

# Holy Worship<sup>1</sup>

*Sermon Preached by the Rev. Robert A. Arbogast*

*Celebration Fellowship, Ionia, Michigan*

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## Scripture

*Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name;  
worship the LORD in the splendor of his holiness.*

Psalm 29:2

## Sermon

Here we are, worshiping God. And it's no wonder. Here we are, lifting up our hearts to the Lord. And it's no wonder. Here we are, joining with heavenly beings and with all the saints to say, "Holy, holy, holy LORD, God of power and might, heaven and earth are filled with your glory!" And it's no wonder.

It's no wonder, because it's what we were made for, you and I. It's no wonder, because it's what we all were made for, we human beings. And it's no wonder, because it's what all creation was made for, made for the worship of Holy God.

**In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.** He filled the heavens with mighty beings: angels and archangels, cherubim and seraphim. He filled the heavens with matter and energy: sun, moon, and stars, galaxies, black holes, and dark matter. And he filled the earth with countless creatures: mountains and meadows, lava fields and lakes, junipers and jellyfish, hawks and honey bees, rats and raccoons, ostriches and oaks.

It's an amazing, wondrous world, filled with color and beauty, filled with life and energy. Actually, the world above us and around us is a temple to God's glory. And every part of that world, from top to bottom, is made to worship the Lord.

So it's no wonder that Psalm 148 calls the heavens and the earth and every creature to worship the Lord God Almighty. From angels to asteroids, from rain clouds to rivers, from whales to wolves, from princes to prisoners, the psalm says,

Let them praise the name of the LORD,  
for his name alone is exalted;  
his splendor is above the earth and the heavens. (Psalm 148:13)

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<sup>1</sup> This is a revised version of the sermon that was preached on April 23. The revision has a more positive and encouraging tone.

**So here we are to worship.** And it's no wonder. Here we are to bow down. And it's no wonder. Here we are to say the Lord is God. And it's no wonder. It's what we were made for. It's what the whole creation was made for. Worship is that big. Worship is the heart and soul of who and what we are. And that's something we learn from Psalm 29.

That psalm begins with a call to worship. It's a call to worship given in the heights of heaven:

Ascribe to the LORD, you heavenly beings,  
ascribe to the LORD glory and strength.  
Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name;  
worship the LORD in the splendor of his holiness.

Maybe you remember Isaiah 6. That's where the prophet has a vision of the LORD's temple throne room. Seraphim are flying this way and that way. And they're chanting the glory of God. There's fire and there's smoke and there's an earthquake.

Well, Psalm 29 paints a picture like the one in Isaiah 6. There's thunder and there's lightning and there's an earthquake. The ground itself is dancing. Trees are splitting and shattering. And it's the voice of the LORD. It's the voice of thunder. It's the voice of power. And the response to it all, the only right response to it all, is worship. Listen:

The voice of the LORD thunders over the mighty waters.  
The voice of the LORD is powerful.  
The voice of the LORD breaks the cedars.  
The voice of the LORD strikes with flashes of lightning.  
The voice of the LORD shakes the desert.  
The voice of the LORD twists the oaks and strips the forests bare.  
And in his temple all cry, "Glory!"

**The whole scene is like Mt. Sinai all over again.** Do you remember Mt. Sinai? That's where the LORD made his covenant with Israel. Before that, Moses heard the LORD speak from a burning bush. The bush was on fire, but it didn't burn up. And the LORD was there. And the ground was holy. And Moses bowed down before the LORD.

But Sinai? Sinai was an erupting volcano. It burned. It shook. It blasted. It roared. And the LORD spoke from that raging inferno. He called his people to worship him alone. And he promised to be the strength and the blessing of his people.

That God is our God. So it's no wonder that we worship. And it's no wonder that all creation worships.

**So, let's think about worship.** And here's where I want to start, with the earth. Because "the earth is the LORD's, and everything in it." That's Psalm 24:1. And for one thing, that means the earth does not belong to us. No; the earth is merely entrusted to us as stewards. And we have a God-given responsibility to see to it that the earth and its creatures flourish.

To go back to some of what I've already said, this means we have a responsibility to help the earth and its creatures, to lead the earth and its creatures, in giving glory to God. Our primary human task is to worship God and to lead all creation in giving glory to God.

It's us and all creation. It's been that way from the beginning. And it's even clearer in Christ. Listen to Colossians 1:

The Son [that's Jesus!] is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible; all things have been created through him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.

It's us and all creation, together under the lordship of Jesus Christ. It's us and all creation, giving glory to God through Christ our Lord. It's what we were made for.

**Yesterday was Earth Day.** And Earth Day reminds us of things worth noticing about the earth and its creatures. Here's what I've been noticing lately.

I've been noticing constellations as they fulfill their God-given tasks. The Big Dipper, for example. It turns through the night sky, yet it never fails to point us North. And we find our way. Then there's Orion. Every winter, he takes his stand above the frozen landscape. He keeps watch as the seasons come and go. He is the sentinel of God's faithfulness, and he will return.

I've been noticing the cycle of water. Clouds form and fill. Rain falls and gathers into rivers. Rivers make their way to lakes and to the sea. These days, I've been noticing the Grand River spreading across flood plains, but still flowing on toward Lake Michigan. There a plume of silt spreads from the river's mouth, coloring the water of the big lake. And the warming sun will draw that water up into clouds again, and the cycle will continue. It's all a testimony to the wisdom of God.

I've been noticing songbirds. They start singing early in the morning. And all day long, they call out to one another. Chickadees and cardinals and jays and wrens—their rhythms and melodies blend into a chorus of praise, praise to the God who gives them life.

And I've been noticing deer. As evening falls, they move gracefully across the landscape. Their silent beauty is a wordless prayer to the God who prepares a home for them.

**All creation is made to worship the Lord.** And all creation is doing its best to worship the Lord. But all creation is in bondage, and it's our fault. The earth has been damaged by human abuse. That's a main point of Earth Day. And that's a great concern for all of us. Our human task is not to damage the earth. No; our human task is to help the earth and its creatures give glory to God.

Let's never forget that worship is more than us, that worship is more than what we do when we get together like this or when we have our private times with God. Yes; those times are important. Personal and shared worship of God, it's like lifeblood to us. But worship is more than us. Worship is the activity of all creatures and of all creation.

The heavens declare the glory of God. But not only the heavens! And it's our task to help all creation sing and to lead the chorus. And because Jesus Christ has set us free, we can take up that task again!

**Now, I know there's not much you can do from inside prison.** There's not much you can do to help the earth and its non-human creatures. There's not much you can do to set them free to worship God.

Well, maybe you can plant a garden plot and tend it. That would be good. Or maybe you can start a puppy on its way to becoming a service dog. That would be good, too. And there is one thing you can all do and do for sure. You can pray, pray for the earth and for its creatures.

And you can remind your brothers and sisters on the outside that the earth is the Lord's, and everything in it. And that there is nothing more important than that the earth and everything in it should worship the Lord!

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Glory and thanks be to God:  
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

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