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Just like these voices influence our knowledge of ourselves, God's voice too influences how we look at ourselves and of others. The Bible records God speaking with many different voices. Today we will look at three different passages in which the voice of God speaks – three different because in each of these passages the voice seems drastically vastly unlike the one before.

Psalm 29, the lectionary Psalm for this Sunday is a psalm where we hear the prototypical voice of God. You know, the voice of God that sounds like we'd imagine power and might to sound?

We Read:

- ³The voice of the Lord is over the waters;
the God of glory thunders, the Lord, over mighty waters.
⁴The voice of the Lord is powerful;
⁵The voice of the Lord breaks the cedars;
⁶He makes Lebanon skip like a calf, and Sirion like a young wild ox.
⁷The voice of the Lord flashes forth flames of fire.
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I think of an angry God – whose judgments are fierce – whose power is unforgivably vast – who causes islands to fall under the weight of lava and ash.

The Psalm, with its repetition of "The voice of the Lord...the voice of the Lord...the voice of the Lord," is relentless in driving home the awesome power and terrible majesty of that voice and of its owner. There is nothing else that compares.

The voice that strips the cedars and the forests also strips away all human pretensions of power, and control. The voice that flashes fire and lightning erases any notion of our own insight and understanding. The voice that shakes Lebanon, shakes all human securities, assumptions, and plans. Before this revelation of even a tiny fraction of the full reality of the Lord, we are undone. We are left with no possible defense, and no possible response, except one. All we can do is say "Glory." And mean it.

This is the God of Glory אל הכבוד, El -Hakkavod – the God of glory.

The Hebrew word for glory (*kavod*) is sometimes used figuratively to mean “heavy” or “dense.” When we speak of a “weighty” person, someone who is honorable, worthy, or impressive, we come close to the way in which the word is used to describe God.

Kavod includes “reputation” but is never detached from the actual reality of the worth and majesty of God. We honor and glorify God by giving appropriate respect, attention and obedience in recognition of God's glory (Is 29:13).

Even this voice of God is one who we can follow. This is the voice of God that reminds us that we are but little ants in a universe of supernovas. And yet this is the same God who rests unafraid at the stern of our chaotic boat, who calms the storm with his voice, who walks unshaking on the turbulent sea and encourages us to join him.

El Hakkavod. The God of Glory whose voice thunders over the raging fire and all are left stripped of pretenses and scorched at the sound of his voice.

Greg read for us from Isaiah 43. Here the voice of God is assuring, naming, comforting, claiming, protecting the people, Israel. “Fear not, for I have redeemed you. The Lord says. I have called you by name and you are mine – the fire may rage, and the floods may flow but I will protect you. I will bring you home.

The funny thing about this passage is that just prior to the Lord’s assurance in chapter 43 we read that it was the LORD who gave up Jacob and Israel to the robbers. And it was upon them that the Lord poured the heat of his anger and the fury of war – Isaiah 42:25 “it set them on fire all around, but they did not understand. It burned them, but they did not take it to heart.”

But now, now they are redeemed – Yahweh, the Redeemer, the Holy one of Israel: Yahweh Ha-goel Ha-Kadosh Y’Israel יְהוָה הַגּוֹאֵל יִשְׂרָאֵל יְהוָה יִצְּלֶם אֶתְכֶם קְדוֹשׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל will bring them forth from exile through tribulation God’s people are brought back. They are claimed and named and protected.

Ivan D. Friesen, in his Believer’s Church Bible Commentary on Isaiah relates a passage in the Martyrs Mirror to Isaiah 43 “In the life of the Church.” He says,

Braght’s Martyrs Mirror (570–73) includes a letter written by a youth named Algerius and the account of his execution by fire in Rome in AD 1557.

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A letter, written on July 12, 1557, while he was still in prison in Padua, tells of his buoyant faith:

In a state of misery, I have had very great delight; in a lonely corner I have had most glorious company, and in the severest bond, great rest. All these things, my fellow brethren in Jesus Christ, the gracious hand of God has given me. Behold, He that at first was far from me, is now with me.... Is there any like God the Most High, who sustains and refreshes those that are tempted? He heals them that are bruised and wounded, and restores them altogether. Isa 41; 43:20. None is like Him. Learn, most beloved brethren, how sweet the Lord is, how faithful and merciful; who visits His servants in trial (Isa 43:2); who humbles Himself and condescends to be with us in our huts and humble abodes. He gives us a cheerful mind and peaceful heart.

Although Algerius walked through fire and died a martyr’s death, the fire did not consume his spirit, and his faith remained strong to the end.

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The voice of Yahweh Ha-Goel Ha-Kadosh – God the Redeemer, the Holy One calls us by name and leads us through the chaos of our world, shepherding us through the darkest valleys. This God sticks with us and doesn't desert us. Men and women throughout the Bible were called to persevere in their faith through fire and water – and all sorts of tribulation and, like Psalm 66:12 says, “yet you have brought us out to a spacious place.”

And today in our Luke scripture we hear God's voice speaking to Jesus – at the pivotal beginning of his ministry.

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And again – God's voice... establishing, claiming, naming and very pleased. I like the Greek, Edzokeo (εὐδόκησα) – “With you I take great delight” or “I'm so delighted with you!”

It seems that the voice of the Lord can make you or break you. I'm not even sure if I would like to hear the voice of God claiming me. It seems a bit frightening.

How did Jesus cope? How did Jesus hold in all the contrasting elements of God together within him? All that creation forming, people claiming, punishing, judging, loving yearning within himself – and not go crazy.

And what was his voice like? Did he shake mountains and cause floods to rise and destroy all the evil religious and political leaders – all the bullies all the oppressors?

We know Jesus used God's voice of power – he spoke words of judgements: Woe to you that are rich – for you have received your consolation. And “Woe to you that are full now, for you shall hunger.” And “Woe to you when all speak well of you, for so their fathers did the false prophets.”

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Jesus Christ, God's son – is here for us – remembers us – reminds us of God's infinite love for us. But can we hear his voice above the tumult and the strife?

To hear the voice of the Lord – you've got to realize that you are not God. To hear the voice of the Lord, you've got to realize that there is nothing that you can do to hide from God. To hear the voice of the Lord, you've got to realize that you are nothing before God – and you are everything because of God.

The voice of God is scary. Mountains shake – floods rise, fires rage – do you hear it?

The voice of God is redeeming – calling out to us – forgiving our sins – calling us home.

The voice of God declares delight in creation, claiming, naming, instructing. And the voice of God who spoke and creation began – who judged all creation – including rest – as good - spurs us to action.

The only thing that we can be certain of – is that God – in all God's amazing wildness - loves us with a love so fierce. And we – if we have ears to hear and hearts ready to be shaped and changed loved – are ready to listen to the voice of God.

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⁹The voice of the Lord causes the oaks to whirl, and strips the forest bare;

I think of an angry God – whose judgments are fierce – whose power is unforgivably vast – who causes islands to fall under the weight of lava and ash.

The Psalm, with its repetition of "The voice of the Lord...the voice of the Lord...the voice of the Lord," is relentless in driving home the awesome power and terrible majesty of that voice and of its owner. There is nothing else that compares.

The voice that strips the cedars and the forests also strips away all human pretensions of power, and control. The voice that flashes fire and lightning erases any notion of our own insight and understanding. The voice that shakes Lebanon, shakes all human securities, assumptions, and plans. Before this revelation of even a tiny fraction of the full reality of the Lord, we are undone. We are left with no possible defense, and no possible response, except one. All we can do is say "Glory." And mean it.

This is the God of Glory אל הכבוד, El -Hakkavod – the God of glory.

The Hebrew word for glory (*kavod*) is sometimes used figuratively to mean “heavy” or “dense.” When we speak of a “weighty” person, someone who is honorable, worthy, or impressive, we come close to the way in which the word is used to describe God.

Kavod includes “reputation” but is never detached from the actual reality of the worth and majesty of God. We honor and glorify God by giving appropriate respect, attention and obedience in recognition of God's glory (Is 29:13).

Even this voice of God is one who we can follow. This is the voice of God that reminds us that we are but little ants in a universe of supernovas. And yet this is the same God who rests unafraid at the stern of our chaotic boat, who calms the storm with his voice, who walks unshaking on the turbulent sea and encourages us to join him.

El Hakkavod. The God of Glory whose voice thunders over the raging fire and all are left stripped of pretenses and scorched at the sound of his voice.

Greg read for us from Isaiah 43. Here the voice of God is assuring, naming, comforting, claiming, protecting the people, Israel. “Fear not, for I have redeemed you. The Lord says. I have called you by name and you are mine – the fire may rage, and the floods may flow but I will protect you. I will bring you home.

The funny thing about this passage is that just prior to the Lord’s assurance in chapter 43 we read that it was the LORD who gave up Jacob and Israel to the robbers. And it was upon them that the Lord poured the heat of his anger and the fury of war – Isaiah 42:25 “it set them on fire all around, but they did not understand. It burned them, but they did not take it to heart.”

But now, now they are redeemed – Yahweh, the Redeemer, the Holy one of Israel: Yahweh Ha-goel Ha-Kadosh Y’Israel יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ יִשְׁרָאֵל יְהוָה יִצְרָאֵל יְהוָה יִשְׁרָאֵל יְהוָה יִצְרָאֵל יְהוָה יִשְׁרָאֵל will bring them forth from exile through tribulation God’s people are brought back. They are claimed and named and protected.

Ivan D. Friesen, in his Believer’s Church Bible Commentary on Isaiah relates a passage in the Martyrs Mirror to Isaiah 43 “In the life of the Church.” He says,

Braght’s Martyrs Mirror (570–73) includes a letter written by a youth named Algerius and the account of his execution by fire in Rome in AD 1557.

Algerius was from the kingdom of Naples in present-day Italy and a student at Padua. An Anabaptist brother came to Padua, and Algerius inquired about the Lord’s will and way. Accepting this way and confessing faith, Algerius was baptized. Sometime afterward, he was imprisoned at Padua and wrote to brothers and sisters in Italy from his prison cell.

From Padua he was transferred to Venice, where attempts were made to convince him to renounce his newfound faith. But Algerius held firm and was sent to Rome; after hard imprisonment, he was executed there by officials pouring boiling oil over his head and body.

A letter, written on July 12, 1557, while he was still in prison in Padua, tells of his buoyant faith:

In a state of misery, I have had very great delight; in a lonely corner I have had most glorious company, and in the severest bond, great rest. All these things, my fellow brethren in Jesus Christ, the gracious hand of God has given me. Behold, He that at first was far from me, is now with me.... Is there any like God the Most High, who sustains and refreshes those that are tempted? He heals them that are bruised and wounded, and restores them altogether. Isa 41; 43:20. None is like Him. Learn, most beloved brethren, how sweet the Lord is, how faithful and merciful; who visits His servants in trial (Isa 43:2); who humbles Himself and condescends to be with us in our huts and humble abodes. He gives us a cheerful mind and peaceful heart.

Although Algerius walked through fire and died a martyr’s death, the fire did not consume his spirit, and his faith remained strong to the end.

Would we follow this voice through tribulation?

The voice of Yahweh Ha-Goel Ha-Kadosh – God the Redeemer, the Holy One calls us by name and leads us through the chaos of our world, shepherding us through the darkest valleys. This God sticks with us and doesn't desert us. Men and women throughout the Bible were called to persevere in their faith through fire and water – and all sorts of tribulation and, like Psalm 66:12 says, “yet you have brought us out to a spacious place.”

And today in our Luke scripture we hear God's voice speaking to Jesus – at the pivotal beginning of his ministry.

We read in Luke 3:15-17 and 21-23:

¹⁵ As the people were filled with expectation, and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Messiah, ¹⁶ John answered all of them by saying, “I baptize you with water; but one who is more powerful than I is coming; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. ¹⁷ His winnowing fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.”

“²¹Now when all the people were baptized, and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heaven was opened, ²²and the Holy Spirit descended upon him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, “You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.””

And again – God's voice... establishing, claiming, naming and very pleased. I like the Greek, Edzokeo (εὐδόκησα) – “With you I take great delight” or “I'm so delighted with you!”

It seems that the voice of the Lord can make you or break you. I'm not even sure if I would like to hear the voice of God claiming me. It seems a bit frightening.

How did Jesus cope? How did Jesus hold in all the contrasting elements of God together within him? All that creation forming, people claiming, punishing, judging, loving yearning within himself – and not go crazy.

And what was his voice like? Did he shake mountains and cause floods to rise and destroy all the evil religious and political leaders – all the bullies all the oppressors?

We know Jesus used God's voice of power – he spoke words of judgements: Woe to you that are rich – for you have received your consolation. And “Woe to you that are full now, for you shall hunger.” And “Woe to you when all speak well of you, for so their fathers did the false prophets.”

He wept God's tears at the loss of a friend. He said, “do not weep.” He said, “Do not be afraid, it is I” as he walked towards the boat on the water... His voice raised the dead, his voice cured this sick and destitute.

He spoke El Hakkavod and the voice of glory calmed the storms and his El Hagoel El Hakadosh Holy Redeeming voice forgave sins. His voice welcomed disruptive noisy children, and his voice chastised the rich religious rulers and the money lenders in the temple.

Menno Mennonite Church
01/12/2025

God Speaks
Psalm 29, Luke 3:21-22

Emily Toews

His voice said, "I pray to the Father for you." And his voice said "my peace I leave with you...My peace I give to you." and his risen voice was the most beautiful the disciples had ever heard.

Jesus Christ, God's son – is here for us – remembers us – reminds us of God's infinite love for us. But can we hear his voice above the tumult and the strife?

To hear the voice of the Lord – you've got to realize that you are not God. To hear the voice of the Lord, you've got to realize that there is nothing that you can do to hide from God. To hear the voice of the Lord, you've got to realize that you are nothing before God – and you are everything because of God.

The voice of God is scary. Mountains shake – floods rise, fires rage – do you hear it?

The voice of God is redeeming – calling out to us – forgiving our sins – calling us home.

The voice of God declares delight in creation, claiming, naming, instructing. And the voice of God who spoke and creation began – who judged all creation – including rest – as good - spurs us to action.

The only thing that we can be certain of – is that God – in all God's amazing wildness - loves us with a love so fierce. And we – if we have ears to hear and hearts ready to be shaped and changed loved – are ready to listen to the voice of God.