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Sunday 21 September 2025 Creation 3 – Storm Sunday

The service today has been prepared by Jane Garrick,
one of our Lay Preachers

Welcome to our service this morning.

In working together on our shared mission, we commit to seven core values:

***Togetherness, Humility, Curiosity, Love, Inclusiveness, Justice,
Sustainability.***

Togetherness: we cultivate genuine opportunities to gather together in
worship and fellowship.

Welcome and Introduction

Today is Storm Sunday. Storms can be outside us, but also within us. They disrupt and disturb. They stir fear, but also awe. Today, we hear God's voice moving through the thunder and chaos, to bring Christ's presence and calming reassurance. Together with all creation, we listen for peace—not necessarily after the storm, but within it.

Call to Worship - Psalm 29

Ascribe to the Lord, you heavenly beings,
ascribe to the Lord glory and strength.

**Ascribe to the Lord the glory due his name;
worship the Lord in the splendour of his holiness.**

The voice of the Lord is over the waters;
the God of glory thunders,
the Lord thunders over the mighty waters.

**The voice of the Lord is powerful;
the voice of the Lord is majestic.**

Mission Statement: Sharing God's love, creating hope, working for justice.

The voice of the Lord breaks the cedars;
the Lord breaks in pieces the cedars of Lebanon.

**He makes Lebanon leap like a calf,
Sirion like a young wild ox.**

The voice of the Lord strikes
with flashes of lightning.

**The voice of the Lord shakes the desert;
the Lord shakes the Desert of Kadesh.**

The voice of the Lord twists the oaks
and strips the forests bare.

And in his temple all cry, “Glory!”

The Lord sits enthroned over the flood
the Lord is enthroned as King forever.

The Lord gives strength to his people;
and blesses his people with peace.

Amen

Opening Prayer

God of storms and stillness, we come just as we are.
Renew us in your rhythm of grace.
God of storms and stillness,
Renew us in your rhythm of courage.
God of storms and stillness
Renew us in your rhythm of justice.
God of storms and stillness
Renew us in your rhythm of love.
God of storms and stillness, we acknowledge our fears and doubts,
Renew us in your rhythm of transformation. **Amen.**

Hymn HIOS 9: Beautiful Presence

(Lyrics: Joy Cowley Tune: Barry Brinson)

1. Beautiful presence, how can we name you?
Words are too small for the one who is all.
How can we speak of your gentleness in us,
the warmth of our hearts in response to your call?

Chorus:

*Beautiful presence, ocean of love,
strong as forever, soft as a dove.
Words often fail us, but this we know true,
you live within us as we live in you.*

2. There have been times of spiritual blindness,
when error and pain have distorted our sight.
Beautiful presence, you were there with us,
to show us how darkness can turn into light.

Chorus:

3. Nothing that happens to us will be wasted,
all of our living is grounded in grace.
Gently you take down the walls of division,
leading us on to a larger place.

Chorus:

Prayer of Approach

God, the storm is both outside and within.

Draw near in our trembling.

We confess our helplessness and our habits,

Draw near in our truth-telling.

We name the grief that rends our hearts,

Draw near in our aching.

We see the fires, the floods, the fleeing –

Draw near in our weeping.

Yet even now, you ask for wise action,

Draw near in our awakening.

Let this worship be both lament and launch,

Draw near in our reshaping.

Call forth in us what the world needs now –

Draw near and make us bold.

Words of Assurance

In every storm, God does not abandon us.

Even as we cry, “Is there no balm in Gilead?” – there is.

Christ weeps with us. Christ calls us forward.

Grace is not withheld from the sorrowful.

You are not alone. You are not forsaken. You are loved. **Amen.**

Sharing the Peace

Hymn AA 156: Where the Road Runs Out

(Lyrics and Tune: Colin Gibson)

1. Where the road runs out and the signposts end,
where we come to the edge of today,
be the God of Abraham for us;
send us out upon our way.

Chorus

*Lord, you were our beginning,
the faith that gave us birth.
We look to you, our ending,
our hope for heaven and earth.*

2. When the coast is left and we journey on
to the rim of the sky and the sea,
be the sailor's friend, be the dolphin Christ;
lead us on to eternity.

Chorus

3. When the clouds are low and the wind is strong,
when tomorrow's storm draws near,
be the spirit bird hovering overhead
who will take away our fear.

Chorus

Readings

1 Kings 19:11-13a

God's Revelation to Elijah after Elijah had fled from Jezebel

¹¹ Then He said, "Go out, and stand on the mountain before the Lord." And behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind tore into the mountains and broke the rocks in pieces before the Lord, *but* the Lord was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, *but* the Lord was not in the earthquake; ¹² and after the earthquake a fire, *but* the Lord was not in the fire; and after the fire ^[a]a still small voice.

¹³ So it was, when Elijah heard *it*, that he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out and stood in the entrance of the cave.

Luke 8:22-25

Wind and Wave Obey Jesus

²² Now it happened, on a certain day, that He got into a boat with His disciples. And He said to them, "Let us cross over to the other side of the lake." And they launched out. ²³ But as they sailed He fell asleep.

And a windstorm came down on the lake, and they were filling *with water*, and were in ^[a]jeopardy. ²⁴ And they came to Him and awoke Him, saying, “Master, Master, we are perishing!”

Then He arose and rebuked the wind and the raging of the water. And they ceased, and there was a calm. ²⁵ But He said to them, “Where is your faith?”

And they were afraid, and marvelled, saying to one another, “Who can this be? For He commands even the winds and water, and they obey Him!”

Reflection

We all go through storms in life – storms around us and within us; storms that disturb, disrupt or dominate our lives. Grief, loss, relationship and family cares, health issues, financial concerns, fears and worries – these all are storms. Some are small and other people are not even aware that we are going through them, but others are huge, and our lives are completely altered as a result.

Yes, storms are inevitable; we cannot avoid them, but if we are willing, they serve a purpose in our spiritual journey. We have a choice to face the issues confronting us and take Jesus with us in those rough waters of life, or not. Perhaps we find ourselves, like Elijah in our reading from 1 Kings this morning, running away and hiding.

Elijah had just experienced an incredible victory on Mount Carmel. He had called together all the prophets of Baal – 450 of them – and set a challenge. He told them to build an altar and make a sacrifice to Baal. He would do the same but call on the name of the Lord. “The God who answers by fire,” Elijah said, “He is God.”

The prophets of Baal spent all day calling on their God, all to no avail, but Elijah, who not only built his altar and sacrificed his bull on it, but also saturated it thoroughly with water had it all consumed by the fire of God. It was a wonderful victory that brought the people back to the true God. “The Lord, He is God! The Lord, He is God!” the people shouted.

But within a few verses of this event, we find Elijah running for his life after King Ahab’s wife Jezebel had vowed to kill him. Jezebel is a force to be reckoned with. Elijah flees into the wilderness and prays that he might die. After this we find him hiding in a cave. He is shut down, depressed and full of self-justification and self-pity.

We can all identify with those ‘down’ times in life, when things go wrong and the storms come. It is often the easier default option to retreat into ourselves, feeling sorry for ourselves and justifying our hurt.

But we note here God's first words to Elijah in his situation: "Go out and stand on the mountain." In other words, God expects us to make a shift, whether it be in our thinking or in our circumstances. We need to make a choice to move out of our caves of self-protection. As we move out, we are then to stand. Standing speaks to me of waiting for God to speak or act.

When Elijah does this a great and strong wind comes, tearing into the mountains and breaking rocks. But God wasn't in the wind. Next comes an earthquake, but God was not in the earthquake. After that comes a fire, but God was not in the fire.

What is going on here? So often in our trials we expect God to come with powerful interventions. I think of Naaman, the Syrian army commander, in 2 Kings 5, who came to the prophet Elisha to be healed of his leprosy. When Naaman gets to Elisha's door a servant is sent to give him a message from the great prophet: "Go, wash yourself seven times in the Jordan, and your flesh will be restored, and you will be cleansed."

Naaman is angry, saying "I thought that he would surely come out to me and stand and call on the name of the Lord his God, wave his hand over the spot and cure me of my leprosy."

Perhaps Elijah here too is expecting God to come and destroy his enemies and restore him to his public role. However, it is not until the still, small voice comes, that Elijah is able to hear the voice of God and connect with Him in a deeply personal and unique way.

How attuned are we to the voice of God? Are we looking for Him "out there", expecting Him to move dramatically in our circumstances or are we listening for that still, small voice? Yes, sometimes He does move dramatically but more often than not, it is the inner knowing, the quiet assurance in the soul saying, "I am here. I am with you. I will never leave nor forsake you."

I wonder what kind of voice Jesus used when He rebuked the wind and the raging of the water, calming the storm in our passage from Luke? Maybe He did use a 'big' voice, but I don't think He would have had to.

We know He has authority over nature and that He is present in all our storms, but why does He let them happen to us? Why did He stay asleep in the boat, knowing that the storm was coming and that the disciples could have been in danger of drowning? The words used in this passage are strong: "perishing" and "jeopardy" which means an imminent and serious danger of loss or harm. Does Jesus not care?

It's not that He doesn't care but rather, that there is a deeper issue at stake. Once the wind and waves stop their raging, Jesus asks the disciples "Where is your faith?" Despite walking with Jesus and spending months and years with Him, they default to their own fears, doubts and insecurities, not activating their faith. There is a lesson here that Jesus is wanting them to learn – to walk by faith whatever the circumstances.

Can we do that? We too are on a journey of learning to live by faith and not by sight. When 'bad' things happen and the storms of life – whether they be financial, emotional, spiritual or relational - assail us, can we activate our faith and trust Jesus to work it out? He will take us through the raging circumstances and quiet them, bringing us to a place of Peace. Sometimes He will quiet the storm like He did on the boat, but other times He will quieten us in the midst of the trouble.

Jesus wants to use the storms to build our faith, shaping us into stronger and more mature believers. Remember Job? I don't pretend to understand his story, but there are wonderful gems of truth there for our taking.

It seems Job was an extraordinary sort of person – a "blameless and upright man" who, Scripture tells us, did not sin when Satan was allowed to attack him. Job lost all his children, servants, livestock and possessions, but his reaction was to say "The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord."

Job is an encouragement to us to trust God whatever the circumstances. At our low points if we can pray with faith and remind ourselves of His promises, we will see a breakthrough. We can encourage ourselves that no storm lasts forever and that even in the fiercest trials, God is working out His perfect plan for our lives. Hard to see at the time, but this is where faith kicks in giving us that inner assurance of hope.

As you came in this morning you were asked to select a small stone from a bowl. I'd like you to pick this up now and hold it quietly. Feel its surface and shape, its coolness... feel its smoothness, its solidity.... Now think about a storm or storms you have faced in life... bring Jesus into that scene and remind yourself of His strong and solid presence with you in it. Hear His still, small voice of love and assurance.

The stone is a tangible symbol of God's calming presence in the midst of trials and fear. Put your stone where you will see it and be reminded of Jesus in the boat saying not only to the raging circumstances but also to your own heart: "Peace, be still." Amen

Hymn WOV 48: Be Still My Soul (Tune: Finlandia)

1. Be still, my soul! the Lord is on your side;
Bear patiently the cross of grief or pain;
Leave to your God to order and provide;
In ev'ry change he faithful will remain.
Be still, my soul! your best, your heav'nly friend
Thru' thorny ways leads to a joyful end.
2. Be still, my soul! your God does undertake
To guide the future as he has the past;
Your hope, your confidence, let nothing shake;
all now mysterious shall be bright at last.
Be still, my soul! the waves and winds still know
His voice who ruled them while he lived below.
3. Be still, my soul! when dearest friends depart
And all is darkened in the vale of tears,
Then shall you better know his love, his heart,
Who comes to soothe your sorrow and your fears.
Be still, my soul! your Jesus can repay
From his own fullness all he takes away.
4. Be still, my soul! the hour is hast'ning on
When we shall be forever with the Lord,
When disappointment, grief, and fear are gone,
Sorrow forgot, love's purest joys restored.
Be still my soul! when change and tears are past,
All safe and blessed we shall meet at last.

Offering

Thank You, Heavenly Father that You are with us in the storms of life. We thank You for Your provision and care. As we bring these offerings to You may they be used to bring Your Presence and Peace into the lives of those in need. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen

Community Time

Prayers of Intercession

Creator God, we pray for all who are facing storms in their lives. We particularly remember those in pain and suffering; those we have mentioned this morning, as well as others who are on our hearts.... Bring healing, Lord.

God of storm and stillness, make Your presence known.

We pray for our nation and its leaders. In economic and political turmoil, give wisdom and compassion. May we once again truly be known as God's Own Nation.

God of storm and stillness, make Your presence known.

We pray for our church, that we would stay true to You in the storms of our lives. Help us to listen to each other and to Your still, small voice, so that we know the way to go. Lead us, Lord, into the future that You have for us and help each one of us to grow in love and faith.

God of storm and stillness, make Your presence known.

We pray for our local community and seek Your blessing on our upcoming market. May You be in every detail. Let connections be made, friendships enriched, and hearts turned towards You. May people know we are Christians by our love.

God of storm and stillness, make Your presence known.

Thank You for Your work in our lives. Open our hearts to receive all that You are wanting to do.

God of storm and stillness, make Your presence known. Amen

Hymn HFTC 545: [Be Thou My Vision](#)

Blessing

May our Creator God, whose still, small voice is heard beyond the wind and rain, fire, and flood, give you courage to face the storm, and peace to overcome your fear. Go with the blessing of God, Creator of clouds and oceans, Christ in the boat beside us. and Spirit stirring in every storm.

We go in faith, hope, and love.

Sung Amen.

Acknowledgements:

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Phillip Garside's Worship at Hand

Season of Creation -Liturgy, Learning and (Purposeful) Life

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