

September 1, 2017

Living in The Past

I generally try to avoid living in the past, (although the past, for a variety of reasons is lots more pleasant than the present) but I can hardly take my eyes off the TV picturing the storm in Texas. It was almost exactly twelve years ago when Katrina roared ashore on the Gulf Coast of Mississippi. Before the storm, we were five houses off the beach in Ocean Springs after, we were three houses off the beach.

I was at our home in Atlanta, and my wife, pregnant younger daughter, son-in-law, and their two toddlers came to Atlanta the night before the storm. My daughter packed for a week, and a year later she came back to Ocean Springs ... with three children.

My son-in-law, one of our friends, and I came back to the Gulf Coast the day after the storm. I have attached a view from our front yard the day after, along with the same view today. (Notice that my Suburban was parked on the street, and I parked the same Suburban in front for the photo today. It is amazing how unimportant new cars become, when you're in your eighties, and God has kept you alive with sixteen surgeries.) The city bulldozed our street the day after the storm, and most of the city streets were open within a few days.

Ocean Springs was about twenty-five miles east of the eye-wall, and most of our damage was from the storm surge. Our elevation is twenty feet, and we had an average of three feet of water in our house. The debris in the photos was the remains of the houses on the beach.

Big flatscreen HD TV's are great, but you must experience the aftereffects of a hurricane to really appreciate how bad it is. The stench is indescribable, and when the rain stops in Texas, and the sun comes out, it's going to be a humid 90 degrees plus, and the mosquitos will be feasting on human blood. Many will be without power for weeks.

It took us almost a full day to clear the yard of debris so we could get in the house to take paintings and TVs off the wall, and salvage clothes and things that were above water. In the master bedroom, there was a soaked King James Version Bible lying face down on the floor. My son-in law-picked it up. It was opened to the first chapter of Job, the first thing he saw was verse 21: "And said, Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord."

After four days of working in "4th world" conditions, we started back to Atlanta. 50 miles from Ocean Springs, we stopped in Mobile at Panera Bread, and it was surreal. There

was background music, air conditioning, and the people were well dressed and unhurried. In 45 minutes, we had traveled back into the 1st world.

We started rebuilding our house, and there was so much mildew/mold that we finally took the bricks off, and didn't save anything but the studs and roof. It took a full year for us to rebuild, and it took about 3 years before things seemed normal. The bridge connecting Ocean Springs with Biloxi didn't reopen for over 2 years.

Katrina has been called the most expensive natural disaster in American history. Houston alone has almost as much population as the whole states of Mississippi and Louisiana combined, and from looking at the TV, there must be well over 100,000 flooded homes. The recovery will take years. Many of those people have lost everything, and many will never recover. They need prayer and donations.

On a happier personal note, after over 8 years, 16 surgeries, and countless days of chemo and radiation, I am glad to report that the docs can't find any evidence of Cancer in me. God used Emory Healthcare, and I am grateful.