

MY EXPERIENCE WITH A HURRICANE

“A refuge from the storm” – Isaiah 25:4

CHANGING WEATHER

A few weeks back, Hurricane Helene impacted western North Carolina, where I live. To complicate matters, even before the deluge Helene brought us, we had already experienced two days of heavy rainfall across the area. As a result, when Helene's downpours reached us in full fury on the morning of Friday, September 27, the situation was ripe for falling trees, downed power lines and raging flood waters for those who live near our rivers. To say the residents were not prepared for all this would be an extremely mild understatement. Remember, we are over 400 miles from the Florida area where the storm came to land. As we are also about 300 miles from the ocean, the area has no real experience with hurricanes, as all we usually get this far inland from an ocean storm is rain and some wind. We got those and more from Helene.

NECESSITIES AND OTHER CONVENIENCES

Our electricity, phone and internet all went out quickly. My niece tried to get to work the day things started deteriorating, but she couldn't and came here with her two children. One of them is a recently turned 3-year-old who can cause toddler storms for those in the know. Early on Friday morning, accompanied by cracking sounds that reminded me of gunshots, two trees uprooted in the backyard. Thankfully, they were not near the house. For the first few days, locals were enveloped by a stunned silence about what to do. We needed more communication as the neighborhood grapevine became the single source of information.

As we began to need water for drinking and toilet flushing, we ventured out on Monday, finding blocked roads and little commerce. The open businesses, mostly grocery stores offering only their dry goods, required cash. We found an ATM open and my niece stood in long lines gathering essentials. The following days, activities were dominated by driving around to churches, which dispersed essentials for everyone. From my vantage point, government response was nowhere to be seen. After 10 days, our power returned, and after four more days, our water came back, though even as I write this, it must still be boiled. After the internet returned, we learned about the catastrophic damage in parts of this area. Helene inconvenienced us, but some lost everything, and some even lost their lives. I could make this narrative much longer, but I suspect most of you have seen the footage. The recovery is in its infancy after a little less than a month. It is a long-term project.

THANKFUL

Dealing with this storm has personalized some of the truths I believe about God in a new way.

- He is faithful.
- He will lead the believer's steps.
- The comfort He provides is real, tangible and sustaining.
- He grants Peace in the midst of the storm.

Hopefully, no hurricane is headed your way. But when your storm arrives, in whatever form it takes, He will be there. In this uncertain world, that is a truth on which you can depend.