

Storm Sunday

(Australian Version 2)

Introduction

Storm refers to the world of the weather, the lighting, the winds, the hurricanes, the cyclones, 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 spirals 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 outcaste 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!

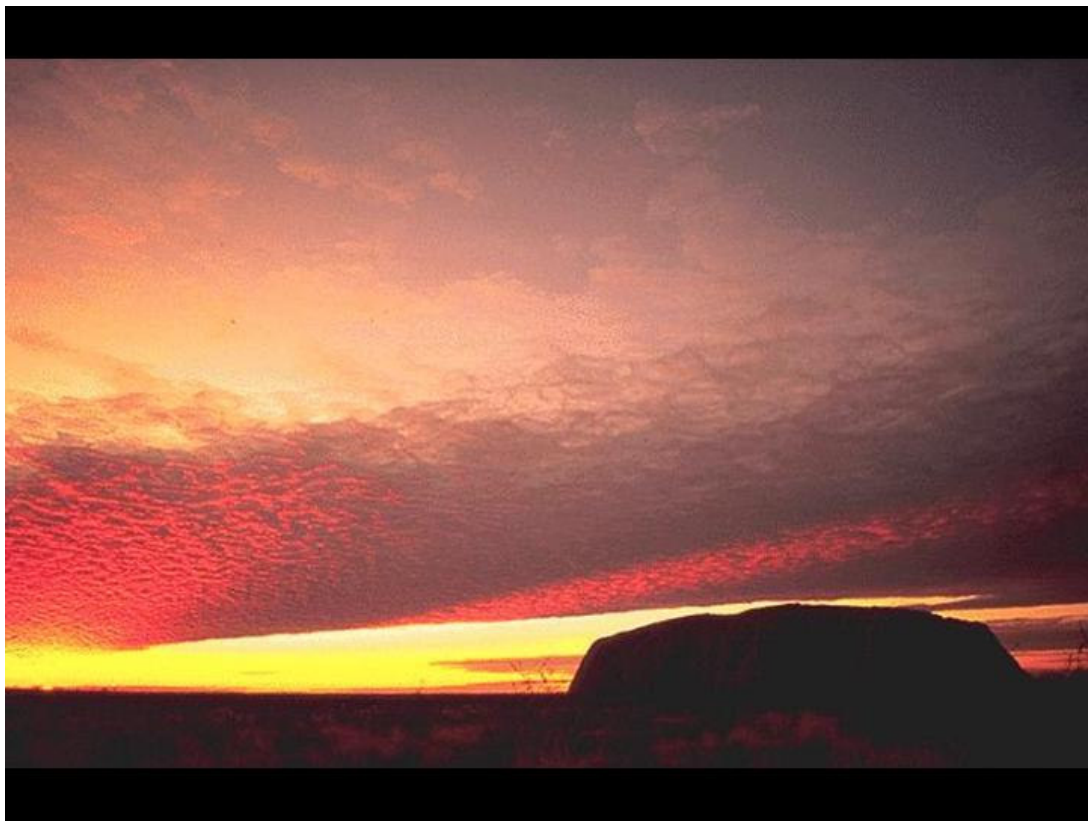
Words: Copyright Norman Habel, July 2005

Melody: Joyful! Joyful! We adore you!

*Third Sunday in the Season of Creation
(Australian Version 2)*

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*

GATHERING IN GOD'S NAME

- 1. This Sunday we worship with storms. We sing with the winds, the clouds and the thunder. We feel the awesome presence of the hurricane. We connect with the stillness before the storm, the fury of the winds and the aftermath of the cyclone. We celebrate God's presence in the storm.*
- 2. A psalm, such as Ps. 29, a creation hymn or an anthem may be sung when the presiding ministers enter or after the greeting.*
- 3. An Invocation, such as the one that follows, may be said before or after the greeting.*

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.

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

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

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

- 4. The Greeting. The presiding minister greets the people in these or other suitable words.*

The Lord of all creation be with you.
And with your spirit.

- 5. An Invitation. The minister or members of the congregation may invite the elements of the storm to worship in the following or similar words.*

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

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

We invite the hurricane to join us in wonder:

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

But with our invitation there are questions.

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

Where is our God in the cyclone?
**Spinning the wind from heaven above?
Or present where the spiral hits the ground?**

Where is our God in the hurricane?
**Sending forth wild winds in anger
or present where the rains strike the land?**

Where is our God in the tsunami?
**Forcing a wall of water onto the shore
or present with the victims left on the sand?**

We celebrate God's presence in the storm
And with all who know the effects of the storm.

- 6. A hymn or song may follow which celebrates creation, especially the domains of a storm. Children or other members of the congregation may enter the church holding symbols of storms. These may be balloons that are painted as clouds, flags or streamers that depict lightning and drums that express thunder. They may place these in the sanctuary. We rejoice with the children as they celebrate a storm.*

CONFESSION AND ABSOLUTION

- 7. **A Remembering.** A small piece of rosemary, eucalyptus leaves or some other fragrant symbol of remembrance may be given to the people as they enter the church as a reminder of our past connection with severe storms and other extremes of nature.*

As we rub this fragrant symbol in our hands we remember times when we experienced extreme weather conditions.
We remember fierce storms in our lives,
moments when we raised questions
about God's role in our world.

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

- 8. **A Confession***

We remember and confess our doubts.
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.

We are sorry.

We have doubted. We are sorry.

9. The Absolution. The people may sit in silence or they may name their sins aloud. The presiding minister declares the absolution.

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

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

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.

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

10. The Kyrie. The minister may add the Kyrie Eleison.

As we come home to Earth,
Christ, have mercy.

As we seek to love our home,
Christ, have mercy.

As we seek to care for our planet,
Christ, have mercy.

11. The Gloria in Excelsis, a suitable hymn of praise or the following invocation may be said or sung.

Glory to God in the highest!
And on Earth peace with all creation!

12. The Collect of the Day. The presiding minister may say: Let us pray.

The community may pray silently. The following collect is said or sung.

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.

THE MINISTRY OF THE WORD

13. All may sit for the first three readings for the Third Sunday in Creation, and rise for the Gospel. After each reading the reader may say:

This is the word of God.
Thanks be to God.

14. A reading from Job chapter 28 verses 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.

15. A reading from Psalm 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’!

16. A reading from the First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians chapter 1, verses 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.

17. The Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Luke chapter 8 verses 22-25.

Glory to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

‘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.

This is the Gospel of the Lord.
Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

18. A Children’s Address: ‘Creating a Storm’ may be may be told by a storyteller and re-enacted by the children.. A hymn or song suitable for children may be sung.

19. The Affirmation of Faith. The Apostles' Creed or the Nicene Creed may be said here or after the sermon, or the following Affirmation of Faith may be used.

God creates all things,
renews all things and celebrates all things.

This we believe.

Earth is a sanctuary,
a sacred planet filled with God's presence,
a home for us to share with our kin.

This we believe.

God became flesh and blood
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.

This we believe.

The risen Jesus
is the Christ at the centre of creation
reconciling all things to God,
renewing all creation and filling the cosmos.

This we believe.

The Holy Spirit renews life in creation
groans in empathy with a suffering creation
and waits with us for the rebirth of creation.

This we believe.

**We believe that with Christ we will rise
and with Christ we will celebrate a new creation.**

20. A Sermon. The sermon may include a time of congregational reflection involving questions and discussion and mutual encouragement. The sermon may be followed by a hymn that reflects the message of the sermon.

THE PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

21. The Prayers. One or more members of the congregation may lead the people in prayer. The prayers conclude with the following prayer or another suitable prayer.

**Jesus Christ, teach us to empathise with Earth.
Make our spirits sensitive to the cries of creation,
cries for justice from the air, the clouds and the sky.
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 from the stars, the storms and the light.
Christ, teach us to care. Amen**

22. A hymn or song may be sung.

THE GREETING OF PEACE

Christ has reconciled us to God in one body by the cross.
We meet in Christ's name and share God's peace.

The peace of the Lord be always with you.
And also with you.

*23. **The Greeting of Peace** may be shared by the people, after which the gifts of the people are brought to the Lord's table. They may be presented in silence or a suitable prayer, such as the one that follows, may be used.*

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 signs of our concern for those in need, including our fellow creatures on planet Earth.
With all creation, we praise our Creator.

THE GREAT THANKSGIVING

*24. **A Prayer of Thanksgiving.** The presiding minister takes the bread and wine for the communion, places them on the Lord's Table and says the following or an authorised Prayer of Thanksgiving.*

The Creator be with you and all creation.
And also with you.

Open your hearts.
We open them to our Creator.

Let us give thanks to the Maker of heaven and earth.
It is right to join creation in thanking God.

It is right to give you thanks, loving Creator. Your Word is the impulse for all things to be, for space, stars and stardust to appear, for Earth to emerge from the deep, for life to be born of Earth and for humans to be born of Earth and the Spirit.

Your Spirit is the life impulse in all things, renewing the barren and healing the wounded, groaning in anticipation of a new creation, stirring a new life born of water and the Spirit.

You chose to be born a human being, to become a part of Earth, to suffer, die and rise from death to redeem humankind, renew creation, and affirm all born of Earth and the Spirit.

Your presence is the living impulse in all things, the Christ deep among us, filling Earth—land, sea and air—filling every element and place, filling the grain and the grape we share with you this day.

Therefore with angels and archangels, ancient voices in the forest, high voices from the sky, deep voices from the sea and the whole company of creation, we proclaim your presence among us.

**Holy, holy, holy, God of all life,
Earth and sea and sky are full of your presence
and glorify your name. Amen.**

*25. **The Consecration.** The presiding minister says an authorised prayer of consecration, the words of institution or other suitable prayer.*

*26. **The Lord's Prayer,** if not already used, may be said here or after the communion.*

THE BREAKING OF THE BREAD AND THE COMMUNION

*27. **The Invitation.** The presiding minister breaks the bread. The following invitation may be said.*

Come, for all things are now ready.
Come to the table and share with all in need:
the gift of healing for those in pain,
the gift of forgiveness for those in sin,
the gift of assurance for those in doubt,
and the gift of hope for those in tears.

**May we who share these gifts
share Christ with one another
and all our kin.**

28. During the communion, psalms, hymns or anthems may be sung, including the following:

**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.**

*29. **The Distribution.** The people receive the Holy Communion. As the people return to their places, they may light a candle in memory of departed loved ones or one of our kin who has become extinct.*

THE SENDING OUT OF GOD'S PEOPLE

30. The presiding minister says

Let us give thanks for this meal.

The people say the following prayer or another suitable prayer.

**We thank you, Christ, for the meal we have celebrated with you,
and we pray that through your body and blood we may be healed
and become agents of healing for Earth. Amen.**

*31. **The Commission.** The members of the Earth care or Earth ministry team may announce practical plans for Earth care sponsored by the congregation. The congregation may be commissioned for ministry to Earth.*

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.
Will you care for creation?

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

32. A hymn of praise may be sung here or after the dismissal.

*33. **The Blessing.** The presiding minister says this or another appropriate blessing:*

Now may the penetrating power of Christ's body and blood reach deep into your heart, your mind and your body to heal your wounds and, through you, to bring healing to Earth, in Jesus' name. **Amen.**

or

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.

34. The president or other minister may say:

Go in peace,
serving Christ and loving Earth!
We go in peace, serving Christ and loving Earth.