

Oregon City United Methodist Church
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Series: N/A

Sermon: Old Glory

Psalm 29 (NLT)

Honor the Lord, you heavenly beings[a];
honor the Lord for his glory and strength.

2

Honor the Lord for the glory of his name.
Worship the Lord in the splendor of his holiness.

3

The voice of the Lord echoes above the sea.
The God of glory thunders.
The Lord thunders over the mighty sea.

4

The voice of the Lord is powerful;
the voice of the Lord is majestic.

5

The voice of the Lord splits the mighty cedars;
the Lord shatters the cedars of Lebanon.

6

He makes Lebanon's mountains skip like a calf;
he makes Mount Hermon[b] leap like a young wild ox.

7

The voice of the Lord strikes
with bolts of lightning.

8

The voice of the Lord makes the barren wilderness quake;
the Lord shakes the wilderness of Kadesh.

9

The voice of the Lord twists mighty oaks[c]
and strips the forests bare.

In his Temple everyone shouts, "Glory!"

10

The Lord rules over the floodwaters.
The Lord reigns as king forever.

11

The Lord gives his people strength.
The Lord blesses them with peace.

Sermon

Old Glory. This famous name was coined by Captain William Driver, a shipmaster of Salem, Massachusetts, in 1831. He traveled many voyages on the brig Charles Doggett. On one of his adventures, they came across an island in the Far East that was inhabited by none other than the mutineers from the Bounty. You remember the story, Mutiny on the Bounty. After the mutiny, the now would be pirates took their ship and found an island to

start their own community. They burned their ship to prevent returning. They were not discovered for 18 years. After someone found them, they returned to Tahiti at the request of the Queen. They soon discovered that life in Tahiti wasn't any better so they wanted to return to their Island Oasis, and the Charles Doggett was that ship. For his help, William Driver was presented with a beautiful American flag of twenty four stars. As the banner opened to the ocean breeze for the first time, he exclaimed "Old Glory!"

He retired to Nashville in 1837, taking his treasured flag from his sea days with him. By the time the Civil War erupted, most everyone in and around Nashville recognized Captain Driver's "Old Glory." When Tennessee seceded from the Union, Rebels were determined to destroy his famous flag, but repeated searches revealed no trace of the hated banner.

Then in 1862, Union forces captured Nashville and raised the American flag over the capital. It was a rather small and puny flag and immediately folks began asking Captain Driver if "Old Glory" still existed. Happy to have soldiers with him this time, Captain Driver went home and began ripping at the seams of his bedcover. As the stitches holding the quilt-top to the batting unraveled, the onlookers peered inside and saw the 24-starred original "Old Glory"!

Captain Driver, gently gathered up the flag and returned with the soldiers to the capitol. Though he was sixty years old, the Captain climbed up to the tower to replace the smaller banner with his beloved flag. The Sixth Ohio Regiment cheered and saluted - and later adopted the nickname "Old Glory" as their own, telling and re-telling the story of Captain Driver's devotion to the flag we honor yet today.

Captain Driver's grave is located in the old Nashville City Cemetery, and is one of only a few places authorized by act of Congress where the Flag of the United States may be flown 24 hours a day.

Old Glory. Glory. As we read this morning's scripture text, we are struck by the use of the word "Glory" over and over and over again. Glory of his name, God of Glory, All in his Temple all say, "Glory!". Indeed, Psalm 29 is a psalm of praise and glory to God. And I began to wonder, what is Glory? Why do we call something glorious. What is it that we glorify? There are many nuances to the word. And we each have different things that we glorify.

At it's base, glory is a noun. Something possess glory. There is something intrinsic to an object that it has glory. When we glorify, we give it glory. When I was growing up, I glorified a lot of things. I thought many different things possessed this thing called glory. I glorified certain music groups. I glorified certain athletes. I glorified the images of the pictures that I hung on my wall. I'll let you guess what those were. Praise and devotion are given to things with glory. Now, I give praise and devotion to other things - which I believe to be the true source of Glory. After much pondering, this is what I've come to believe.

First, we glorify those things that are at the top of their field, the pinnacle of achievement. For each culture and generation, it is different and it changes. For the ancient Greeks, it was athleticism and philosophy. You were glorified if you could run faster than anyone else. You had glory if you could philosophize better than anyone else. Heros for the Greeks: Socrates. Plato. Aristotle. Homer. Hippocrates. For the Romans, it was civil law and public life. Law was glorified above just about all. Justice. Who were some famous Romans? Julius Ceasar, Augustus, Tiberius, Constantine. Skip down thru history to, lets say, the Renasance. If I were to ask who are some Italian folk who lived in the 1400's, you'd say, Huh? Who led the Italians during this time? Who were there philosphers? Huh? OK, who are some famous Italian artists from that period? Bam: Michaelangelo, DaVinci, Rafael, Donatello, Botticelli. You see what they give glory to. For some cultures, the art of love is glorified, for others, education might be glorified. Native American cultures glorified bravery and courage. In the main stream U.S., what do we glorify? Could be a lot of things, but I really think we glorify being number one. Who are the top celebrities? Who is ranked #1 in whatever? We have an arrogance that generally works to our advantage in trying to be the best. Here in Oregon, what are the Ducks ranked? #12?

Awesome, but remember what we were ranked last year. Nope. Year before? Nope. Were the Ducks ever ranked #1? YES. Some may even remember - 2010. Number one for most of the season - national championship game! Auburn kicked a field goal in the last second to deny the ducks their first unbeaten season. Oregon State fans probably don't like it that we're talking about this, so I'll give them this: It's nice that Oregon displays on its field the number of national championships they've won. That takes courage. It's number one that we care about. What is dangerous, however, is the fleetingness of this type of glory. We might glorify something for a while, then forget about it. We look back at previous generations, previous cultures and think, why did they glorify this, why did they glorify that? What made that so important? We don't see philosophy in the lime-light anymore. The Chinese glorify ping-pong and can't understand why we don't. We glorify football and can't understand why anyone else doesn't. One hundred years from now, will they look back on us and wonder why we glorified certain things? Probably so, probably so.

Secondly, we glorify those things which bring us in touch with humanity and it's role in the world. We give glory to the song which touches our heart. We give glory to an image or painting that reaches our soul. We give glory and praise to a story that tells us something about ourselves. We call a sunset glorious because it shows us colors we've never imagined. We call love glorious because it compels us to look beyond ourselves and honestly care about someone else. We give glory to that which connects us to the world around us.

But most importantly, I believe that glory comes from Character. Wrapped up in glory is the symbolism and nature of character. We give glory to that which we admire. That is where I find true glory. In the love and faithfulness of someone does true glory reside. Is someone worthy of glory because they can accomplish something, such as athletic achievement? I don't believe so. Is something glorious because it is beautiful, such as art or a song? I don't believe so. Only in the character and sincere affections of a person is true glory found. Glory gives us something to believe in. We give an athletic team glory because of their character against adversity and challenges. We give a leader glory and honor, not because they are leaders, but because they have character and dignity. We call the flag, "Old Glory", not because there is something about the flag itself, it's design, shape, or color, but because it defines the character of America. Liberty, Freedom, Justice. That is the character of a nation that we give honor to. We don't give honor to America for America's sake, but that for which it stands. We don't defend America, we defend it's character. We give glory to God, not because he is all powerful, not because he created us, but because he loves us. If he made us on a whim and left us alone, he would not be worthy of glory, but because he cares and love us, because he gives us hope, strength and wishes us peace, that is worthy of glory. It is the character of God that gives him glory.

Glory, we give it in many different ways to different things, but I hope we remember this: What is worthy of glory today will probably not be worthy of glory tomorrow - at least not in the same way. But to give something glory because of their character and their love and their devotion will never fade away. What do you give glory to? What do we tell our kids is important? If we worried about their character more than their athletic ability or their social status, or even their grades, what a difference the world would be. And if we work on our character as well, we would be worthy of glory in their sight as well. And the Family of God said, Amen.