**The voice of the Lord**  15/10/23 dkm

Read: Psalm 29, Romans 1:16-32

Text: Psalm 29

Psalms: 104:24-36, 97:1-7, 29:1-5, 150b

Are you ready for a sermon about the voice? We have just voted about a voice to parliament for indigenous people. Where or how they came up with this word, and exactly what it means in this context, no one seems to know. If you watch TV you might have seen a talent show called ‘The Voice’. If you thought you would hear people singing, think again- it is a boring show! In the midst of all this drama and confusion about a voice, we come to this psalm about the voice of the Lord. I am sure you will find it a pleasant relief and uplifting at this time. Hearing the truth is always a refreshing relief when we are bombarded with lies!

Speaking of lies, this psalm stands in contrast to the ‘climate gods’ that men have worshipped down through the ages. The Canaanites worshipped Baal, the storm god, among other things. The prophets of Baal failed to get him to answer their cries when challenged by Elijah in the midst of a severe drought. Elijah showed Israel that Yahweh sends fire and rain. David tells the people of God that the Lord is ‘over the waters’ and behind the storm. The thunder and lightning associated with storms is quite frightening to most people. Storms on our farm sometimes hit the electricity transformer and left us with no power. Our dog took shelter in the barn; my mother hated storms. Some people who took no notice and no shelter in the storm are now dead, struck by lightning on the golf course!

Most pagan cultures had storm gods like Baal. The Egyptians has Horus, and the Greeks and Romans has Zeus and Jupiter. Most aboriginal cultures had storm or rain gods. Our modern secular society had come up with its own ‘climate-change god’. Climate change activists are in fact worshippers of this newly created god, fearful and devoted worshippers; they are certainly not worshipping the God of David described in this psalm, and not recognising Jesus of Nazareth who rebuked the storm and it stopped (Mark 4:39). People tell us it is science, but science itself has become a modern-day god. People are waiting for scientists and their worshippers to stop the storms, waiting in vain.

‘The voice of the Lord is over the waters; the God of glory thunders’ (29:3). This is what we read here in this psalm, this portion of the Bible. The Bible tells us that God created the heavens and the earth and everything that exists. He spoke everything into being, and in him, in Jesus, all things consist or hold together (Col 1:16, 17). So it is not surprising to see Jesus, the Son of God, speaking to his creation and to the storm. Some think that David, like Elijah, was teaching that Yahweh, the covenant God of Israel, is more powerful than Baal and other man-made gods.

David begins this psalm picturing the Lord in heaven being worshipped by heavenly beings or angels. He goes on to teach that the Lord controls the storm, and that the thunder and lightning are like the voice and power of almighty God. In the closing verses he reminds us of Noah’s flood, of God’s power to destroy the wicked but save and bless his people.

**1. Worthy of worship**

Yahweh is Lord of heaven and earth. This psalm begins with a look into heaven, and a call for the ‘mighty ones’ or angels, or literally ‘sons of god(s)’, to give glory and strength to the Lord (29:1). The Lord, and he alone, is most worthy of worship by human beings and by angels. We must not worship angels or anything else in heaven or on earth. We must give all praise and glory to the Lord, the Triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Baal and all other man-made gods are not worthy of worship; they are only lumps of stone or wood.

Man is more worthy than inanimate objects, but what is man compared to his creator. Worship of scientists or celebrities, as is common today, falls short of the glory of God. Why worship something or someone who is no greater or more glorious that you when they are stripped of all earthly riches and fame. Worship of one’s self or narcissism makes more sense, if we ignore our many sins and imperfections. Giving unto the Lord the glory due to his name is the call of David, a man who had more reason that you or I to worship himself.

The Lord is holy; he is perfect and pure in every respect. ‘God a spirit- infinite, eternal, and unchangeable - in his being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth’ (Westminster Shorter Catechism Q4). He is not part of this sinful world in which we live, and which we cannot escape. Holiness is not seen in man, or in man-made gods. Those who worship such gods imagine them to be powerful but not holy. The Lord is both powerful and holy. ‘Beauty of holiness’ is literally ‘splendour of holiness’ (29:2). While this could refer to ‘holy array’ or ‘holy dress’ worn by priests, or the holiness of the sanctuary, it is best understood as God’s holiness rather than man’s. ‘Worship the Lord in the splendour of his holiness’ (29:2 NIV).

The Lord’s power is seen in the creation and his control over his creation, as revealed in this psalm. His power is also seen in the affairs of men, in his delivering his people from powerful rulers like Pharaoh. This is celebrated in many psalms, but this psalm celebrates God’s power over the creation. God’s strength is part of his glory, ‘glory due to his name’. God revealed himself to Moses as the great ‘I am’ or Yahweh, the self-existent and eternal creator and ruler of all. The name of Jesus is the name that is above every name (Phil 2:9). When Jesus was baptised in the Jordan, a voice from heaven declared him to be, ‘My beloved Son’ (Luke 3:22). If the angels in heaven are called to worship the Lord so are mere human beings like us. Those who refuse to bow the knee to Jesus today will do so when he comes in glory on the clouds of heaven.

**2. The Lord’s voice in the storm**

We can see God’s glory and power in the beauty of nature and the forces of nature. This psalm focuses on the storm as a demonstration of God’s power. We understand a lot more about storms in our day, and we can predict where and when they will come. But we are just as vulnerable and helpless as David was when they hit. All we can do is take shelter from ferocious storms, from cyclones and hurricanes; knowing when they will come simply helps us to find shelter sooner.

David describes a storm developing over ‘many waters’, over the Mediterranean Sea most likely (29:3). As storm clouds gather and darken the sky, the sound of thunder is heard and lightning is seen in the distance. This psalm focuses on the thunder, calling it the voice of the Lord, although the destructive power of lightning is also described. The word ‘voice’ occurs seven times in this psalm, seven being the number of perfection or completeness in the Scriptures. The ‘many waters’ in verse 3 is translated ‘mighty waters’ in the NIV. The sea itself is very noisy with waves crashing all the time, but the sound of thunder is heard about the roar of the ocean. The thunder coming from the storm over the sea is like the voice of the Lord. The crack followed by the boom is awesome and powerful- and frightening. No man, with the exception of Jesus, can stop the thunder or the associated lightning.

The storm moves over the land, the land being the mountains of Lebanon, where even the mighty cedars are smashed by lightning: ‘The voice of the Lord …splinters the cedars of Lebanon’ (29:5). When lightning strikes a tree it effectively explodes; I have seen a tree split in two by lightening. Verse 7 describes what seems like forked lightning, or maybe a fire from the tree hit by lightning. Many of our devastating bushfires are started by lightning strikes.

‘Divided flames of fire’ reminds us the day of Pentecost. The disciples were together in the upper room when they heard the sound of a mighty rushing wind, and saw divided tongues, as of fire, above each one (Acts 2:2,3). The Spirit of God had come upon these men and they spoke in other tongues; in a sense the voice of the Lord came upon them. The Lord speaks in his creation in that his power and majesty are revealed in the creation; but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son (Rom 1:20, Heb 1:2). Let us hear the voice of the Lord in the creation, but above all hear his voice telling us of redemption in the blood of his precious Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.

‘He makes them skip like a calf’ (29:6). What does this mean? David is referring to the mountains; Sirion is Mt Hermon. Does this skipping refer to an earthquake? In the day of the Lord every high thing will be brought low, the cedars and Mount Lebanon included (Isa 2:12-14). While the focus of this psalm is on the voice of the Lord in the storm, we know the Lord also shakes the earth in judgment (Heb 12:26). People report strange noises during an earthquake, sounds above the crashing of buildings. Modern man can predict storms and he thinks he can change the climate, but earthquakes remain a fearful mystery, a reminder of the power of the Lord.

‘The voice of the Lord’ shakes the desert in the south of the land (29:8). Is this the storm moving south or is it an earthquake? Shaking points to an earthquake but a storm or hurricane with gale force winds shakes things up as it passes by. Forests are flattened and wild animals flee in fear, and may give birth while fleeing (29:9).

This picture of the voice of Lord as heard in the storm moving in from the sea, across Lebanon and down to Kadesh, possibly Kadesh Barnea, comes to a close in the temple, ‘His temple’ (29:9). The temple is the place where the Lord is present. This psalm began with the heavenly host worshipping the Lord in heaven. As it comes to an end we see everyone in his temple saying, ‘Glory!’ Is this the temple of the Lord on earth, the temple in Jerusalem? This would be an appropriate response for David and every human being to the voice of the Lord in the storm, or the revelation of God in his creation. Those who do not see God’s hand in the creation and do not glorify him have God’s wrath upon them (Rom 1:21). We are left with a picture of the Lord being worshipped and gloried in heaven and on earth because he alone is worthy of universal praise and glory.

**3. The Flood- judgment and salvation**

When the Lord sent a flood upon the whole world in Noah’s day, every human being saw the power of God in the creation. Only Noah believed in God and his almighty power before the flood. Apart from Noah and his family the rest of humanity perished at the hands of the God they refused to worship. They realised too late that God sits on the throne in heaven, ruling over the climate and the nations. ‘The Lord sits as King forever’ so he sits as King still today (29:10).

Do you acknowledge the Lord as King, King of heaven and earth? Do you worship and glorify his holy name? The King of heaven and earth has revealed his power and majesty in the creation. Do not join the foolish in saying that this marvellous creation, including yourself, evolved from primeval slime over billions of years. You are fearfully and wonderfully made by a most powerful and loving God. God had shown his love for us in Jesus Christ, his beloved Son. In Christ we see the redemptive power of God, the power to save us from sin and death, the power to save us as he saved Noah through the flood.

Come into the house of the Lord, come and praise his holy name. The picture of everyone in the temple, in God’s house, saying, ‘Glory!’, ‘Glory to God in the highest’, is a wonderful climax in this majestic psalm (29:9). But it does not end here. It ends with the Lord blessing his people with peace; ‘Peace on earth and goodwill towards men’ (Luke 2:14). Do you know the peace of God in your heart today? Are you looking forward to the return of the Lord Jesus Christ, his coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory (Mat 24:30)? Will you be in the ark with Noah, or will you perish in your pride, your ignorance, and your sin.