

# Christmas and Thunderstorms

God reminds us of his power and glory in many ways. He speaks through the spirit to his people, through the Bible itself, and reveals himself in ways we cannot imagine. One of the ways he speaks is through the thunderstorms.

Recently I preached on a passage from Psalm 29, which speaks of the voice of the Lord speaking through thunderstorms. “The God of glory thunders, the Lord thunders over the mighty waters, the voice of the Lord is powerful and majestic.

As I spoke about God speaking through thunderstorms, I was reminded of the times I had sat and listened to the thunder, and heard the crashes of lightning in a summer storm. I have heard God clearly in those moments, as I experienced in real time the mighty God asserting his power, and making sounds and shaking the earth in ways that humans would never be able to accomplish.

My grandmother was deathly afraid of thunderstorms, and a dedicated Christian. When I went to stay with her in the summer, and a storm came up, we had to go to the center of the house, be quiet, and wait out the storm.

When she died, a tremendous thunderstorm blew over the church. The funeral home staff was shocked as they were touching the iron railing outside as lightning crashed, and the church bell rang with the impact. I always felt that God was telling her that heaven is a wonderful place, and that she never had to be afraid.

God’s speaking through thunderstorms, winds, and other major disturbances of the earth have always been something I have wondered about. But now that I have said it, and trust in it, another passage from God’s word comes to mind.

In I Kings chapter 19, we find these words. “a great and mighty wind tore into the mountains and shattered the rocks before the LORD, but the LORD was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake. After the earthquake there was a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire. And after the fire came a still, small voice. When Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his cloak and went out and stood at the mouth of the cave. Suddenly a voice came to him and said, “What are you doing here, Elijah?”

So, I have always taken this to mean that God did not speak through earthquakes, winds, and fire. But when we hear the words of the Psalmist, and look at the ways God speaks through and after powerful storms and their effects, we find that God can and does speak through all of these occurrences, if we are willing to listen.

It was not that God never speaks through earthquakes, wind, fire, and the like, but that he was not speaking through them, as he often did, and as Elijah might have been expecting him to speak. At that time he chose to speak in a still small voice.

As we reflect on the thunderstorm and God's mighty ways to speak, we must remember that in the midst of all the other things going on in the world, our thunderstorms of politics, family, work, and just trying to survive, that God can and will speak to us in all of those times. Even as we look at last year, and the one to come, God stands there speaking in and around the storms of life.

Jesus became clear to the disciples in the middle of the Sea of Galilee amidst a thunderstorm, when he calmed the winds and the waves. The disciples said to themselves, "Who is this, that even the wind and sea obey him?"

Dear Lord and Father of Mankind, a powerful hymn to a quiet tune, the words were written by Quaker poet John Greenleaf Whittier. Listen to the words about God's voice, in earthquake, wind, fire, AND the still small voice.

*In simple trust like theirs who heard  
Beside the Syrian sea  
The gracious calling of the Lord,  
Let us, like them, without a word  
Rise up and follow Thee.  
Speak through the earthquake, wind, and fire,  
O still, small voice of calm.*

Garrison Keillor, a radio personality and writer, says, "A lovely thing about Christmas is that it's compulsory, like a thunderstorm, and we all go through it together."

Maybe Christmas, in all the peace and reminders of the fact that God is with us, can indeed be a thunderstorm which cuts through all our excuses and hesitations about heaven and faith, and be the force which makes everything finally make

sense.

So listen, dear reader, to the voice of God, not just at Christmas, not just in the moment of our choosing, but when He breaks through all the other forces in a thunderstorm of grace. He will, and we must be ready to listen.