

Storm Sunday

(Australian Version 1)

Introduction

Storm refers to the world of the weather, the gales, the lighting, the winds, the cyclones, the hurricanes, the downpours and the flash floods outback.. Storm means both nature in the raw and the weather we need to renew our planet. Storms may be events that frighten us, but they are also events that we celebrate in the weather cycle that sustains Earth as a living planet.

Setting

Central to this liturgy is a sense of being surrounded by winds and weather, storm clouds and rain, lightning and thunder. Lightning flashes may come from the ceiling which is portrayed as rolling rain clouds. Even the swirls of cyclones may be depicted on the walls.

Special Focus

A special focus for this service is a 'storm experience'. We enter into God's presence appearing in a storm as God did on Mount Sinai. Sometimes, in the Old Testament, God is depicted as riding on clouds with the winds as messengers racing ahead. At other times God's voice is portrayed as thunder. God often seems to be present deep within a storm. For Elijah, however, God was not present in the storm or the earthquake, but in the silence.

Themes

In our call to worship we invite all the domains of the weather to worship with us. As we do we wonder at the power/passion of storms and fierce expressions of the elements. In the readings we become aware of God's presence revealed in the weather. We also learn that God discovers the Wisdom imbedded in creation especially in the wind, the rain and the lightning. Each element has its God-given way. We are aware that global warming has changed weather patterns around the world. Storms are on the increase. Yet, Jesus Christ, surrounded by many fierce forces at the last supper and on the cross, is present also in the stillness after the storm. He knows the way of the storm.

Songs

A special song/hymn appropriate for this Sunday is located in *Habel Hymns Volume Two*. The melody is the well-known **Joyful, Joyful, we Adore Thee**. The words follow.

WHY, O WHY THIS WILD TSUNAMI?

Written in the wake of the Asian tsunami

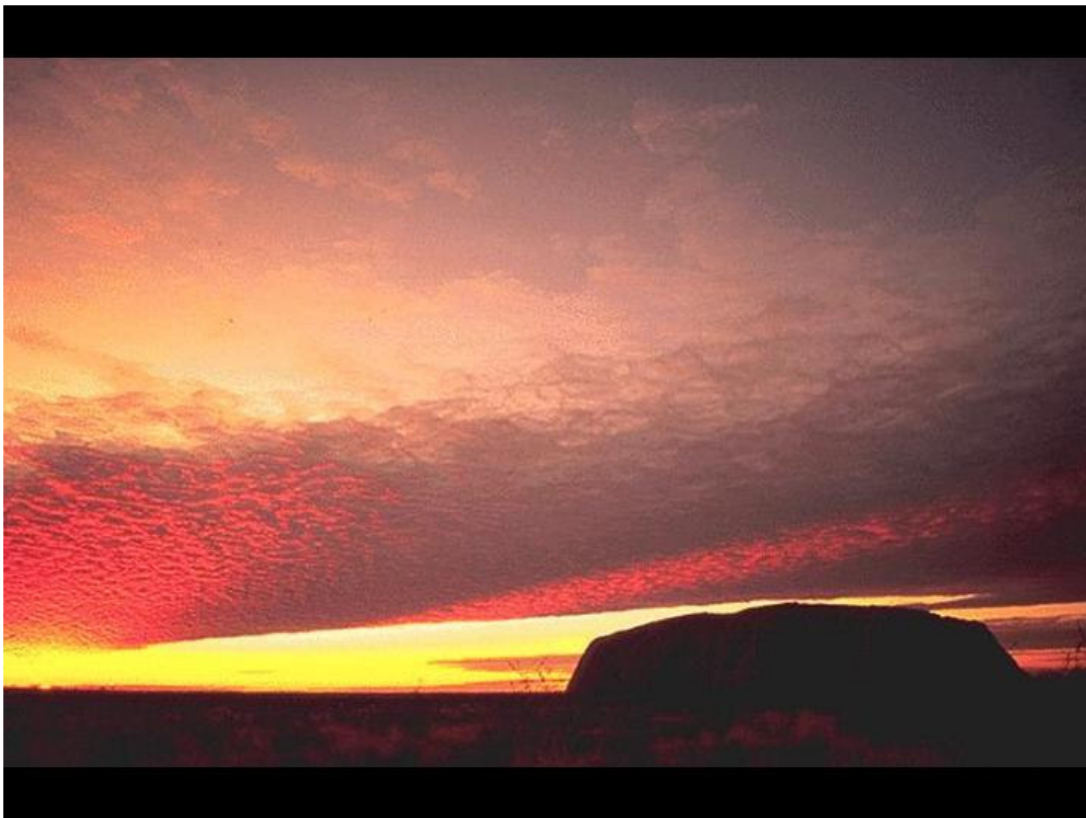
1. Why? O why this wild tsunami?
Why this cruel mystery?
Why? O why these raging waters
Sweeping loved ones out to sea?
Was our God consumed by anger
As when Noah faced his rage?
Or is there a deeper reason
Earth has taken centre stage?
2. Why? O why this mass compassion?
Why this change of human heart?
Why amid the graves of thousands
Do our hatreds fall apart?
Even in the poorest village,
Even where the outcasts live,
Those with something sell their jewels,
Those with nothing give and give!
3. Lord, you've suffered down the ages,
Waiting for a surge of love;
People of your planet hating
In the name of God above!
Now you speak in one tsunami,
Stirring what lies deep inside.
Is this how your son once suffered,
Died when love was crucified?
4. Is that God among the debris,
Weeping on a battered shore,
Holding in her arms an infant—
One! No, two! No, maybe more!
God made flesh knows human grieving;
God made flesh knows our distress.
Help us, God, to find you weeping
With an infant at your breast!

Words: Copyright Norman Habel, July 2005
Melody: Joyful! Joyful! We adore you!

*Third Sunday in the Season of Creation
(Australian Version 1)*

Storm Sunday

We worship with the winds and the weather



*“You make the clouds your chariots, you ride on
the wings of the wind and you make the winds your
messengers” Ps. 104.3-4*

STORM SUNDAY

Welcome!

We worship this Sunday with the storm. We sing with the winds, the clouds and the thunder. We feel the awesome presence of a hurricane. We connect with the stillness before the storm, the fury of the winds and the aftermath of a cyclone. We celebrate God's presence in the storm.

Gathering

Leader In the name of God,
 present in the thunder of the storm,
 the name of Christ,
 present in the stillness after the storm,
 and the name of the Spirit,
 present in the winds of the storm. Amen.

People **Holy! Holy! Holy!**
 Earth is filled with God's presence.

L Christ, as we come to into this sanctuary today,
 we enter your presence even in the storm.

P **Holy! Holy! Holy!**
 Earth is filled with your presence.

Procession and Song

We join in songs with the children as they enter the church holding symbols of the storms. These can be balloons that are painted as clouds, flags that depict lightning and drums that express thunder. They place these symbols in the sanctuary. We rejoice as children celebrate a storm.

Call to Worship

We celebrate with creation as worship leaders, from different points in the church, call the elements of the storm to worship with us as we remember our experiences and our questions about fierce storms.

L1 We invite the elements of the storm to worship with us.

P **The wild winds and the dark clouds,
 the lightning flash and the thunder roll.**

L2 We invite the hurricane to join us in wonder:

**P The fierce gales and blinding rains,
the crashing waves and swaying trees.**

L3 But with our invitation there are questions.

**P Where is our God in all of this?
Where is our God in the storm?**

L1 Where is our God in the cyclone?

**P Spinning the wind from heaven above?
Or present where the spiral hits the ground?**

L2 Where is our God in the hurricane?

**P Sending forth wild winds in anger
or present where the rains strike the land?**

L3 Where is our God in the tsunami?

**P Forcing a wall of water onto the shore
or present with the victims left on the sand?**

L Yes, where is our God in all of this?

P Where is our God in the storm?

Remembering

We use rosemary, eucalyptus or some other fragrant symbol to assist us to stir our memories of storms and other extremes of nature.

L Take the fragrant symbol you received at the door, rub it between your fingers and share with the person next to you a special memory of a storm or extreme weather that raised questions for you.

We remember fierce storms in our lives,
moments when we raised questions
about God's role in our world.

**P We remember asking, 'Why?'
'Where was our God in all of this?'**

Confession

L As I hold this fragrant symbol aloft,
we remember and confess our doubts.

**P We have doubted God's goodness.
We have doubted God's purpose
when hurricanes and flash floods have hit.
We have doubted God's presence
in the aftermath of human suffering.
We are sorry. We are sorry.**

L We are sorry.

P We have doubted. We are sorry.

Absolution

L Christ hears your confession,
forgives your sins
and answers your doubts.

**P Christ, assure us of your purpose,
your goodness and your love.**

L I speak for Christ:
Your God is not high in heaven
playing wild games with nature.
Your God is deep within each storm
feeling its power and awe.
Your God is the suffering God,
revealed as such at Calvary,
and suffering with all who suffer
in the aftermath of storms.

**P Shalom! Shalom!
God too suffers in our storms.**

Christ Have Mercy

L As we raise questions about God.

P Christ, have mercy.

L As we confess our doubts about storms.

P Christ, have mercy.

L As we discover God's presence.

P **Christ, have mercy.**

Glory to God

L Glory to God in the highest!

P **And on Earth peace amid storms!**

Prayer for the Day

P **God, our Creator, as we face the storms of this world, we celebrate the wonders of the wind and the weather. Help us to see your presence, not only in the forces of nature, but also among those who suffer from natural disasters. Teach us to recognise that your Wisdom is imbedded in all natural forces, a Wisdom that guides, controls and limits them. In the name of Christ who is the Wisdom of God renewing all things in creation. Amen.**

Readings for Storm Sunday

Old Testament: Job 28.20-27 'God Discovers Wisdom'

Where can wisdom be found? According to the poet in Job, God discovered wisdom imbedded in nature, even in the elements of the weather, when God was creating the cosmos.

Psalms: Ps. 29 'God in the Storm'

Thunder, in this Psalm, is described as the voice of God, a powerful force that strikes Earth with great force, while the beings in the heavenly temple respond with the cry of 'Glory'!

Epistle: 1 Corinthians 1.21-31 'Christ, the Wisdom of God'

According to Paul, the wise in the world cannot grasp the message of Christ crucified. Ultimately the crucified one is also the source of life and the Wisdom of God.

Gospel: Luke 8.22-25 'Jesus knows the Way of the Storm'

The stilling of the storm not only demonstrates Jesus capacity to perform miracles, it also demonstrates that he is in tune with nature and knows 'the way' of the storm, its inner nature.

Children's Address: Creating a Storm

Prayer: Thank you God for sending storms to make us see just how important rain is for us, for the animals and everything on planet Earth. Amen.

Affirmation of Faith

- L Let us affirm our faith together.
- Women We believe that God creates all things,
renews all things and celebrates all things.**
- Men We believe Earth is a sanctuary,
a sacred planet filled with God's presence,
a home for us to share with our kin.**
- Women We believe that God became flesh and blood,
became a piece of Earth,
a human being called Jesus Christ,
who lived and breathed and spoke among us,
suffered and died on a cross,
for all human beings and for all creation.**
- Men We believe that the risen Jesus
is the Christ at the core of creation
reconciling all things to God,
renewing all creation and filling the cosmos.**
- Women We believe the Spirit renews life in creation
groans in empathy with a suffering creation,
and waits with us for the rebirth of creation.**
- Together We believe that with Christ we will rise
and with Christ we will celebrate a new creation.**

Passing of the Peace

- L Let us share the peace of the Lord with one another.
- P The peace of the Lord be with you

Song

Sermon or Reflection

Song

Offering Prayer

L God, our Creator, through your love you have given us these gifts to share. Accept our offerings as an expression of our deep thanks and our concern for those in need, especially those suffering the effects of natural disasters.

P. **With all creation, we bless our Creator.**

Prayers of the People

We thank God for a wondrous creation. We celebrate with all the forces of nature. We pray for all those in need. We name them now. We close with the following prayer.

Creation Prayer

**Jesus Christ, teach us to empathize with Earth.
Make our spirits sensitive to the cries of creation,
cries for justice from the air, the clouds and the sky,
cries of our fellow creatures deserted and dying.
Jesus Christ, make our faith sensitive to the groans of the Spirit
in creation, groans of longing for a new creation.
Jesus Christ, make our hearts sensitive to the songs of our kin,
songs of celebration echoing around us.
Christ, teach us to care. Amen**

The Great Thanksgiving

L The Creator be with you and all creation.

P **And also with you.**

L Open your hearts.

P **We open them to our Creator.**

L Let us give thanks to our Creator.

P **It is right to join creation in thanking God.**

L God our Creator,
source of everything that is,
we bring before you this day,
bread and wine
and with it we bring all creation to say:

P **Thank you, God, thank you!**

L Thank you for joining the web of creation
for living and dying among us
to redeem us and all creation:

P Thank you, God, thank you!

L Thank you for rising to life
permeating creation with your Spirit
to sustain and heal all things:

P Thank you, God, thank you!

L Therefore with voices of thanks
echoing through the cosmos
from the first day of creation
until this very moment in time,
we praise and thank you saying:

**P Holy! Holy! Holy! Lord God of all life!
The whole cosmos is filled with your presence!**

Lord's Prayer

Words of Institution

Invitation

C Come, for all things are now ready.
Come to the table and find peace:
assurance of God's goodness and love
amid all the storms in nature and life,
assurance of Christ's compassion
no matter how deep your pain,
assurance that Christ is our hope
for a new creation.

**P May we who share these gifts,
share Christ with one another
and all who suffer.**

Lamb of God

**P Lamb of God, who takes away all sin against God,
have mercy on us.
Lamb of God, who takes away all sin against Earth,**

have mercy on us.
Lamb of God, who takes away all sin from the world,
receive our prayer.

Distribution

Distribution Songs

Thanksgiving

L Let us give thanks for this meal.

P *We thank you Christ for the assurance that comes with this meal. We pray that through your body and blood we may be healed and become agents of healing for Earth. Amen.*

Sending Out

L Christ calls you to be his disciples,
to celebrate storms
and discern God's Wisdom, goodness
and suffering presence in all the forces of nature.

Hold again the fragrant symbol in your hands.
Will you care for creation?

P **We will care for creation!**
We will be in awe before the storm.
We will celebrate God's presence!

Blessing

L May the Spirit of God blowing in the wind,
fill you with the knowledge of God's Wisdom in Earth
and the pulsing of Christ within you.

Go in peace!
Serving Christ and loving Earth!

P **We go in peace,**
servicing Christ and loving our home.

Recession and Song

<p><i>We join the children in song as they process from the church. We cry with the psalmist: 'You ride on the wings of the wind' Ps. 148.3.</i></p>
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