

Southport Presbyterian Church
Rev. June Barrow
April 19, 2009

Doxology
Romans 11:33-36

We have a guest preacher today. I'll do the first part of the message and Dr. S. M. Lockridge will do the last part. He must come to us by video because he died in 2000 at the age of 87. When he was born, his parents named him Shadrach Meshach. That's what the S. M. stands for. You are probably not surprised to hear that he was a preacher's kid. Dr. Lockridge began his career as a high school English teacher, but then became a minister and he was a pastor for 50 years. Dr. Martin Luther King preached in his church and Dr. Lockridge was invited to be lecturer on preaching at the Billy Graham School of Evangelism. Some of his sermons were so famous he preached them many times in many places and other people also preached them. Many people borrowed from his sermons. One of his famous ones was called "It's Friday, but Sunday's coming." Another is the one we'll hear later, "That's my King." I am pleased to share the morning with him and to introduce him to you. Let's pray as we begin.

The title of the message today is "Doxology." *Doxos* means *glory* and *logos* means *word*. A doxology is a word of glory or praise to God. The Bible is full of doxologies. The Psalms, of course, but also Exodus, Romans, Hebrews, Peter, Timothy, Jude, and Revelation contain doxologies. You've just heard one of them that Paul wrote right in the middle of the letter to the Romans. Let's hear it again:

Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God!

**How unsearchable his judgments,
and his paths beyond tracing out!**

"Who has known the mind of the Lord?

Or who has been his counselor?"

**"Who has ever given to God,
that God should repay him?"**

For from him and through him and to him are all things.

To him be the glory forever! Amen.

What would cause Paul to make such an outburst in the middle of the letter? When we first meet him, his name was Saul. He was busy, purposeful, and very religious, but he had yet to be overwhelmed by the Lord. On one ordinary day, a day when he woke up with plans for this day and the next day and the days following, God showed up to Paul and Paul was overwhelmed. Right in the middle of the day, in the middle of the road, in the middle of a journey, in the middle of his plan, in the middle of his life, Paul was encountered by and overwhelmed by God. The glory and majesty and power and might and purposing of God shocked this already religious man. And he was never the same. His very name changed. All his own understandings of who he was, what his purposes were, how he would understand his life – all of this changed because he was overwhelmed by God. What he came to see about God overwhelmed him, undid him, made him drop to his knees.

In Hebrew, the word "worship" (*shakah*) means to fall down or bow down. Our English word "worship" literally means "worth-ship". Whether it's an object, or a person, or even an idea, worshipping is attributing ultimate worth to something, honoring one thing as valuable above all else. To worship God honors his worth or worthiness. All of the doxologies in scripture are written because someone has had a

moment when the vision clears and he cries out: “Come, let us sing for joy to the LORD; let us shout aloud to the Rock of our salvation. Let us come before him with thanksgiving, and extol him with music and song. For the LORD is the great God, the great King above all gods. In his hand are the depths of the earth, and the mountain peaks belong to him. The sea is his, for he made it, and his hands formed the dry land.”

There are doxologies all through scripture and there is a doxology in each of you. When you can say it or sing it or pray it, it is the truest moment in your life. Then you can turn from the very natural self-concern, self-protection, self-obsession, self-centeredness that plagues us all and wastes our time. When you are overwhelmed by God, you no longer have to create your own life, fantasize about an imaginary life you could have, invest in artificial props. Worship is the most important thing we do, and it can change us forever. Some have said that what worship produces in us is a shift in the center of our being. There is a shift from what I have done and will do, to what God has done, what God is doing, what God will do. There is an orientation, a grounding as I know myself to belong to God, to be God’s loved creation, very small but seen by God my Maker. There is a shift away from an uncertain future to a very solid hope. Worship re-orientates and re-centers our lives.

Eugene Peterson: “Christians travel the same ground that everyone else walks on, breathe the same air, drink the same water, shop in the same stores, read the same newspapers, are citizens under the same government, pay the same prices for groceries and gasoline, fear the same dangers, are subject to the same pressures, get the same distresses, are buried in the same ground. The difference is that each step we walk, each breath we breathe, we know we are preserved by God, we know we are accompanied by God, we know we are ruled by God.” (Eugene Peterson, *A Long Obedience in the Same Direction*)

What he is saying is that we are worshipers. When we gather for worship, we may sing and give and pray and hear the Word of God read and taught, and share communion and baptism. And the point of it all is that we remind one another of the worthiness of God – of God’s power and honor. When we worship, there is an audience and it’s not you. It’s the Lord before whom we gather, in whose presence we worship, whose character we explore and discuss and before whom we know ourselves to be small.

May we be overwhelmed by God’s sovereign purposes—it will change you. You will become a worshipper. That’s who we are as disciples: we are worshippers. We are people willing to be overwhelmed by God, maybe longing to be overwhelmed. In the Bible, some worshipped God because they saw his glory or power or might. The psalmist writes: **“Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name; worship the LORD in the splendor of his holiness.” (Psalm 29:2)** Others worshipped because they were overwhelmed by his tender mercy. In Exodus it says: **“And when they heard that the Lord was concerned about them and had seen their misery, they bowed down and worshiped.” (Exodus 4:31)**

When you are overwhelmed by God, it may change your very name. God changed the name of Abraham, of Peter, of Saul and he changed my name. I know what it is to discover that my real name is this: “the beloved daughter of God.” This sovereign God loves and blesses, sees and chooses, calls and claims, and sets honor and dignity upon us his creatures and calls us by name. This Lord deserves to be worshiped.

Christians, more than any other people on earth, know that our lives are not our own. We belong to the God who made us, to the Son who died and rose for us, and to the Spirit, the constant companion who reminds us of God’s love and purposes.

“The heaviest obligation lying upon the Christian church today is to purify and elevate her concept of God until it is once more worthy of him—and of her. In all her prayers and labor this should have first place. We do the greatest service to the next generation of Christians by passing on to them undimmed and undiminished that noble concept of God which we received from our Hebrew and Christian fathers of generations past.” (A.W. Tozer, *Knowledge of the Holy*)

Have you wondered how the world will end? What will the end of the world look like? Does it worry you? Does it seem awful, perhaps? Friends, it ends with doxology. Listen to my favorite doxology in **Revelation chapter 5**.

Then I saw in the right hand of him who sat on the throne a scroll with writing on both sides and sealed with seven seals. And I saw a mighty angel proclaiming in a loud voice, “Who is worthy to break the seals and open the scroll? “But no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth could open the scroll or even look inside it. I wept and wept because no one was found who was worthy to open the scroll or look inside. Then one of the elders said to me, “Do not weep! See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed. He is able to open the scroll and its seven seals.”

Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, ... He came and took the scroll from the right hand of him who sat on the throne. And when he had taken it, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb... And they sang a new song:

**“You are worthy to take the scroll
and to open its seals,
because you were slain,
and with your blood you purchased men for God
from every tribe and language and people and nation.
You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God,
and they will reign on the earth.”**

Then I looked and heard the voice of many angels, numbering thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand. They encircled the throne and the living creatures and the elders. In a loud voice they sang:

**“Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain,
to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength
and honor and glory and praise!”**

Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them, singing:

**“To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb
be praise and honor and glory and power,
for ever and ever!”**

The four living creatures said, “Amen,” and the elders fell down and worshiped.

And now let’s join Dr. S.M. Lockridge; he’s right in the middle of his sermon.

My King was born King. The Bible says He’s a Seven Way King. He’s the King of the Jews – that’s a racial King. He’s the King of Israel – that’s a National King. He’s the King of righteousness. He’s the

King of the ages. He's the King of Heaven. He's the King of glory. He's the King of kings and He is the Lord of lords. Now that's my King. Well, I wonder if you know Him. Do you know Him

David said the Heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament shows His handiwork. No means of measure can define His limitless love. No far seeing telescope can bring into visibility the coastline of His shoreless supply. No barriers can hinder Him from pouring out His blessing. Well, well, He's enduringly strong. He's entirely sincere. He's eternally steadfast. He's immortally graceful. He's imperially powerful. He's impartially merciful. That's my King.

He's God's Son. He's the sinner's Saviour. He's the centerpiece of civilization. He stands alone in Himself. He's august. He's unique. He's unparalleled. He's unprecedented. He's supreme. He's pre-eminent.

Well, He's the loftiest idea in literature. He's the highest personality in philosophy. He's the supreme problem in high criticism. He's the fundamental doctrine of proved theology. He's the carnal necessity of spiritual religion. That's my King.

He's the miracle of the age. He's the superlative of everything good that you choose to call Him. Well, He's the only one able to supply all of our needs simultaneously. He supplies strength for the weak. He's available for the tempted and the tried. He sympathizes and He saves. He guards and He guides. He heals the sick. He cleanses the lepers. He forgives sinners. He discharges debtors. He delivers the captives. He defends the feeble. He blesses the young. He serves the unfortunate. He regards the aged. He rewards the diligent and He beautifies the meek. Do you know Him?

Well, my King is the key of knowledge. He's the wellspring of wisdom. He's the doorway of deliverance. He's the pathway of peace. He's the roadway of righteousness. He's the highway of holiness. He's the gateway of glory. He's the master of the mighty. He's the captain of the conquerors. He's the head of the heroes. He's the leader of the legislatures. He's the overseer of the overcomers. He's the governor of governors. He's the prince of princes. He's the King of kings and He's the Lord of lords. That's my King.

His office is manifold. His promise is sure. His light is matchless. His goodness is limitless. His mercy is everlasting. His love never changes. His Word is enough. His grace is sufficient. His reign is righteous. His yoke is easy and His burden is light.

Well, I wish I could describe Him to you, but He's indescribable. He's indescribable. Yes. He's incomprehensible. He's invincible. He's irresistible. I'm trying to tell you, the heavens of heavens cannot contain Him, let alone a man explain Him. You can't get Him out of your mind. You can't get Him off of your hands. You can't outlive Him and you can't live without Him.

Well, Pharisees couldn't stand Him, but they found out they couldn't stop Him. Pilot couldn't find any fault in Him. The witnesses couldn't get their testimonies to agree. Herod couldn't kill Him. Death couldn't handle Him and the grave couldn't hold Him. That's my King. Yeah.

He always has been and He always will be. I'm talking about He had no predecessor and He'll have no successor. There was nobody before Him and there'll be nobody after Him. You can't impeach Him and He's not going to resign. That's my King! That's my King!

Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory. Thine is the kingdom. And the power. And the glory. The glory is all His. Yes. Thine is the Kingdom and the power and glory, forever and ever and ever and ever. And when you get through with all of the forevers, then, Amen.

Do you see why I went first? Isn't his preaching a doxology? Hasn't Dr. Lockridge been overwhelmed by God? Are you willing to be overwhelmed by God? To have doxology rise up in you? Are you longing to be overwhelmed by God? Give him your thanks, your praise, your troubles, and your questions. Turn to the Lord. Stand before Him who is your Maker and speak an invitation. And see what the Lord might do.