

Psalm 29

29:1 Ascribe to the LORD, O heavenly beings, ascribe to the LORD glory and strength.

29:2 Ascribe to the LORD the glory of his name; worship the LORD in holy splendor.

29:3 The voice of the LORD is over the waters; the God of glory thunders, the LORD, over mighty waters.

29:4 The voice of the LORD is powerful; the voice of the LORD is full of majesty.

29:5 The voice of the LORD breaks the cedars; the LORD breaks the cedars of Lebanon.

29:6 He makes Lebanon skip like a calf and Sirion like a young wild ox.

29:7 The voice of the LORD flashes forth flames of fire.

29:8 The voice of the LORD shakes the wilderness; the LORD shakes the wilderness of Kadesh.

29:9 The voice of the LORD causes the oaks to whirl and strips the forest bare, and in his temple all say, "Glory!"

29:10 The LORD sits enthroned over the flood; the LORD sits enthroned as king forever.

29:11 May the LORD give strength to his people! May the LORD bless his people with peace!

Reflection: A Powerful Voice

Rev. Bob Stillerman

In the beginning, even before a beginning we can comprehend, there was a blanket of chaos and disorder. Maybe it was a whirling blur. Maybe it was a boggy nothingness. Whatever the case, it was a monster that needed to be tamed. And then, suddenly, there was order in the universe. God made light. And separated the waters. There was sky, and land, and sea, and creatures to fill all three. And there was a commonality in every aspect of creation: God' breath, God's voice, and God's presence filled the world with creative affection. And it was good. Very good. All of it. And it still is!!!

This morning, the Psalmist seeks to remind us of God's voice. In fact, the Psalmist, encourages us, to collectively, as a body of believers, give thanks for the power and authority of God's voice.

It's interesting, too. The Psalmist puts their primary focus on the sheer power of God's voice. God's voice marshals the very depth of nature – it has the force of hurricanes, earthquakes, and cyclones. And this psalm is written for us to imagine and experience such a force. We hear the phrase "voice of God" six times, and we hear God's name a dozen times.

Imagine thousands of people gathered together, mimicking the thundering voice of God. Think about the biggest big-haired rock band you can imagine, Fender Stratocasters amplified to the max, projecting a rhythm so deep, and so loud, and so booming it shakes the pews, rumbles the plaster on the ceiling, and rattles every ear drum. We don't just hear such a voice; we are overwhelmed by it. God speaks with an

earthshaking magnitude and wields an earth-bending power that controls floods, levels mighty cedars, and guides the movements of every nation.

There is good news, Millbrook Baptist Church! We reside in the presence of a powerful God! We ask this good and powerful God of ours to bring forth shalom in our world. We faith that God's supernatural abilities to both order and heal the physical world are only eclipsed by God's supernatural abilities to bring forth a peace that passes understanding.

Glory, indeed! Amen.

Luke 3:15-17, 21-22

15: The people were filled with expectation, and everyone wondered whether John might be the Christ.

16 John replied to them all, "I baptize you with water, but the one who is more powerful than me is coming. I'm not worthy to loosen the strap of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.

17 The shovel he uses to sift the wheat from the husks is in his hands. He will clean out his threshing area and bring the wheat into his barn. But he will burn the husks with a fire that can't be put out."

21 When everyone was being baptized, Jesus also was baptized. While he was praying, heaven was opened

22 and the Holy Spirit came down on him in bodily form like a dove. And there was a voice from heaven: "You are my Son, whom I dearly love; in you I find happiness."

Reflection

Rev. Jessica McDougald

When I was ordained here a few years ago, my Mom presented me with my stole. When it was time, she came up front and put the stole around my neck and looked me in the eye and said “Jessica, you are an incredible gift from God, and God has amazing plans for your life.” And she told me she loved me, and that she was proud of me.

She was repeating the blessing that I give to the Millbrook preschoolers on preschool graduation day. It’s a blessing I stole from Evan Talbert, who said those same words to my Camille on her preschool graduation day - a blessing that I have not been able to forget. You are an incredible gift from God, and God has amazing plans for your life. Simple words, a familiar sentiment, but powerfully profound nonetheless.

The gospel of Luke offers us a glimpse into Jesus’ humanity this morning. Our lectionary selection for today begins with the end of John the Baptist’s ministry - right after he finishes talking about “the one who is to come,” Jesus, Luke tells us that he’s arrested by Herod. And immediately following that, we read about Jesus’ baptism - the ushering in of his ministry. So we are transitioning from John to Jesus here - Jesus starts his ministry with baptism and the affirmation of his calling by the Divine Godself. You are my son, whom I dearly love; in you I find happiness.

Not only does Luke show us a flicker of Jesus’ humanity in this passage - Luke shows us an image of God that we don’t pay attention to often...

Reflections
Bob Stillerman and Jessica McDougald
Baptism of the Lord Sunday, 1/12/2025
Psalm 29; Luke 3:15-17, 21-22



the proud parent, the beaming creator, the personification of love, the God that puts your pictures on God's refrigerator door. And it changes everything - that God loves us that way? That is something everyone needs to be reminded of.

So hear this from me: You are an incredible gift from God - the God who spoke the whole world into being. And God - the God of space and time, past and future - God has amazing plans for your life.

Amen!