

"Though the rain comes and the winds beat against that house, it won't collapse, because it is built on rock." - Matthew 7:25



TYPHOON YOLANDA

Typhoons are just part of life in the Philippines. Every year at least a dozen or so storms find their way into our neck of the woods - but we are blessed here in Himamaylan because they rarely if ever hit us directly. Even Super Typhoon Pablo was heading right for us last year - miraculously it did nothing. Just as the storm approached it seemed to melt away to nothing. Yet even Pablo was nothing compared to the terrifying power of typhoon Yolanda / Haiyan that rolled towards us a little over a week ago.

Super Typhoon Yolanda moved towards Leyte (*the Island to the east of us*) as a strong category 5 storm with top winds over 380kph. It made landfall as the

strongest storm ever to hit anywhere in history! It left the Island of Leyte devastated heading west towards us on the Island of Negros. It moved into our area about midday. We lost power almost immediately (*our transformer died with a spectacular bang and dazzling display of sparks*). Yet even though the winds were strong there was very little damage. By 3pm the worst of the storm had passed. Pastor Bem and I went out to check on the church from the storm. By the untouched and no one

I thought that would the news reports began the storm had wrought The Island of Leyte in some estimates as many the wake of Yolanda's fury. It was the worst natural disaster in the history of the Philippines.

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When we gathered together that Sunday to worship - one of the men from the church whose name is 'Jun' - came up to me with a look of deep concern. He was from Leyte and had not heard from his family since the storm hit. All power lines were down / and all communications had been severed to the area. The last text he received from them was during the storm saying their house had been destroyed. The decision was quickly reached to send out a small team to check on Jun's family and see if there was anything we could do to help!

We drove 6 hours to the city of Cebu - packed with bags full of basic supplies (*food / hygiene / and medicine*). We got on the 3 hour boat ride to Ormoc, Leyte having no idea what to expect when we arrived. It was night by the time the boat pulled into the port. The only lights emanating from the city came from the few boats docked at the pier - casting an eerie yellow glow on an otherwise pitch black backdrop. There was a large crowd of people - most looking to get out of town - packed into the bus terminal just outside the dock. We were able to hire a small trike (*motorcycle with a side car*) to take us the 15km to Jun's community. As we began to wind our way through the rubble and debris that had been quickly shoved to the side in an effort to open a path on the otherwise impassable road - it began to sink in just how much destruction was all around us. We stopped by a group of men huddled around the fluorescent hue of a flashlight - they were now the equivalent of a local gas station.





For roughly 5 times the regular cost we were able to get the two liters we needed to make it to our destination. Winding around fallen power poles and under low hanging power lines draped across the street we made it most of the way - but the trike could only take us so far. Eventually we got to a place where the road had not yet been cleared. We were forced to continue on foot winding over / under / and around fallen trees and twisted metal roofs blown onto the road by the ferocious winds. When we finally arrived at Jun's house we were elated to find everyone was ok! They had huddled in a corner as their cement house shook from the violent winds / and one by one the GI sheets above them tore away. They hid their one week newborn under the cement counter of the kitchen sink and prayed. Although their house had been severely damaged they had made it through unscathed!



The next morning we got up and got busy rebuilding. We helped put the walls back up on their outhouse. We were also able to put tarps on their roof to keep out the rain (*only two pieces of GI were left on the house after the storm*). In the afternoon we went into the city to try to buy more tarps. There were long lines for everything - gas / medicine / hardware. Desperate people waiting - often in vain - to get very limited supplies at inflated prices. In fact we were not able to find ANY tarps.

We were also amazed by the level of destruction now clearly visible in the light of day. Concrete and steel buildings mangled and twisted like they were made of paper. Power lines and utility poles - strewn all over the roads. Even the 100' metal towers of the high voltage power lines had been bent over and mangled like they were made of aluminum foil. Any house made of wood or bamboo was gone - only the slab of the house remained. Houses that were still standing had no roofs. Piles of sheet metal littered the ground everywhere. There were even a few houses that ONLY had roofs left. Their house itself was nowhere to be found - just a roof lying orphaned on the dirt! All of the trees were

of them was blistering winds. It was only by were so few of the deaths that was hit by

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gone. Even the mightiest not able to withstand the The mountains stood bare! the Grace of God that there casualties in this city (*most came from a different city 15ft storm surge.*)

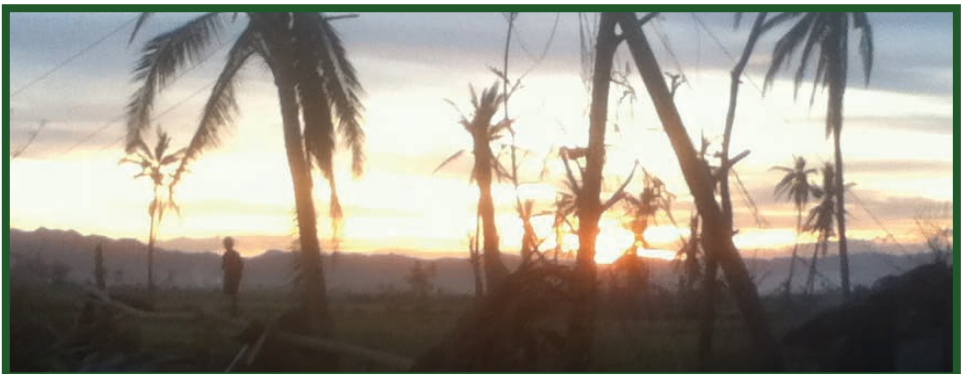
When we got down and had a Bible study with his family. In the wake of destruction left by Yolanda - they were VERY open to hear about Jesus. We talked about how to get to heaven -

Matthew 19:26. We also talked about how God uses trials to get us to listen to Him. The reality is when we have money / food / and no problems we tend to forget about God. It is when life falls apart - when the storms of life hit - that we are quick to call out on His name!

As we got up before dawn Thursday morning to take the slow boat back to Cebu - I was struck by the beauty around me. It was a perfectly clear moonless night. Without the lights of a city to dull them - the stars above shown brilliantly. Little fire flies darted among the silhouettes of fallen trees. Smiling I thought - the storm may have extinguished the lights of men - but it only made God's lights brighter! Lord willing we will make the trek back to Leyte in the next few weeks. Pastor Bem and a group of men from the church will bring additional supplies to help the people there in Jun's community get back on their feet. Giving loving hands to help mend the marred lives of those who had to endure this tragedy. Continuing to share with them the most important thing of all - the Love of Jesus!

PRAYER REQUESTS...

- Raising up pastors - transition the church
- All those effected by Typhoon Yolanda
- Story of Jesus outreach - 25,000 copies!
- The radio - Franchise / new repeater
- Marriage - closer to Jesus / each other
- Flexibility and humility - be full of Jesus!



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