authority to forgive sins...
 - He shows this by declaring that the paralysed man's sins are forgiven when He heals him.
- You should not think that Christ's miracles are when He suddenly takes control of the situation...
 - It is not that at all...
 - He was in control of the storm or whatever it was all along and when He stops it, He is simply showing His gracious will,
 - that as our redeemer, He will not always afflict us with these things...
 - He will remove storms and demons and sin from us one day if we are His.
 - But these things are not in the world as some alien power...

- They are here by His will as a judgement upon man for his rebellion against God.

Too often, we deny the absolute authority of Christ in the storms of life.

- We deny God's place in the world as the One who blesses and curses.
 - And we deny this, we deny it to our own hurt—because we don't see clearly the majesty and glory of God.
- Psalm 29 teaches you worship God as the God of the storm...
 - It calls you to worship Christ whose voice is heard in the thunder...
 - And to take comfort in Him as the same Christ who will change the storm into a calm for His people.

Your faith is not complete if you see Him as the God who ends storms when He can...

- You must learn to see Him as the God who sent the storm in the first place.
- I realise that this may not be a very comfortable thought at first, but bear with me and I will show you that it is.

And so it is that Psalm 29 begins with a call to acknowledge God as the one who possesses all glory and strength!

I. In the first two verses, you are taught to give all glory and strength to God.

A. What does this mean?

1. To **give** means to **ascribe** glory and strength to Him...
 - You are to give Him the credit for possessing these things
 - You must learn to recognise that He is the original possessor and only source of every drop of glory and strength in the universe.
 - What is it you glory in? The mountains? Technology? The stars? Wisdom? People?
 - Don't stop short in your glorying, but go to the One who is behind it all!
 - Give thanks to Him and acknowledge Him...
 - Depend upon Him instead of upon these things that only have the strength that He gives.
2. Three times it says to "Give to the LORD."
 - a. There is good reason for this!

- We need to be exhorted because we are forever giving glory to secondary causes!
 - We do not give to God the praise that it is due to Him, but transfer it to other sources.
- 1) We fear terrorists because we think they have power—
 - and indeed they do have power, but none but what they have received from God.
 - If we ascribe all strength to Him, we will ultimately fear Him instead of a terrorist who is nothing but an instrument in His hand who can only do as much as God gives him to do.
 - Isaiah 10 makes it clear that invaders are sent by God to chasten His people.
 - 2) We give thanks to doctors or to preachers or to builders or to our mothers...
 - and well we should when God has used them to bless us...
 - But how remiss we are if our gratitude does not extend on up to God who is the source from whom all blessings flow!
- b. Man is too slow to give God the glory that is due to His name.
- 1) Nothing shows our depravity more than this...
 - We do not see the glory of the glorious one—not because it is not continually on display to us in the world...
 - but because we are desperately blind and corrupted by our sin...
 - We are alienated from our Maker,
 - cut off from what ought to be chief delight and what would make us complete and whole.
 - 2) Just this week, a certain British philosophy professor (described as a leading champion of atheism for over half a century) changed His mind.
 - The article reads: “At age 81, after decades of insisting belief is a mistake, Antony Flew has concluded that some sort of intelligence or first cause must have created the universe. A super-intelligence is the only good explanation for the origin of life and the complexity of nature.”
 - He said that biologists’ investigation of DNA “has shown, by the almost unbelievable complexity of arrangements which are needed to produce life, that intelligence must have been involved.”

3) Now just look at this soberly...

- Can you believe it took DNA to make this man realise how complex life is? Can you believe that such a person is a philosophy professor?
- Only in a world that is desperately depraved could such a person exist!
- But he still doesn't get it...
 - He thinks this super intelligent being is personal, but took off after He made us—leaving us on our own.
 - He is a Deist—a person who thinks god created and then withdrew.
- I expect this man says this because he can't account for all the evil in the world... things like storms and death...
 - At least that's what many like him say...
 - But I tell you that the God of the bible does not apologise for storms and death...
 - He is not at all embarrassed that they happen and makes no apologies from them...
 - Instead, He claims these for the revelation of His glory...
 - It is His glory as a holy God to judge sin.
 - Rather than denying Him because He has cursed us...
 - We should all the more acknowledge Him...
 - We should ascribe all glory and strength to Him.

c. You will observe that it is the “**mighty ones**” who are called to ascribe these things to Him...

1) And it is no wonder!

- It is **the mighty** who are most suited to this task because they are given more of His strength and glory to praise Him with...
- The more you are given, the more you are to praise Him!
 - Let princes and rulers and philosophers and great men lead the way in praising Him...
 - But sadly, in this dark and sinful world,
 - they are often the ones who are the most self-sufficient and proud!
 - This is completely backwards!

- Those that have received more have that much more to ascribe to God.

2) “**Mighty Ones**” is perhaps a reference to angels.

- But whether that is so or not,
 - we are surely called to follow their example.

B. You are called here to “worship the LORD in the beauty of Holiness!” when as you ascribe all these things to Him.

- What does it mean to worship Him in the beauty of Holiness?

1. First, this speaks of worshipping Him in the beauty of **His** holiness...

a. Holiness speaks of God’s otherness...

- His absolute superiority in excellence and virtue...
- His surpassing greatness in power and sufficiency...
- His moral greatness and perfection.

b. To **worship** means to bow down to Him...

- And in doing so to gladly put yourself under Him as His humble servant...
- You are to be awed by His beautiful holiness and praise Him...
 - Oh I wish that we could see more of Him!
 - “Lord, show us your glory!”
 - “Hallowed be your name in heaven and earth!”
 - “Holy, Holy, Holy, the whole earth is full of your glory!”

2. But *worship in the beauty of holiness* not only speaks of **His** beautiful holiness;

- it is also a summons to **you** to be beautiful in holiness when you worship...

a. Do not dare to come before this God without first taking a bath...

- When God appeared to His people at Sinai, He told them to consecrate themselves, to wash themselves.
- They were to put away all their idols and to repent of their sins...
- We are told by Paul to repent when we come to worship:
 - 1Co 5:8 Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened *bread* of sincerity and truth.
 - Isa 55:7: Let the wicked forsake his way, And the unrighteous man his thoughts.

- b. But your repentance will do you no good unless you turn the Lord Jesus Christ to be washed by Him...
 - He is the One who shed His blood for the remission of sin...
 - You are sanctified or made holy by faith in His blood...
 - That is what gives you the right to come and worship such a holy God...

- c. And indeed, this cleansing of Christ is the main focus of holy worship...
 - Holy worship is the worship of those who have been set apart to God by Christ.
 - consecrated by His blood.
 - God is honoured when (and only when) we come to Him as He has commanded—with faith in Jesus Christ.
 - If you come on your own, without Christ, you will be cast out from God’s presence.
 - You are to worship in the beauty of holiness that Christ gives.
 - If you come without that, you are not coming to God as God is, but are actually denying His glory.

TRANS> And so you see in these first two verses that you are taught to come before God in the beauty of holiness, ascribing to Him all glory and strength!

- But to do this you must first wake up to see His glory and strength!
 - And I tell you, I am concerned that too many of you are like that British philosopher.
 - You believe that God created,
 - but you do not ascribe all glory and strength to Him...
 - You are ready to ascribe the glory and strength of creation to Him,
 - but not the glory and strength of Him that is revealed in the storm!
 - But I tell you, **all** glory and strength are to be ascribed to Him...
 - You must see Him in the storm as well as in the calm...

II. Psalm 29 teaches you to consider His mighty voice, which is heard in the storm.

A. Brothers and sisters, verse 3 says that “His voice is over the waters!”

1. This is talking about the storm clouds that are full of rain.
 - a. Do you know that God is the strength behind great storms?
 - 1) You must ascribe to Him the glory of destructive storms—
 - Do not attribute it to the secondary causes of low pressure systems and all the rest...
 - There would be no storm and no low pressure system if not for the will of God.
 - 2) Do you know that there were no storms at all from the time of Adam until Noah?
 - It was not until the great flood that God sent rain...
 - Before that, He caused water to come up from the ground to water the earth.
 - 3) And why did God send that great flood?
 - It was a judgement...
 - It was because the wickedness of men had become great in the earth.
 - As King, God sent the flood to judge His people.
 - b. Verse 10 speaks about this...
 - 1) It says,
 - “The LORD sat enthroned at the Flood and the LORD sits as King forever.”
 - The great flood was not something that just happened without God’s knowing it—
 - and something He had to come and pick up the pieces after!
 - It was a deliberate judgement sent from His royal throne!
 - It was the expression of a justly offended majesty!
 - He was not there wondering what to do when the flood came.
 - It was His flood.
 - 2) And when verse 3 says that His voice is over the waters...
 - it is saying that His voice is over all storms!
 - He is speaking to us in a very loud, majestic voice in these storms!
 - He has promised that there will never be another one to destroy the whole world as with Noah—
 - It was an amazingly awful storm!

- There were all sorts to disturbances—
 - Can you imagine the terror to the inhabitants of the world who had never seen rain, never seen high winds, never seen thunder and lightning...
 - Here, all the sudden, was the storm of all storms to a people who had forgotten God.
 - In this great storm, God was showing His glory and strength in a very unpleasant way to a people who had denied His glory and strength.
 - There will never be another storm like that storm,
 - but ever since that day, there are still smaller storms to remind us of His glory and strength.
 - Verse 10 says
 - He **sat** enthroned at that Flood,
 - and consequently, He **sits** enthroned forever.
 - Ever since Noah’s flood,
 - God has sent tornadoes and hurricanes and thunder storms and volcanoes and cold and heat.
2. From all these you are supposed to learn of His glory and strength!
- a. Because we do not acknowledge Him, He shouts at us in these storms!
 - Verse 3 & 4 say:
 - “The God of glory thunders!”
 - “The LORD is over many waters.”
 - “The voice of the LORD is powerful...”
 - “The voice of the LORD is full of majesty.”
 - b. Even with all our technology, we cannot prevent destructive storms...
 - 1) If God wants to, He can shake California off the map...
 - If He wants to, He can throw our city into confusion with a Blizzard or a Hurricane and there is nothing we can do to stop it.
 - 2) He does these things to tell us that He is on the throne...
 - And of course, it is not just storms by which He speaks...
 - Cancer is His voice,
 - Heart disease is His voice,
 - Terrorist attacks are His voice,
 - Death is His voice of judgement and no one can prevent it...

- He is on His throne...
- He is over the waters...
- The God of glory thunders!

3) And I say, you miss so much if do not see this glory!

- Do not try to separate God from His works by stopping with naturalistic explanations!
- We are in a world that is trying to do this—perhaps more than ever before!
- But God is still speaking and it is for us to hear His voice.

B. Now I want you to consider how His power and majesty are revealed in His thundering voice!

1. v. 5: The voice of the LORD breaks the cedars, Yes, the LORD splinters the cedars of Lebanon.

- Here are the most praised and esteemed of trees, shattered to pieces by the voice of God!
- Nothing is secure, nothing is safe...
 - The Lord God can bring it down.
 - Even the proudest most venerable of men—
 - the most self-sufficient and exalted will be shattered by God’s judgements—
 - either now so that they are brought to repentance...
 - or on the day of judgement...
 - “Every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that He is Lord.”
 - Hear His voice today!
 - It thunders in the storm!

2. v. 6: He makes them also skip like a calf, Lebanon and Sirion like a young wild ox.

- a. The word “skip” here is a word that has a range of meaning including everything from the jolting and bouncing along of chariots to dancing...
 - The idea is that God can set mountains in motion by His great storms.
 - This could refer to the trembling of terrified calf or young ox which is like the shaking of the trees on the hillside...
 - or it could refer to avalanches when the whole sides of hills fall off and bounce down the hill side.

- b. God can blast a small place or a big place with His voice...
 - He can bring down a mighty nation as easily as a mosquito...
 - Every city, every nation, is upheld by His decree and if He chooses, He can overthrow it in a night as He overthrow impregnable Babylon.
 - Do not take comfort or find security in a nation's strength or size...
 - Find your security in the will of God.
 - He is the one who brings the changes.
3. v. 7: The voice of the LORD divides the flames of fire.
- a. Lightening is the fiery sword of God that strikes His target every time...
 - God is the one that divides the lightening,
 - that portions each flash out according to His will.
 - Lightening does not strike anything at random...
 - It always obeys the command of God and goes exactly where He sends it.
 - b. There is no comfort in thinking that you were struck with calamity at random...
 - It is all part of God's design and you must ascribe the glory to Him...
 - You must bow down to Him and submit to Him and worship Him.
4. v. 8: The voice of the LORD shakes the wilderness; The LORD shakes the Wilderness of Kadesh. The voice of the LORD makes the deer give birth.
- a. The word translated "shake" in the Hebrew in verse 8 is translated "give birth" in verse 9.
 - It is the same word.
 - For this reason, I am inclined to see this as a **contrast** to the destructive effects of the storm in the mountain...
 - The same storm that brought destruction to the trees in the mountains of Lebanon brings life to the dessert.
 - It makes the dessert blossom and bring forth...
 - Just as it causes the terrified deer who often has a terrible time giving birth to give birth quickly.
 - To complete the contrast,
 - it says that God's voice strips the forests bare.

- b. This is similar to the varied effects of the gospel on the rich and poor.
 - James 1:9-10: Let the lowly brother glory in his exaltation, but the rich in his humiliation, because as a flower of the field he will pass away.
 - The idea here is that the lowly brother who had nothing until the gospel came is given something, even in this world...
 - while the rich brother is humbled in the world because he realises that all he had set his heart on is vanity.
 - Another way to see this is as it is presented in Revelation 3 where those that who say:
 - “I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing”
 - need to be humbled to see that they are
 - “wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked”
 - And those who are poor and know they have nothing obey Christ’s counsel to
 - “buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, *that* the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see.”
- c. The very same storm that debases the proud and strips them to nothing lifts up the barren wilderness and causes it to be fruitful and the barren to bring forth.

TRANS> Oh brothers and sisters, when you hear the mighty of voice of God in the storm,

- let it strip away all the overgrown pride and vanity in your heart, the self love and self sufficiency, the hypocrisy and bitterness, and all the covetousness and sensuality...
 - I tell you, if you take an honest look at the LORD’s majesty and power,
 - if His word of judgement thunders effectually into your life...
 - you won’t be able to stand in your own glory and strength any longer!

III. Have you heard this glory and power?

- A. Are you one of those in the temple who sees the storm and says “glory” because you hear the voice of God in the storm?
 - 1. The whole temple—everyone in it—says “glory” when they behold the judgements of God.
 - a. Those in the temple do not see merely a terrible storm,
 - they see the God of all glory rendering His judgements...

- They ascribe all power and glory to Him and worship in the beauty of holiness.
 - They do not respond to the flood, but to the God of the flood.
 - They see Him reigning in majesty and power over the flood forever.
- b. If you have trusted in Christ, you are part of this temple...
- In 2 Cor. 6:16, Paul says:
 - For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will dwell in them And walk among *them*. I will be their God, And they shall be My people."
 - And in Ephesians 2:19-22 He says:
 - Eph 2:19-22: Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief *cornerstone*, in whom the whole building, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.
 - Do you see?
 - The temple is the place where God dwells by His Spirit.
 - It is the place where God is acknowledged and worshipped in truth.
 - It is the place where God is known and His judgements understood.
2. The temple understands the glory of God's judgement because in the temple, Christ crucified is revealed in word and sacrament...
- a. Central to the temple is the altar where the blood of the sacrifice is offered up to God...
- On this altar, the terrible wrath of God is revealed against sin...
 - The sacrifice is crucified and offered to a holy God...
 - And God receives the offering and declares His acceptance of guilty sinners.
- b. We glory in the sacrifice of our Lord that was offered two thousand years ago.
- Each week we gather to give thanks to His name and hear the declaration of what He has done for us.
- 1) And here we find this holy, majestic God...
- to whom all strength and glory belong...
 - reconciled to us... a friend and not an enemy!

- 2) Here we find all that power and glory revealed in the storm is power and glory exercised for us!
 - I say, what more could He do to show His good will toward us than to send His only Son to bear the curse for us!
 - Surely if He has not spared His Son, He has fully accepted all those who run to Him for refuge in the storm.

TRANS> The good news is this:

B. The God of thunder reigns for you—all you are trusting in Christ!

- The promises of verse 11 are for you!
 1. First it says, “The LORD will give strength to His people”
 - a. Yes, the God of all glory and strength whose voice is heard in the storm—
 - Whose majesty and glory shakes mountains and shatters cedars...
 - That is the God who promises to give strength to you who trust in Him.
 - b. Isaiah 40:28-31: Have you not known? Have you not heard? The everlasting God, the LORD, The Creator of the ends of the earth, Neither faints nor is weary. His understanding is unsearchable. He gives power to the weak, And to *those who have* no might He increases strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, And the young men shall utterly fall, But those who wait on the LORD Shall renew *their* strength; They shall mount up with wings like eagles, They shall run and not be weary, They shall walk and not faint.
 - What is it little Christian?
 - Do you need strength to overcome temptation? He has it for you. He is able to provide the way of escape.
 - Do you need strength to love others as you should? He has it for you.
 - Do you need strength to obey your parents without complaining? He has it for you. You can do all things through Christ who strengthens you.
 - Do you need strength to bear up under affliction? His strength is made perfect in your weakness.
 - Do you need strength to train up your children? Look to Him, He gently leads those that are with young.
 - Hebrews 11 says: “By faith Sarah herself also received strength to conceive seed, and she bore a child when she was past the age, because she judged Him faithful who had promised.”
 - Do you need strength to testify of Him? He has not given you a spirit of fear, but of love and of a sound mind.

- c. Surely you realise that without Him, you have no strength...
 - He is the source of all glory and strength, and without Him you are nothing...
 - But if He is strengthening you, you can do all things!
 - You can move mountains if you have faith as a mustard seed.
 - God has promised to strengthen you.

TRANS> And that is not all... verse 11 also says...

- 2. v. 11: “The LORD will bless His people with peace.”
 - a. This same God to whose voice thunders forth with glory and power will direct His voice to give you peace!
 - b. I have already spoken about what He did to purchase your peace!
 - He gave His only Son to die on the cross...
 - He has paid the price of peace so that whoever believes in Him is forgiven.
 - It He has suffered for your sins, God will not make you pay again!
 - c. And let me tell you what this peace entails!
 - 1) It is the Hebrew word shalom that is used here!
 - It is a much better word than our English word....
 - Our English word is quite wonderful—
 - It speaks of the absence of conflict and turmoil and trouble...
 - Shalom surely includes all that...
 - But it also includes the idea do wholeness, fullness, completeness of blessing.
 - 2) When the God of all glory and strength gives us peace,
 - a) We will be everything that a human being ought to be...
 - We will be perfected in beauty and glory...
 - We will be in perfect relationship with God and with each other!
 - It will be glory!
 - b) I am talking about an eternal relationship in the perfect love of God!
 - He will not just accept us, He will rejoice over us!
 - We will actually be lovely and desirable to Him.

- He will delight in us and be pleased with us.
 - We will never disappoint Him again and of course...
 - We will be absolutely thrilled in His love and acceptance.
 - We will bask in His unchangeable wonderfulness...
 - We will give all glory and strength to Him...
 - And we will worship in the beauty of holiness!

Conclusion

Christian, do you see what a glorious God this is!

- This God to whom all glory and all strength belongs—
 - This God whose voice shakes heaven and earth in dreadful judgements—
 - This God is the same God who turns all that power to bless His people.
 - What can we do but say “Glory?”