

Special Message on Spiritual Lessons from Hurricane Gustav
Genesis 32:24-32

Dr. Steve Horn

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Text: Genesis 32:24-32 ²⁴ Then Jacob was left alone; and a Man wrestled with him until the breaking of day. ²⁵ Now when He saw that He did not prevail against him, He touched the socket of his hip; and the socket of Jacob's hip was out of joint as He wrestled with him. ²⁶ And He said, "Let Me go, for the day breaks."

But he said, "I will not let You go unless You bless me!"

²⁷ So He said to him, "What *is* your name?" He said, "Jacob."

²⁸ And He said, "Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel; for you have struggled with God and with men, and have prevailed."

²⁹ Then Jacob asked, saying, "Tell *me* Your name, I pray."

And He said, "Why *is* it *that* you ask about My name?" And He blessed him there.

³⁰ So Jacob called the name of the place Peniel: "For I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved." ³¹ Just as he crossed over Peniel the sun rose on him, and he limped on his hip. ³² Therefore to this day the children of Israel do not eat the muscle that shrank, which *is* on the hip socket, because He touched the socket of Jacob's hip in the muscle that shrank.

Years ago when I was in college, my College Pastor was in the middle of a series of messages on the family. He paused the series of messages on the Sunday of the week that the news broke that basketball star Magic Johnson had been diagnosed with HIV. His explanation for breaking into the series was simple: We were at a "teachable moment." So, I sense that we are at a teachable moment. We will return to the series "We Believe," LORD willing, next Sunday. However, today, we are at a teachable moment.

Three years ago, after Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, I preached a message entitled, "Spiritual Lessons from a Hurricane." In that message, I pointed out these lessons: (1) The Prayer Lesson; (2) The Possession Lesson; and (3) The Preparation Lesson. Those lessons are still very much true.

Monday night, I took out a pad and began to jot down some thoughts that I had been having about this particular hurricane. As I began the list, I noticed how by analogy, these thoughts also had a spiritual implication.

Jacob's struggle with the "man of God" sets the stage for today's message. Jacob wrestled through the night with this unidentified "man of God." Jacob demanded, "I will not let you go unless you bless me." Jacob's story simply tells us that we can be blessed by some of the most difficult experiences of life. Can our wrestling with hurricanes bless us? They can if we are willing to learn some spiritual lessons through these hurricanes.

Today's message is different from my normal mode of preaching. Instead of explaining and applying this passage of Scripture, I want to share some spiritual lessons that I think we learn especially from Hurricane Gustav. These are not new lessons, but they are lessons that we seem to never learn. Ask God to help you to learn these lessons today.

Top 10 Spiritual Lessons from Hurricane Gustav:

10. It is better to go through a hurricane in the daytime than at night.

I've gone through several hurricanes—some during the day and some at night. Given those options, I would rather go through a hurricane during the day.

There is a great emphasis on light in the Bible. The Gospel of John records that Jesus called Himself the "Light of the World." (John 8:12) John, in the Revelation, said about Heaven, "There shall be no night there." (Revelation 21:25) Added to that, Jesus said that we, as believers, are to be salt and **light**. (Matthew 5:13-14)

What does all this mean? We ought to celebrate light. Things in darkness ought to raise a red flag for us. If we are hiding something in the dark, so to speak, we should be convicted of that because light is always better than darkness.

9. We must learn from the past.

Much has been said about the mistakes made by all during other hurricanes. The good thing about mistakes is that we can learn from the past. Nothing prepares us for the future like experience. The tough thing about gaining experience is that the only way to gain experience is to make a few mistakes.

Listen to 1 Corinthians 10:11, "Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come."

8. Advanced preparation is the key.

In all of life, we must get ready well in advance of the problem. The time to prepare for eternity is now. The time to prepare for God's calling on your life is now. The time to gain spiritual maturity is now.

7. The next one is coming.

You don't like to hear that, but it is true. May not be this year, but the next one is coming, so...

6. We are going to have to learn to put our faith into practice.

And...

5. Because the future is uncertain, we must know the One who holds the future.

"Never be afraid to trust an unknown future to a known God."—Corrie Ten Boom

4. It really is true what Jesus said, "Don't Worry about tomorrow."

The rest of that quote is "Sufficient for the day is its own trouble."

3. We are all in this thing together.

Did you notice how during the hurricane, we were all in it together? Why does it take something like a hurricane to cause us to remember that we need each other?

2. I will never completely understand the mercy of God.

Why did some communities get hit so hard, while others escaped? It's what I said last time, "Sometimes God calms the storm; sometimes God calms the sailor." Both are examples of the mercy of God.

1. Always give thanks! (Habakkuk 3:17-19)

¹⁷ Though the fig tree may not blossom,
Nor fruit be on the vines;
Though the labor of the olive may fail,
And the fields yield no food;
Though the flock may be cut off from the fold,
And there be no herd in the stalls—
¹⁸ Yet I will rejoice in the LORD,
I will joy in the God of my salvation.
¹⁹ The LORD God is my strength;
He will make my feet like deer's *feet*,
And He will make me walk on my high hills.

It's a hymn of faith!