

Did the Hurricanes Wash Away the Hate?

In the midst and aftermath of the destruction caused by Hurricanes Harvey and Irma, I saw a number of comments in social media marveling at how people came together and served each other regardless of race, religion, or any other “us/them” division. Immediately before the hurricanes, the subject of hate was hot and furious in the various media. Then suddenly people weren’t talking about it. Something much bigger and much more immediate consumed our attention.

So that left an intriguing question: did the hurricanes wash away the hate?

Alas, no.

It didn’t take long before a third hurricane, Maria, decimated America’s own Puerto Rico, and the horrific humanitarian crisis became fodder for politically-related contempt and ugliness in the media. This was immediately followed by the mass shooting in Las Vegas that remains a mystery.

What in the world is going on?

In answering a question about signs indicating the end times, GotQuestions.org writes, “An increase in false messiahs, an increase in warfare, and **increases in famines, plagues, and natural disasters**—these are signs of the end times. In [Matthew 24:5-8], though, we are given a warning: we are not to be deceived, because these events are only the beginning of birth pains; the end is still to come.” (emphasis mine)

Paul writes this to Timothy about the end times:

You should know this, Timothy, that in the last days there will be very difficult times. For people will love only

themselves and their money. They will be boastful and proud, scoffing at God, disobedient to their parents, and ungrateful. They will consider nothing sacred. They will be unloving and unforgiving; they will slander others and have no self-control. **They will be cruel and hate what is good.** They will betray their friends, be reckless, be puffed up with pride, and love pleasure rather than God. They will act religious, but they will reject the power that could make them godly. Stay away from people like that! (2 Timothy 3:3-5, emphasis mine)

This sure sounds like 2017, doesn't it? The subjects of cruelty and hate are front-page news stories, whether we're learning of new beheadings or accusations of new hate groups. Recently, CNN published the Southern Poverty Law Center's "hate map," which lumps together true hate-fueled organizations with Christian ministries holding to historic biblical orthodoxy. I follow this story because two years ago, SPLC put Probe Ministries on their hate map for being "anti-LGBT." And since I am the one who writes most of the content for Probe.org on sexuality and gender issues, they were mainly pointing their finger at me.

So while some people were wondering if the hurricanes had washed away the hate, I found myself writing a number of answers to email and social media posts assuring people that no, Probe is not a hate group, and inviting them—as I always have—to identify any words of hatred on our website. No one has ever shown me any hateful words. (I don't think we've ever written any hateful words to begin with, but I have always vetted anything I've written on the subject of LGBT by first submitting it to friends who used to identify as gay or lesbian.) But simply writing about homosexuality as not God's design, and the truth that Jesus Christ changes people and sometimes that includes people's same-sex attractions, is purportedly potential fuel for those who would commit violence against LGBT people.

(What's interesting is that an armed man used the SPLC hate map to attempt to commit violence against the Family Research Council as retribution for their inclusion on the hate list. The SPLC doesn't seem to have a problem with that.)

As my pastor says, "Truth sounds like hate to those who hate the truth." There are so many cultural lies about God's design for sex and identity that when we proclaim God's truth in a culture that embraces lies, we get called hateful and discriminatory.

No, the hurricanes did not wash away the hate; they just distracted us for a time, I think. I do believe we are seeing the birth pangs of the end times, and the world is going to continue to get darker and more hostile to those holding a biblical worldview. My prayer is that we will be faithful to stand for what is right and true no matter the cost.

Even when we're slimed with false accusations of hate.

This blog post originally appeared at blogs.bible.org/engage/sue_bohlin/did_the_hurricanes_wash_away_the_hate on October 3, 2017.

Hurricane Ike and God's Commands

Hurricane Ike barreled down on Texas a few days ago, leaving millions of our neighbors without power or safe water, causing huge amounts of wind and water damage, and forcing countless numbers from their homes, some permanently.

Government officials ordered Galveston residents, along with other coastal cities and towns, to evacuate. The National Weather Service tried to express the seriousness of their warning, promising “certain death” to those who stayed. People who lived in one- or two-story homes were told to pin their names and social security numbers to their chests to make identifying their corpses easier. Thousands decided to ride it out, wondering just how bad it could really be.

They found out.

Hurricane Ike left many parts of Galveston a broken, crumpled mess. The aftermath is much worse than residents imagined: no water, no power, no food, no phones. The smell is awful as sewage backs up into waterlogged streets. With no running water, people can't shower, much less flush toilets or even wash their hands after using one. A fetid smell rises from the sludge that's everywhere, a disgusting concoction of mud, sewage, asbestos, lead and gasoline. Not only are officials concerned about the health problems from the stuff, but gigantic bugs are emerging from it. Adding insult to injury is the growing number of mosquitoes.

One woman said, “Next time they should warn people about this, not the storm itself.”

There are many reasons officials did everything they could to persuade people to evacuate. And this was one of them: the aftermath of a devastating storm is at least as bad as the battering winds and rain of the storm itself. The desire to spare residents from having to live in the post-hurricane nightmare was part of why officials urged residents to obey the evacuation order.

Surely this must grieve God's heart with pangs of familiarity. He sees every day—every moment!—the awful aftermath of our disobedience. Behind the gift of His commands is His desire to spare us from the pain and heartbreak that comes from

disobedient independence. Behind the gift of His commands is a brilliant mind that knows every possible scenario about what would happen if we obeyed and if we disobeyed. He doesn't tell us on the front end what our disobedience will cost us; He doesn't owe it to us.

Government officials can't see the future. They could only assume the worst, given the computer models and even a rudimentary knowledge of the power of hurricanes. But God can.

May the awful post-hurricane stories remind us that God's rules and intentions are given to bless us, not because He's some sort of cosmic killjoy.

There are two truths He seems intent on wanting us to learn by heart: He is good, and He loves us. And that's why we can trust Him when He tells us what to do and what to avoid.

© 2008 Probe Ministries