



Sermon, Sunday January 7, 2024 “The Voice of the Lord”

SCRIPTURE: Psalms 29:1-11 ¹ Ascribe to the LORD, O heavenly beings, ascribe to the LORD glory and strength. ² Ascribe to the LORD the glory of his name; worship the LORD in holy splendor. ³ The voice of the LORD is over the waters; the God of glory thunders, the LORD, over mighty 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 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 causes the oaks to whirl and strips the forest bare, and in his temple all say, “Glory!” 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!

Introduction: Worship the Lord

Today is Epiphany in the church calendar. Epiphany is a day that commemorates when the wise men brought gold, frankincense, and myrrh to Jesus and worshiped him. Epiphany is celebrated every year on January 6th, the 13th day after Christmas. “**Epiphany**” comes from the Greek word “**epiphania**”, meaning “**appearance**.”

I think many people will have made new goals, plans, and resolutions as they welcome 2024. I hope that among our goals, plans, and resolutions this year, there will be a desire to enter the deep world of Christian spirituality through ‘**spirit and true worship**.’

Worship is an act of giving glory to the Lord through a certain form in church, but it also includes the overall attitude of our lives toward the Lord. Additionally, worship is the core of Christian faith. Today’s text clearly talks about the essence of worship in verses 1-2. “**Ascribe to the Lord, O heavenly beings, ascribe to the Lord glory and strength. Ascribe to the Lord the glory of his name; worship the Lord in holy splendor.**”

In this verse, ‘**worship the Lord**’ means ‘**bow your head to the Lord**’ or ‘**bow down before Him**.’ In other words, worship is a sacred ritual that completely humbles us before the Lord. If we can remain faithful to the ‘essence of worship’ this year, we will experience amazing spiritual growth.

Body: The voice of the Lord

According to today’s text, the attitude and essence of worship is repeated seven times in the expression ‘**The voice of the Lord**.’ This ‘**The voice of the Lord**’ overpowers everything in the world. David describes the voice of the Lord as being like the sound of thunder, majestic, breaking the cedars of Lebanon, flashes forth flames of fire, and shakes the wilderness. Worship is to give glory to the Lord, the source of overwhelming power.

David felt the absolute presence of the Lord, which was invisible and untouchable but overwhelmed all natural phenomena. Humans are helpless before the overwhelming power of the Lord.



Dear brothers and sisters in Christ! Please think about the ‘time’ we experience in our daily lives and how helpless we are. It's already been a week since 2024 started. None of us can stop time from passing. Young people feel the passage of time dimly, but older people perceptively experience our bodies aging with the passage of time.

Additionally, verse 1 of today’s text says, ‘**ascribe to the Lord glory and strength.**’ What this means is that we must realize how clear human limitations are. This means that only by knowing that the Lord's power is overwhelming can humans accurately know their limitations.

Humans have made tremendous progress in scientific civilization since the Industrial Revolution. And the development of such technology is progressing faster than we can imagine. However, no matter how much science develops, the limits of human knowledge and perception of the world are limited.

Today we worship together at church, but we do not know what will happen to us tomorrow. In this sense, humans, whether rich or poor, powerful, or not powerful, popular to people or not popular to people, are all helpless in the face of death, the ultimate human existence.

According to today's text, worship is when human beings, created beings, bow their heads before the overwhelming power of the Lord. This is the essence of worship.

In fact, we are aware of our helpless nature before death and time. However, we are not good at living a life of worship where we bow our heads before the Lord. This is because the reality we must face in life makes us ignore our ultimate existence. This is because our lives are dominated by things such as real estate prices, interest rates, stocks, pensions, children, business, and social achievements.

So what should we do? In today’s text, chapter 29, verse 2, David says, “**Worship the Lord in holy splendor.**” These words mean that humans must recognize their limitations before the absolute Lord, bow their heads, and bow down in worship. However, another thing this verse means is a warning against the mind and attitude of humans trying to glorify themselves.

In the era in which David and the psalmist lived, various empires in the Near East repeatedly rose and fell and dominated the surrounding countries. Such empires made themselves absolute. Additionally, the emperor of the empire was revered as a god. Furthermore, they did not avoid war with other countries if they judged that their absolutization would be hindered.

However, this absolutization of empire only brings about the destruction of human life. In other words, it looks like there is something on the outside, but it is ‘**empty.**’ This is kind of like an idol. The reason the Bible strongly criticizes idolatry is because idols inherently do not have the power of life. In other words, an idol is not a being worthy of glory. What would be the result if we only seek glory when we are not qualified? So the Bible says to give glory only to the Lord.

The problem is that, like those who lived in ancient times in the Bible, we who live today cannot escape the temptation to seek glory. The reason people are not free from these temptations is because it is related to human nature.

I am not telling you that human life is worthless or that all human life is futile because all human beings are sinners. There are people around us who are aware of their shortcomings and limitations, are ashamed of them, and end up living their lives sincerely. I am saying that due to human sin and weakness, there are only relative differences in human life, but nothing absolutely valuable comes out. As Christians, we must acknowledge the limitations of human existence and live each day with a sincere heart asking the Lord to take pity on our entire lives. That is the way and method by which we truly worship the Lord.



Conclusion: The Lord bless his people with peace!

Now let's summarize today's sermon. Dear brothers and sisters in Christ! What I am saying through today's message is to hear 'the voice of the Lord' and 'worship the Lord' does not mean that we should have a nihilistic or negative view of human life.

I wish we could see the reality of life accurately. When we see the reality of life accurately, we can experience the Lord's salvation.

Verse 11 of today's text says: **"May the Lord give strength to his people! May the Lord bless his people with peace!"**

The Lord has promised us the blessing of peace. When we do not give glory to others or to ourselves, the peace of the Lord is given to us as a gift. Because we don't have to be overly conscious of others or force ourselves to do things to impress others, we become freer from such things and can live a peaceful life.

Would you like to live this year with achievements and conditions in life that others would envy? Do you think you can be happy because of this?

My answer is **'no.'** What is your answer? Today, through the words of the Psalms, David is telling us what the essence of truly worshiping the Lord is. Whether we admit it or not, if we cannot truly worship the Lord, we will not be set free but will be kept in bondage to life.

Now the year 2024 has begun. I hope that this year we will all go deeper into David's cry: **'Worship the Lord.'** This kind of life requires us to have a humble attitude toward life before the Lord. Also, instead of seeking our own glory, we are captivated by God's overwhelming power. This kind of life is not a life spent worrying about being disadvantaged in the world or worrying about living a life that lags behind others, but a life captivated by the love of God. If we live this kind of life this year, we will receive the blessing of peace granted by the Lord.

