

Reflection on Psalm 29 & The Baptism of Jesus

God is Still Speaking

Sunday, 9th January 2022

This is the first Sunday after Epiphany and the season of Epiphany lasts for some six weeks or so in the run up to Lent ... On this first Sunday after Epiphany the Church worldwide celebrates the Baptism of Jesus by John the Baptist ... and one of the readings we come to at this time of year is Psalm 29, a Psalm which the Prayer Group will be looking at tomorrow ... a Psalm we'll hear read in a moment ...

Psalms are forms of Hebrew poetry and in this particular poem the theme of water is prominent ... the poet writes dramatically about how God's power speaks over it, through it ... in one place it reads, *The voice of the Lord is over the waters, the God of Glory thunders over mighty waters the voice of the Lord is powerful; the voice of the Lord is full of majesty ...* and this reminds us of the Genesis myth which describes how the voice of God caused the sky to separate from the sea - the implication being God's voice has that kind of awesome power over water and indeed every other created thing ... interestingly the refrain *The voice of the Lord ...* is repeated seven times, and this gives us pause as we remember the number seven symbolises perfection in the Hebrew numbering system ...

God's complete power over water is an important message as we recall that science has long taught that water is the most powerful force on earth - for that matter human beings are more water than anything else ... and while folks living in the ancient world didn't have these handy tips to turn to they certainly discerned the importance and power of water - not just its physical force, it's hydrating ability but its spiritual power too ... it's perfectly reasonable, I think to believe that in writing about God's power over water in this way, the poet was meaning to reassure people ... if God's power is greater than water - indeed if God controls water then take comfort in the power of God over all the things that trouble us in life and dominate us so ... the troubles and cares we all have from time to time be they health related .. relationship concerned ... work orientated or even the pain of isolation ... God is more powerful than these, says the poet ... so do not be afraid and put trust in the power which spoke everything into being ... and on this day we remember *The voice of the Lord ...* spoke at Jesus' baptism, sanctioning his identity, confirming his power ...

Since last Sunday the Prayer Group has met and many sensitive observations were made and questioned by the group ... one person spoke about the voice of God in the Elijah story ... The story comes from the Bible (**I Kings 19:12**), where Elijah hears his own inner voice: *And after the earthquake a fire ... and after the fire a still small voice.* It's good to be reminded that God isn't all about shouting. Someone else recalled visiting Shetland, when unusually there was no wind, and as she stood beside the water hearing it moving against the stones she and her party could hear human voices coming from a long way off, transported by - well what? The non-existent breeze, the water perhaps ... or maybe something else tuned them in to fellow beings in the mystery of the universe?

The voice of God is beyond shouting and less than whispering, and as the United Congregational Church in America often comments, *God is still speaking ...*