

## FROM OUR PASTOR

September 2, 2017

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Sabbath Greetings to everyone!

Hurricane Harvey hit Texas this week. The storm damage is expected to make one of the costliest storms in U.S. history. As the storm stalled and dropped as much as 52 inches of rain in some areas, 100,000 homes were damaged and more than 30,000 people went to emergency shelters. As is often the case in storms, wreckage on the sprawling city of 6.7 million was uneven. Businesses were open on one block but closed on the next; traffic signals worked at one intersection but not another. Most of those who suffered loss did not have flood insurance coverage, so rebuilding will take years.

Amidst the stories of loss and suffering, there were some encouraging reports of people helping people. The Los Angeles Times reported: "The 'Cajun Navy' Sails Again." "After wreaking havoc in parts of Texas and Louisiana, the biggest rainstorm in U.S. mainland history was weakening.... More than 30 people are believed to have died, and the sun has emerged above Houston, National Guard members have made thousands of rescues, and the Navy is sending a ship to support relief efforts. But among the first responders have been volunteers loosely organized as the "Cajun Navy," as we saw 12 years ago during Hurricane Katrina."

The flotilla of over 400 privately owned boats left Louisiana to rescue people stranded by the rising water. No one called them, no government official made an announcement. They just hitched their boats to their pickup trucks and came to help their fellow man. The number of people rescued by these nameless volunteers will never be known, but the estimates are in the thousands. Who knows how many lives they saved. While a few of the boat owners were interviewed by reporters, most distained any recognition and hitched up their boats to head to other areas in need as the waters began to recede. The accounts of people volunteering to help and giving to help are mounting faster than one can count. Those who have been reporting the past few weeks that the US is in a "civil war" must have been disappointed to see so many coming together to help and differences between people disappear.

One definition of true religion in the Bible is to help the fatherless and widows in their affliction (James 1:27). The parable of the good Samaritan is one illustration of a man helping his fellow man in time of need, not expecting anything in return (Luke 10: 30-37). Jesus told us to "Go and do likewise."

We have witnessed that kind of selfless help in thousands of cases this past week. My niece, who lives in Houston, purchased her first house last month. She took time off and volunteered to teach arts and crafts at our Northwest teen camp in July and was excited about returning to decorate her new place. After only living there a few weeks, her home

flooded the third day of the storm. Our extended family is going to help her, and enough craftsmen have volunteered to repair her place that she will only have to pay for materials.

Sometimes a disaster brings out the best in people. After all the bad news we have been hearing in recent times, the news of people helping their fellow man after the storm has been heartening.

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