

Scripture: Psalm 29:1-11
Message: Created to Worship
August 6, 2017; Bethel CRC, Brockville, ON
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Here we are again. We have this time set aside on Sundays when we come together as a group of people for what we call a worship service. What do we expect from this service? What happens here? Do we expect a certain kind of sermon? Do we expect certain kinds of music and songs, following a certain kind of order?

Worship is important. It has a central place in the life of the church. But what is worship? Why do we worship? Does it make a difference what we do in worship? How often do we really think about what it is that we are doing when we come together for a worship service? Or do we go through the usual motions of worship, without giving a thought to what we are doing, unless something really different happens?

The first verses of Psalm 29 command us to ascribe to the Lord glory, strength, and the glory due his name. One meaning of the word *ascribe* is *to give*. God's people are commanded to give something to God. But we are not asked to give money or animals or flowers to the God to whom belong the heavens and the earth. Ascribe has the meaning of attributing to God or crediting God with what he is worthy to have or who he is.

And that brings us to the word *worship* in v. 2. Worship is to attribute worth to someone or something. When we say of someone that "they worship their money or their car or their grandkids," we may be using the word rather loosely. If, however, the most important thing for that person is their money or car or grandkids, then it is an accurate use of the term. To worship someone or something is to attribute supreme worth or to declare supreme value to that one or that thing.

When we carry this over to the area of our relationship with God, we have a working definition of the term worship. To worship God is to ascribe or credit to him supreme worth, for he alone is worthy.

These first verses of Psalm 29 are then instructing us to give God the glory that he deserves as the supreme God. He deserves the highest honour. One place to do that is in a service of worship.

The authors of a book about worship explain this in a direct and powerful way :

Worship is not the casual chatter that occasionally drowns out the organ or piano

prelude; we celebrate God when we allow the prelude to attune our hearts to the glory of God by means of the music.

Worship is not the mumbling of prayers or the mouthing of hymns with little thought and less heart; we celebrate God when we join together earnestly in prayer and intensely in song.

Worship is not irrelevant thoughts or fragmented elements, silly asides or unconnected directions in purpose; we celebrate God when all of the parts of the service fit together and work to a common end.

Worship is not grudging gifts or compulsory service; we celebrate God when we give to him hilariously, cheerfully, and serve him with integrity.

Worship is not haphazard music done poorly, not even great music done merely as a performance; we celebrate God when we enjoy and participate in music to his glory.

Worship is not a distracted endurance of the sermon; we celebrate God as we hear his Word gladly and seek to be conformed by it more and more to the image of our Saviour.

Worship is not a sermon that is poorly prepared and carelessly delivered; we celebrate God when we honour his Word with our words, by his Spirit.

(Worship: Rediscovering the Missing Jewel, by Ronald Allen and Gordon Borrer, Multnomah Press, © 1982, p. 18.)

Ascribe to the Lord the glory due his name. Give to God what he deserves because of who he is.

Have you ever had to write lines in school? It was an old form of classroom discipline of writing something on the chalkboard or on a paper a hundred times. 'I will not throw spitballs in class, I will not throw spitballs in class....' The teacher understood the power of ascribing, the idea that truth that we know can become a living truth by writing or declaring it. What might begin as just a faint idea at the back of our minds can be turned into something we are convinced of through the practice of ascribing. What's more, ascribing shapes our response. We live out and declare what we know is a living truth.

Worship is fundamentally about ascribing. We declare something that we know *is* true to *be* true, to be a living truth. This is an interesting distinction. To believe something *is* true is vital but not enough. I can know it *is* true that I should not throw spitballs in class. But just knowing it *is* true might have little bearing on my actions. But what we know to *be* true becomes living truth by the power of ascribing—literally, by writing it out, by declaring, by stating. This happens on the human level. Ascribe to someone foolishness, and you'll dismiss

everything they say. Ascribe to them wisdom, and you give extra weight to every word they utter.

So it is with God. We can know that something *is* true about God. What we ascribe to him impacts how we see him and therefore how we behave around him.

We come to know what God deserves when we ascribe to God who he is. What we know becomes a living truth, as we declare this to be true. God is holy. We approach him with the respect that he is due to receive. God is unchanging and faithful. We can trust him in all he does. God sees and knows all. He is always watching over us. God is compassionate and gracious. We can be certain of his love and forgiveness.

The author of Psalm 29 also proclaims the power and greatness of God as seen in the power of nature. In these verses we hear the voice of the Lord which thunders. The voice of the Lord is powerful and majestic. It is pictured as able to break the mighty cedars of Lebanon and to shake mountains and deserts so that they seem to come alive. When the voice of the Lord sounds in all its power and majesty, all in his temple cry "Glory!" The *all* here must refer to all creation, responding to God's revelation of his greatness. All creation ascribes to God the glory due his name.

This revelation of power and the greatness of God is then put in the context of God's relationship with his people. In v. 11, the Lord gives strength to his people and blesses his people with peace. The Lord works his power for the good of those who love him.

And how well we know that. We can see the Lord working in our individual lives. We can see the work of the Lord in defeating the power of death. God showed his love and care for us in sending Jesus his Son to die for our sins. He showed his power in raising his Son from the dead.

Therefore we have peace. We know that this mighty God is on our side. If God is for us, who can be against us? We have strength. Thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

Our response to such a great God is to worship him, to give him glory. Every day we live in the awareness of the presence and blessings and strength of God. All we do, whether driving a tractor or a truck, typing on a computer or cooking by the stove, studying or reading the paper, all is worship, done to give God glory.

We also have a special time of worship as we come to church. This is a unique time,

set apart to worship and honour God for who he is. Following Psalm 29, we come to give God glory. This command to give God glory goes out to all; we worship God together. Worship is not just about me and God. It is expressed together. The purpose of worship is to praise God. He alone is worthy of our highest praise. And we are blessed. We receive peace from God.

What determines a meaningful time of worship? The answer often comes out, "It depends on what I got out of the service. It was good if I feel good after the service ends." Or, "I liked that; it was good." But that is not the primary reason from Psalm 29. Worship is not about us, or for us. Our first reason for worship is to praise God, to give him the glory and praise that he deserves. Then even if we "get nothing out of it", it can be a meaningful time because we could give to God.

A secondary reason for worship is to be blessed. We are blessed to the extent that we give glory to God. We can find in worship also "that it is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35). We can also experience blessing from God in hearing his word of greeting, forgiveness, instruction and encouragement and blessing.

In worship we give glory to God. That's true for Sunday worship, and for the whole of our lives lived as worship to do. The attention is not on ourselves, but on the Lord, in all his glory. Praise the Lord for who he is and for what he has done. To God be the glory!

Amen.