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Preaching Through A Storm

This is an amazing book that highlights the struggles that most seminary students are not taught about pastoring. The author H. Beecher Hicks Jr speaks about his experience going through a “storm” with his church. The book is written to pastors and preachers about pastoral leadership and he specifically addresses many things in the “black” church. He opens up about his personal storms as well as the congregational storms. He goes from speaking about members of the board stopping him from doing things to getting personal death threats and having to leave town for his safety. The overall objective or purpose of this book is to encourage pastors to continue to go through the storm and not give up. Through the preaching God will be faithful and speak.

The author is writing specifically to the black community or “black church”. The writing style is perfect for this audience, the words are not so eloquent that you have to look up every other word but he is also speaking very maturely. The content he is addressing in this book is very specific and I would say he pinpoints problems instead of generalizing them. He is also speaking to pastors and although he is addressing specifically the “black” church, anyone can take away wisdom from this book. There are many strengths that you can take away and apply to not only ministry but life in general.

One of the strengths that you can take away can be found in chapter 2 “Predicting a Storm”. He speaks on learning that the church board can be both a blessing and a cursing. It teaches the importance of knowing who is really by your side. This is one of the takeaways that I got from this book and that is praying for the right team to be around you. Things were going smooth for him until someone started to go against the vision of the house. Having the wrong people around you can cause the vision that God has given you to either be delayed or completely shut down. I would apply this to ministry by structuring a system that would not allow something like that to happen. It would not be set up as a way where the pastor does not have a final say because it is God that gave the pastor the vision and instructions for the church, not the people.

Another strength in this book is the sermon “How to Silence a Preacher”. This sermon is so relevant because we see what he addresses in it happening today. He addresses the way congregants and society tells the preacher to shut their mouths in “polite” ways. He quotes “the reason the society at large wants to silence the preacher may well be because the preacher is under orders to speak a word about morality.” This might be the biggest take away for me in this book, to have a backbone as I preach and teach. In today's society we have what is called “cancel culture” and if we do or say anything that is against the culture’s grain, we are immediately canceled or cut off from society. I need to have the fear of God in me rather than the fear of man in me. I would apply this practically by setting up teams that would teach in depth about things like politics and social injustices through the eyes of the Bible. Teaching why certain views are not only wrong but against the Word of God.

The third strength can be found in the sermon that spoke to me for my current “storm” and that is “Concerning This House”. Hicks spoke about the issue with the people not wanting to build a new church because the building was built by slave’s hands. He said it was sad that the ruling on that decision had to be from people outside of the church. In the sermon he says he was curious on why Solomon would start to build God’s House when he did not have any of the resources. Solomon had to go out and fetch for them elsewhere with thousands of men. Hicks concludes that even though everything around Solomon said “don’t do it” he did it anyway because God gave him a word to do it. The takeaway is not to let anyone or anything around you stop you from doing what God said to do, God knows the current situation and if He says to do something then He will provide. Practically, I would set a standard that we would not alter what God’s plan is, we would simply only figure the best way to establish it.

One critique I have about the reading was the huge emphasis on the black community. Of course we have to address cultural issues but it tends to become our focus and we stay stuck in the past. One example is when he starts to use the words “the black church”. Jesus did not die for a black, white, asian or hispanic church but died for the people as a whole. I’ve noticed that because we stay stuck on culture, we ourselves have established it to be normal to see full white, black, etc, churches. He basically started to address the political issues of racism and tied it back to slavery. I could have read that part wrong but it does seem as if they are still stuck on the “slave mentality”. Yes, slavery and everything that had anything to do with that was wrong but Jesus came to set the captives free and we can’t keep blaming the “white man” for our setbacks. This is part of the reason why minorities seem as if they are constantly going through a storm and love to quote “though i walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil”. It looks like they never see the word “through” and think they are constantly in the valley.

