

Kippax Uniting Church

Seasons of Creation Study Series – week 3

Storms

*by Jessica Morthorpe & Steve Coster,
based on bible study material from www.seasonsofcreation.com*

INTRODUCTION

In celebrating with creation, there is often a tendency to ignore nature in the raw: the storms, hurricanes and tornadoes that are also part of the weather system of our planet. Fierce winds are as much of part of our world as the air we breathe.

Throughout the Bible we not only meet storms of various kinds, but also occasions where God makes God's presence felt through a storm. Are storms simply expressions of God's power or something more? If we were to listen to all the elements of storm or watch the ways of a storm, might we learn something about the very nature of creation and God's presence in creation?

Discuss: Have you been caught outside in the midst of a storm, a cyclone or a tornado? What was it like? What was your reaction? Intense excitement? Did you gain a new appreciation of nature or feel terrified?¹



OUT OF CONTROL

Reading: Psalm 29

In Psalm 29, the thunder of the storm is the voice of God. That voice is so powerful it causes ocean waters to rage, the mighty cedar trees of Lebanon to break and forests to be stripped bare. God's thundering voice also causes lightning to appear as flashes of consuming fire. God's voice can be a devastating power on Earth; in response the beings in the heavenly temple above respond with their own 'gloria'!

Have you ever deliberately stood outside in a storm to enjoy and dance in the rain? Have you let its elemental power remind you that you are not in charge of your life?

One of the biggest barriers to conservation and appreciation of nature today is our need for control. Ask anyone in your group who is an environmentalist what the first thing that made them love nature was, and the chances are they will tell you an idyllic story of time spent as a child playing with insects and dogs, making mud pies, and building shanties from branches -

¹ Season of Creation Bible Studies – Storm Sunday

generally mucking about in nature. Today, many parents are afraid to let their children visit the local bushland on their own because they are scared something will happen to them. These may be legitimate fears, but our fears have become like prison bars preventing children from exploring the natural world. Sometimes we also stop our kids playing in the backyard because they get messy and it is a pain to clean them up and fix the things they make or break in the yard. The question is, **if we cut our kids off from nature, who is going to form the next generation of champions for our planet?**



It is not only as children that we are becoming cut off from nature. We have created clean, predictable, sanitised environments for ourselves in our homes, workplaces and shopping centres. When a part of nature, usually an insect, steps into these places, how do we react? Is your first impulse to reach for the bugspray?



Discussion question: What is it that threatens us about having nature enter ‘our’ spaces? How sensible is it to have nature in one corner and humanity and human spaces in the other? Is this a false dichotomy? And if God is revealed in nature, are we cutting ourselves off from God?

So maybe we need storms in our lives. Storms can be destructive, but they can also remind us of some important lessons about control and about trying to separate ourselves from nature and the problems this can create.

Discussion question: How do you think our cave-dwelling ancestors felt about storms? With no houses to be threatened, how do you think they would have responded to their power and majesty?

CONNECTING WITH CHRIST

Return to the story of Jesus and the storm from the first week’s study (Mark 4: 35-41 or Luke 8:22-25)

It is traditional to read this story as an example of Jesus’ miraculous power, his capacity not only to heal the sick, but also to intervene in the course of nature. Here he controls a storm that terrifies the disciples.

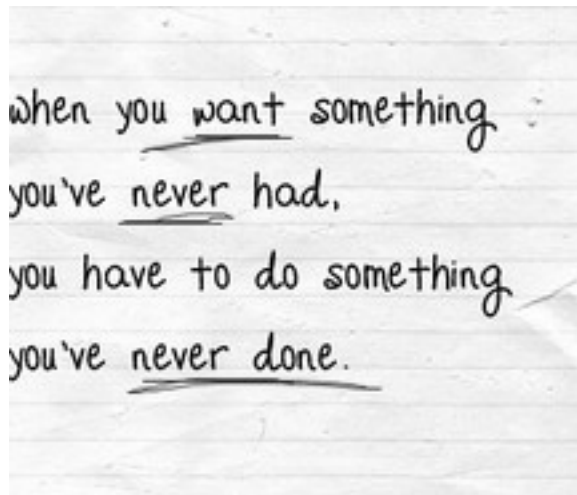
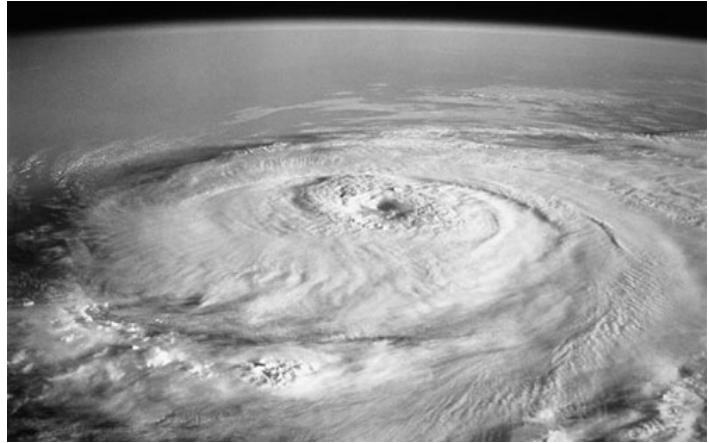
Jesus is not so much exhibiting an extraordinary power play, but rather connecting with the wisdom in the storm, the inner impulse that governs the storm. Jesus, like God in Job 28, sees the wisdom in the storm and knows how to move that wisdom to produce calm. Jesus is in tune with nature and in tune with wisdom.



Discuss: Why is it important for us to recognise that Jesus not only connects with our inner beings, but also with the inner impulses of nature? Does this point ahead to the claim of Paul that Jesus is that power which reconciles nature to God as well as all humans?²

CONSCIOUS OF THE CRISIS

Storms of various kinds have long been part of the natural order around the world. Human beings have learned to live with these storms as an integral part of the weather patterns of the planet. However with the advent of climate change, weather patterns are changing. Climate change has had an impact on the world's weather systems as warming interferes with the delicate balance of the world's atmospheric and oceanic currents and cycles which determine the planet's weather patterns. As climate change progresses, scientist predict that there will be more intense storms such as cyclones and tornadoes around the world, and there may also be an increase in the number of storms we experience.



Discuss: Where will we find the wisdom to ward off the disasters that have begun to invade our world because of climate change? Is there a way to understand the weather and pursue a model of reversing the damage?³

CLOSING PRAYER

God of lightening and thunder,

Thank you for reminding us of you through your presence in storms.



² Season of Creation Bible Studies – Storm Sunday

³ Season of Creation Bible Studies – Storm Sunday

Help us to hear your loving words in the rumble of thunder, see your awesome power in the lightning and feel your spirit move in the restless wind.

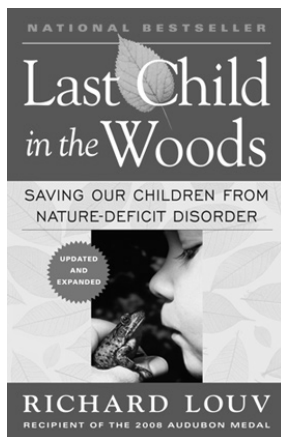
Creator God, give us the courage to reach out to your creation and you, even when it is uncomfortable.

Lord, thank you for the awesome intricacies of the weather systems. Help us to understand them better so we can better understand the impact we are having on them. Help us as individuals to take the action needed to play our part in fighting climate change. Help us as a society to find ways of fixing the mess we have made as much as possible and help us as your Church to be a voice for your creation and for the poor in addressing this issue.

May your will be done on Earth as it is in Heaven,

We ask this in Jesus' name,

Amen.



Additional Resources:

Last Child in the Woods: Saving our children from nature-deficit disorder by Richard Louv, Algonquin Paperbacks
<http://richardlouv.com/>

This is a great book, it is well worth a read for anyone with children or concerned about the future. There are also a range of extra resources available on the website given above.