

Our two Bible readings for today both show us the power of God's voice. In Genesis 1:1-5, the very first words of our Bible start with the moment God began to create. Depending on which translation you're reading, everything outside of God begins with shapeless, watery darkness. In the NRSV, it's a "void." In the NIV, it's "formless and empty." In *The Message* paraphrase, it's "a soup of nothingness, a bottomless emptiness, an inky blackness."

And then...light. Just like that, God speaks and light appears, and a beautiful world teeming with life begins. What power flows out from the Creator, what seemingly infinite joy infuses this new matter, this unstoppable, expansive, extravagant universe. God calls it good and so do we.

Psalms 29 sings glory to God whose voice again rings out over the world. In a kind of bounce-back echo of the seven days of creation in Genesis 1, God's voice thunders back over the waters, breaks and shatters the trees, stripping them bare. It rattles the nations, unleashes fire, and shakes the wilderness. God speaks and every created thing is undone. And God's people cry, "Glory!" (v. 9). Honour! Splendour! Amazing!

Does God still speak like that today? What do you think?

This is a little tricky. On the one hand, we know the "right" answer is yes. Of course, God is still speaking, still all-powerful, still ruler of all creation, including us. On the other hand, though, we're not sure that God is still speaking *in that way*, or at least not to us. Are we allowed to say that out loud?

Let's think about it for a few minutes. This is a pretty important matter for Christians. Our faith is in God who loves us (Jeremiah 31:3; John 3:16), never leaves us (Genesis 28:6; Deuteronomy 31:6), and wants to be in relationship with us (John 14:23; 1 John 1:3). Fair enough. We speak to God with our prayers. We thank God for things, ask for things, express joy and sorrow, tell our story. We speak to God. But does *God* speak to *us*?

Being human, the kind of speaking we tend to want God to do with us most often is related to answering our prayers positively. We want God to speak with us in ways that are welcoming, loving,

and forgiving. True confession: I don't know about you, but I'm not sure I'm ready for God to speak with me in ways that shake my world down to the foundations. Psalm 29 describes it: thundering, strong, majestic, unleashed. Nothing stands in its way. This is a "scorched earth" voice of God.

Yet if I'm going to let God be God, I take the chance that that just may happen. To me. To my life. Like you, I'm more than a little afraid to open a conversation with God which might end up like that. So instead of letting God be God, maybe I pray for very specific things. Or I try to come up with my own solutions and then thank God for their "success" after the fact. If I really leave the answers up to God, I may get something I didn't expect or even want. I may be asked to break a mindset I've been holding onto, like a time-worn opinion or an unforgiving hardness toward someone. I may be asked to shake up my life so that I can put someone else first or strip away a comfortable habit to free up something for sharing. God may speak over my life and unleash change.

That would be just like God.

A little scary but kind of exciting, too.

Because scripture also reminds us that God is trustworthy. If God speaks to strip away, maybe it will give something better more room to grow. If God speaks to burn things up, maybe it will leave nothing standing between us and God any longer.

Remember the first of today's readings from Genesis 1? This is the same Voice that's speaking in Psalm 29. And in Genesis 1, the voice of God creates something out of nothing. God speaks and makes a way for all that we hold dear: the provision of the earth, the beauty of our surroundings, the animals and people that we love. God sees the possibilities. God recognizes that we—and the world we continue to make such a mess of—could be so much more than we are: more whole, more loving, more free. More like the kingdom of God: powerful AND splendid.

Rather than trying to shush God with our tight, timid prayers in which we do all the talking, **what would happen if we let God speak?** If we trusted the breath of God to divide darkness from light, and in the process make all things new?