Psalm 29
The Lord of Glory

1. My ears were ringing
   - My ears were ringing, and pitch darkness had swallowed us.
   - It all happened in an instant.
   - One moment my sister and I were watching tv, and the next moment, we were left in shock.
   - There was a bright flash and a deafening crack.
   - What does it tell you when the lightning and thunder happen at the same time?
   - I never knew what burning air smelt like before.
   - I had a newfound respect and fear for the power of a lightning bolt.
   - Whatever control we think we have as a human being, it all melts away when something as uncontrollable as lightning is sent by God.
   - The Eastern states of Australia has seen just how much they aren’t in control as coastlines were reshaped, and towns were deluged.
   - That captures a sense of the humility we are to have when we encounter God.
   - Psalm 29 is going to widen our eyes to the wonder of God’s magnificence.
   - He is big, he is untameable, he is almighty and sovereign.
   - If I was put in my place by lightning, I will certainly be put in my place before the God who thunders.
   - My hope tonight is that we ourselves would take the lead of our psalmist and worship the LORD of glory.

2. A psalm of David (v0)
   - The title tells us that this psalm is connected with David - that is, Israel's prominent king.
   - He ruled over Israel at a high point of her history.
   - It is impressive to consider his victories, his trust in God, and the kingdom that was built around him.
   - Yet, this psalm of David is all about Israel's true king and strength - the LORD.
   - The psalm begins with a call to worship the LORD
   - It then gives words for this worship, describing the voice of the LORD.
   - Finally, it praises the enthroned LORD as he blesses.
3. Worship the LORD (vv1-2)

• Firstly, the call to worship the LORD in verses 1 and 2.
• Isn't it wonderful that we can listen to God speak to us in poetry and song?
  • There is so much that is embedded within its words.
  • It introduces rich ideas in each line, and builds upon these ideas with delicious depth.
  • Just listen to the rhythm and focus of these opening verses:

    Ascribe to the LORD, O mighty ones,
    Ascribe to the LORD glory and strength.
    Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name; (Psalm 29:1-2)

• Even from just 2 verses, it's clear that the LORD is the central focus of this psalm.
  • It is mentioned a total of 18 times, and appears in every verse except one.
  • Just like how the chorus of a song might echo in our minds, the chorus of this psalm is the LORD.
  • Remember that when the word 'LORD' is written all in capitals, it's referring to the name of the only living and true God.
  • He is the self-defining God who is not dependent on or directed by any person (Ex 3:14-16).
  • He is the rescuing God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and he does not tolerate the worship of any other.
  • From the original language, we can pronounce his name Yahweh.
  • Yahweh is the very God who chose his people, and created them, grew them, rescued them, and secured them in his land.
  • He is totally unique - totally unlike the gods that mankind create.
  • The other day, I met a person who worships the moon because he can see it!
  • God is not like the moon, for he is the creator, whilst the moon is created.
• It is before this LORD, Yahweh, that mighty ones are to worship.
  • It's talking about heavenly beings, or angels (cf Job 38:7; Ps 89:6).
  • So, the psalm is calling upon these heavenly beings to worship the God of Israel.
  • And straight away, we are taken beyond what we can see with our eyes or touch with our hands.
  • Imagine that - calling upon angels to worship God.
• Are we getting the sense that God is greater than what we can see?
  • They are to ascribe to the LORD, to credit Yahweh, with the qualities that belong to him.
  • Credit God with glory - acknowledge that he is great and magnificent.
  • According to Exodus (33:18-20), God's glory is his goodness and mercy and compassion.
• And he would show his greatness to his people through physical displays - like in an awesome cloud, or consuming fire (Ex 24:15-17).
• He caused his glory to fill his temple - where he would reside with his people (2 Ch 7:1-3)
• Ascribe to the LORD glory, because his name deserves it.
• Credit God with strength - acknowledge that he is powerful and strong.
  • King David has experienced God's strength when he was a little boy.
  • When he defeats strong enemies, he did so in the name of Yahweh Almighty.
• The end of v2 sums up this section:
  
  "Worship the LORD in the splendor of his holiness" (Psalm 29:2)

  • Honour Yahweh, take joy in who he is and what he's like.
  • Praise him and thank him.
  • Holiness means set-apart and pure - that is, God is set apart from the people he has created.
    • Whilst we are sinful, he is pure and good.
    • Worship God as he is clothed in holiness.
  • Our psalm begins with a call for the angels to recognise who God is and what he is like.
  • Worship the LORD for he is glorious, and strong, and holy.
  • With the arrival of Jesus, who is king forever, in the line of David, the angels worship him.
  • Take a look at the verses from Revelation, printed in your leaflet:

    Then I looked and heard the voice of many angels, numbering thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand. They encircled the throne and the living creatures and the elders. In a loud voice they sang: "Worthy is the Lamb [ie. Jesus], who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!" (Revelation 5:11-12)

  • We are to worship Jesus in his glory, and strength, and holiness.

4. The voice of the LORD (vv3-9)

  • The psalm has given its call to worship, and now it gives words for this worship.
    • You want to know how to ascribe to Yahweh what is due his name, well, verses 3-9 do exactly that.
    • And we've moved from the realm of God and angels, to the realm of the earth.
  • The focus is still on Yahweh, David's faithful God, but now it sharpens this focus to the voice of the LORD.
  • The words 'The voice of the LORD' gets repeated 7 times in 7 verses.
• Whilst our mind’s eye were stimulated by the first 2 verses (glory and splendour), our mind’s ears are resonating now.
  • Especially with the rumblings from the repetition - ‘the voice of the LORD, the voice of the LORD, the voice of the LORD’
  • And God’s voice here - it’s not quiet and soothing, but ominous and threatening.
• These verses pick up the idea of God’s glory and strength from v1, and it shows us the glory of his voice and its strength.
  • In v3, Yahweh’s voice thunders over the waters, the mighty waters.
    • Waters or seas that hold great terror for the Israelites, for it is the place of chaos, and danger, and uncertainty.
    • The God of glory’s voice is strong over the might of the waters.
    • Are we beginning to hear the sound of his voice?
  • In v4, Yahweh’s voice is powerful and majestic.
    • When we encounter his voice, we would respond in awe at God’s might and impressiveness.
• The power of Yahweh’s voice is amplified as we see what it can do in v5.
  • It breaks the cedars, the cedars of Lebanon.
  • The cedar tree is a symbol of strength at that time.
    • The cedar trees of Lebanon were famous, and it was used for the construction of the king’s palace and the temple of God.
    • If you want to build a solid building, you need to use sturdy materials, so you would use cedar wood.
    • It is terrifying that the mere voice of the LORD breaks these mighty trees, like toothpicks.
      • Well, I couldn’t break a toothpick with my voice, let alone a tree.
      • So, it’s something that is totally beyond our abilities.
  • If the thought of God’s voice snapping trees isn’t amazing enough, v6 starts to make our insides reverberate.
    • Lebanon is at the northern part of the land that God gave Israel.
    • The landscape is mountainous and rugged, with Sirion being the name of one of those mountains.
    • Yet another symbol of Israel’s strength - for what could be more immovable than a mountain.
    • God’s voice is mightier than that immovable force - for God’s thundering utterance makes this mountain range skip like a ‘young wild ox’.
      • It’s just ludicrous to put those two things together - a mountain and a cow.
      • A mountain is nothing like a cow - it doesn’t have legs, a tail, and go ‘moo’ when you milk it.
      • And yet Yahweh’s voice can make mountains breakdance.
  • The thunderstorm of God’s voice doesn’t let up at this point of the psalm, as v7 pairs the thunder with lightning.
    • The ‘voice of the LORD strikes with flashes of lightning’.
• We’ve made some amazing advances in meteorology (which by the way, isn’t the study of meteors, but weather).
• Yet, even with our greater understanding, when a ferocious lightning storm comes around, we are still put in our place.
• Did you know that lightning heats up the air to as hot as 30,000 degC - that’s 5 times hotter than the surface of the sun.
• Now, the hot water in my shower is 40 degC.
• So, don’t be hanging around outside with a golf stick when there’s a storm.
• They say that if you’re stuck outside in one of these storms, stay away from trees, tall buildings, flag poles, avoid open areas, and don’t lie down on the ground.
• So, I think that leaves levitating.
• It’s no wonder the psalmist chooses thunder and lightning to describe God’s voice - it’s just so powerful.
• v8, his voice shakes the desert of Kadesh, which is the southern tip of Israel’s land.
• And, v9, just as he shakes the desert, he destroys the forests and its mighty oak.
• There is nowhere in Israel’s land that does not witness the glory, strength and majesty of her almighty God.
• From the north to the south; from the waters to the mountains; from the desert to the forests - all hear the sound of Yahweh’s voice.
• Israel has heard this voice before.
• And it was just as terrifying then as it is now.
• On Mount Sinai, where God gave them the 10 commandments, Yahweh appeared in thunder, and lightning, and a thick cloud like that from a furnace.
• The whole mountain trembled violently.
• The Israelites were not to force their way to see him, lest they be destroyed because of God’s holiness.
• And when the LORD spoke his law, they trembled with fear, saying to Moses ‘speak to us yourself and we will listen. But do not have God speak to us or we will die’ (Exodus 20:19).
• Israel worshipped the LORD of glory with right fear and trembling, for they experienced his glory and strength.
• Sometimes the psalms use hyperbole or exaggeration to heighten the point they’re making.
• I think this is one of those occasions where it’s not hyperbole or exaggeration.
• What I mean is God can literally make his voice thunder.
• If he wishes, he could more than break cedars and oaks, and shake deserts and mountains.
• He could pick up mount lofty and plonk it in the middle of Rundle Mall, if he wished.
• Because, planet earth, he made that from nothing, and placed it here.
• How do you respond to such an awesome God - well, in v9, ‘in [God’s] temple all cry, “Glory!”’
• After experiencing the planet-shaking voice of God, the voices of his people gasp and join the angels in ascribing glory to God.
• The temple where God and his glory dwelt with his people.
• Where they could appropriately approach God to hear from him, to give him thanks, to praise him, to confess their sin.
• It is where they would gather to worship the LORD of glory.
• The most glorious thing he does with his voice, is to introduce his son Jesus (in your leaflets):

  While he was speaking, a cloud appeared and enveloped them, and they were afraid as they entered the cloud. A voice came from the cloud, saying, “This is my Son, whom I have chosen; listen to him.” (Luke 9:34-35)

• God said this when Jesus’ clothes became as bright as a ‘flash of lightning’, appearing in glory.
• The same earth-shattering glory and strength and majesty, residing in the person of Jesus.
• Glorious God and fully man.
• ‘the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word’ (Hebrews 1:3).
• It was he who walked amongst us.
• How amazing it is that sinners could wonder up to him, and touch him, and be healed, and be forgiven as they trusted in him.
• It was God the Son who endured the fearsome judgment of God for us.
• Today we worship the Son of glory.
• Psalm 29 began with a call to worship the LORD of glory.
• It then proceeded to ascribe to God’s voice power and majesty.
• In the final verses we find out how the enthroned LORD treats his people.

5. The enthroned LORD blesses (vv10-11)
• This worship of God has left us rightly humbled and lowly as it celebrates his sovereignty.
• v10 appropriately highlights the enthronement of Yahweh.
  • He sits as king over the flood.
  • Every other time this word ‘flood’ is used, it’s talking about the flood.
  • The one that God had sent because he was grieved about the wickedness and evil of people whom he created (Genesis 6-8).
  • Here is the example of God’s power as he, in a sense, reversed his creation of mankind.
  • It was, on one hand, his act of judgment, and on the other hand, an act of mercy as he preserved Noah and his family.
  • Our psalm brings to the fore God’s holy intolerance of evil, and his gracious act to save.
• That is the nature of our enthroned LORD, whom we worship.
• The last verse of psalm 29 leaves us with a torrential outpouring of love from Yahweh.
  • Remember what the angels are to ascribe to Yahweh?
    • Glory, strength, and splendour of holiness.
  • And here in v11, see what God does:
    
    The LORD gives strength to his people
    the LORD blesses his people with peace (Psalm 29:11)
    
• I wonder how David felt, being given strength like thunder, and power like lightning?
• David is strong, not because God gave him muscles, but because God is with him - as in Ps 28:8 “The LORD is the strength of his people”.
  • His people were strong because their God sustained them, and provided for them, and fought for them.
• He gives them peace from the nations around them who do not recognise Yahweh and wish harm upon them.
  • In Psalm 28:9 David says ‘save your people and bless your inheritance’, and here is God’s reply.
  • The LORD of glory blesses his people with peace.
• This blessing of peace is given greater significance with the birth of Jesus (in your leaflets):

  Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.” Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests.” (Luke 2:11-14)

• The myriad of angels are at it again - they are ascribing to God glory for his blessing of Jesus.
• And the peace he brings comes through Christ the Lord.
• The peace we need is, first and foremost, between us and the glorious God.
  • For he still is enthroned over his creation, with splendour and holiness.
  • He still is intolerant of our wickedness as the world withholding its worship of him.
  • We need to entrust ourselves to Jesus so that we can have peace with God.
• So, worship the LORD of glory and praise his Son by the power of his Spirit.
  • Let’s join the angels and delight in Christ’s character.
  • Worship the LORD of glory and bring ourselves beyond the cares of this world.
  • Worship the LORD of glory and ‘declare the praises of him who call you out of darkness and into his wonderful light’.
• The world needs to know his voice - they are listening even now.
• If you don't trust in Jesus yet, then will you join us today as we worship him?

Ascribe to Jesus, O Christians,
ascrbe to Jesus glory and strength.
Ascribe to Jesus the glory due his name;
worship Jesus in the splendour of his holiness.

The voice of Jesus is powerful;
the voice of Jesus is majestic
The voice of Jesus says “father, forgive them”

And in his church all cry, “Glory!”