
The Pilgrim's Glorious Lord

Psalm 29¹⁹

Russ Kennedy

My wife and family are from Washington State. We have driven across the USA from Ohio to her home many times. Just for the record, it is about 33 hours of driving from here to there. The Rocky mountain pass in Montana and through Idaho is an amazing day of driving. Much of southern Minnesota is beautiful. But some of the longest hours are the horizonless grass lands of South Dakota. Once when we were driving home we were caught in one of those stunning prairie storms. The children were with us. The shelf clouds filled the sky towering thousands of feet high. Lightening walked across the grassland. The tumbleweed was surfing the wind. At one amazing point, one blew by us on fire having been hit by lightening.

This Psalm is about that kind of moment.

What if we are called to stand in awe, not merely at the storm, but at the God who brings and directs the storm?

David watches this powerful storm come off the Mediterranean Sea, sweep down from the north and across the southern wilderness. He is mightily moved to see the majesty of the glorious Lord. Pilgrims see their glorious Lord in all of their lives.

Praise: His Worship by the Sons of Might

(v.1-2)

All of heaven's creatures are summoned to worship the glorious Lord.

¹ Ascribe to the Lord, O heavenly beings,
ascribe to the Lord glory and strength.

² Ascribe to the Lord the glory due his name;
worship the Lord in the splendor of holiness.

The Call to Worship

(v.1)

God's people echo the call to worship God. But there is more to that here. This is not merely a call to worship, but also give to the Lord the honor and recognition that is His due. He is due this glory and strength because He is the Lord. God is called Lord in every stanza in this Psalm.

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Now there is a question as to whom this summons, this call is being given. Literally the Hebrew words are "sons of mighty" or "sons of Elohim." Our translators thought the weight was on heavenly beings including angels, cherubim and seraphim. Others see this as referring to earthly princes, the sons of the mighty. In either case creatures on earth and in heaven are to worship the Lord by giving Him the honor and glory He is due. So it calls for humility and obedience.

The Content of Worship

(v.1-2)

Worship involves seeing, saying and singing about THE PERSON OF GOD. We often think of worship as focusing on what God does. What is called for here is a recognition of the person of God, His character, His worth, His reputation.

Worship involves seeing, saying and singing about THE PERFECTIONS OF GOD. All that has been made should know and admire the flawlessness of God. The call reverses what sinful humans often do: we attribute to God what He is not. We do this most often by questioning His character. In the troubles and trials of life we question God's wisdom, authority, goodness and love. It is precisely when it is hardest to that we must give to the Lord the honor He is due.

The Character of worship

(v.2)

There is some discussion what is meant by the phrase "the beauty or splendor of holiness." Is this God's holiness? Or is the worshipper clothed in holiness? Maybe what is envisioned here is the whole sphere of worship in which holy creatures worship a holy God ascribing to Him His worth. What occurs then is beautiful. It is full of the brightness of splendor.

The Old Testament priests and Levites had attire that they were required to wear when serving in the Temple. These were simple linen garments with beautiful trim. This is what the Psalmist has in mind. He sees in the bright whiteness and beauty the splendor of holiness. So the Lord Himself, the heavenly beings and the earthly pilgrims all worship in heaven and on earth in the beauty of being clothed in holiness. The New Testament speaks then of all the worshippers before the throne as being dressed in white garments which is the righteousness given to the saints. (Revelation 15:5-8; 19:6-10).

God's people delight to give God the honor and glory He is due.

Power: His Way in the Earthly Storm

(v.3-9)

Having called us to ascribe to God the glory He is due, the Psalmist celebrates the glory of God in creation. Across the land moves the mighty storm of God's glorious power. The noise of the storm is the voice of the Lord. The voice of the glory breaks and makes...

³ The voice of the Lord is over the waters;
the God of glory thunders,
the Lord, over many waters.

⁴ The voice of the Lord is powerful;
the voice of the Lord is full of majesty.

⁵ The voice of the Lord breaks the cedars;
the Lord breaks the cedars of Lebanon.

⁶ He makes Lebanon to skip like a calf,
and Sirion like a young wild ox.

⁷ The voice of the Lord flashes forth flames of fire.

⁸ The voice of the Lord shakes the wilderness;
the Lord shakes the wilderness of Kadesh.

⁹ The voice of the Lord makes the deer give birth
and strips the forests bare,
and in his temple all cry, "Glory!"

The Path of the Storm

The Psalmist traces the path of the storm across the region he knows. It sweeps in over the wide sea, the Mediterranean (v.3-4). The storm strides across the northern forests of Lebanon (v.5-6). Then the storm crashes its way over the southern wilderness (v.7-8). This is no gentle soothing rain sending us into the quiet night of sleep. This is a howling hurricane. In its path it leaves wreckage and devastation.

The Power of the Voice

We are in awe of the power of the voice. The voice of God thunders over the sea (v.3) causing the mighty waves (v. 4). The voice of shatters the towering cedars of Lebanon (v.4). It rolls across the mountains and valleys in as the landscape heaves and the animals prance and skip. The voice of God walks in thunder and lightening across the wilderness plains, shaking the rolling hillsides and wilderness stretches (v.6-8). The voice of God blows and strips the forests bare (v.9)

To ascribe to the Lord the glory, strength and honor He is due is to see His voice in the storm. God's Word makes and God's Word breaks.

The Praise in the Storm

In the Lord's Temple all shout, "Glory..." This shout is not just choral accompaniment or for effect. This is a response. Glory, glory, glory is the delight of true worshippers even in the dangers of God. Normally we huddle in fear in the raging storms. But God's people are in awe of the glory and the power of God. They stand in the storm and shout, "glory." They stand even in the storms of their own lives and ascribe glory and power and strength and authority to God. God's voice may bring devastation, but God's people praise Him.

The Purpose of the Storm

What God does in creation is ultimately designed to cause us to worship and glory in Him. Our experience of the creation is to cause us to glory in the Creator. David is not doing something extraordinary in seeing God in the path and power of the storm. He is humbled before such an awesome sovereign God. He relates it to the Scripture. He remembers God's promises. He submits to the Lord.

May God grant that we remember in all things that we live in God's world. Yes, there is study of the way God has made the creation with all its intricate design and marvelous working. But for God's people, this should never be an end in itself, *even when we are seeking to understand the world in order to make things*. Let us never lose the wonder of God in the wonderfulness of His creation. Otherwise our science becomes idolatry. It is idolatry to attribute deity to things that are made. But it is also idolatry to miss God in things He made.

The Person in the Glory

The voice of the Lord as a powerfully moving force. Creation is more than just a massive mechanical system that works on fixed laws and relationships. It is no less than that. But it is also so much more. God is immediately and directly affecting the world. He made by His Word. He upholds it by His Word. By His voice he guides the storms.

The voice of the Lord is revealed in John 1 to be a person, the Lord Jesus Christ. He is Word of God. He is the voice of God. He is the one whose words form the commands the wind and seas obey. What Jesus did several times in calming the storms during His life here on earth was simply going public with He has always done.

God's people see God at work in all the storms of life.

Place: His Reign from the Heavenly Throne

(v.10-11)

¹⁰ The Lord sits enthroned over the flood;
the Lord sits enthroned as king forever.

¹¹ May the Lord give strength to his people!
May the Lord bless his people with peace!

The Sovereignty of the Lord

He reigns over all. Even the storms in the world are under His sovereign purpose and power. The storm reminds David of Noah's flood. The word "flood" here only occurs in Genesis 6-9. So God's people are to remember several things about the storms that devastate the world at our large and our own worlds.

God can be dangerous, particularly to the wicked. His present wrath is nothing compared to His eternal judgment.

God will rescue His people from the outpouring of His wrath in the final day.

God's people will suffer many hardships, trials and troubles. God is in control of the storms. He sets their path, their power and their purposes.

God is sovereign. He is the Lord. We will learn to bow to Him in everything. All our wants, desires, agendas, aims, purposes, hopes and dreams: all gladly bowing before the King who sits enthroned even over the flood.

The Subjects of the Lord

We are comforted by our God. Here are two great needs of the subjects of the Lord in the midst of life shattering storms.

We need His strength

So we pray that God grant us strength. We feel so weak, frail and vulnerable. It is hard to bear up. We are overwhelmed. But oh to know that our sovereign God will strengthen us so that we will be able to endure.

We need His peace

And we pray that God grant us peace. We are not praying for relief. We are praying for inner peace in the midst of outer turmoil. So many of us have known this peace. The storms rage and threaten. But God fills us with a deep sense of quiet as we rest on Him.

10, 11. Over this terrible raging of the elements God is enthroned, directing and restraining by sovereign power; and hence the comfort of His people. "This awful God is ours, our Father and our Love." [JFB]

God's people gladly submit to their sovereign Lord and thus receive His strength and peace..

Reflect and Respond

From heaven above to earth below, may all living beings give glory and honor to the Lord. Join in that worshipping throng dressed in robes of holiness worshipping before our Sovereign's throne.

When the next hurricane strikes and moves across our land, see the voice of God. And stand with heaven's throng shouting, "Glory, glory glory..."

How do pilgrims respond to the storms?

God's people delight to give God the honor and glory He is due.

God's people see God at work in all the storms of life.

God's people gladly submit to their sovereign Lord and thus receive His strength and peace..