



a case for Bad Choices
"Since the Storm"
October 2, 2016
Courage Church, Detroit, MI

Today we are wrapping up our mini series "a case for bad choices." I have gotten a lot of great feedback from people about this series, that it has been life and healing... and I hope that today is no different.

One thing that we have been saying this whole series, is that our lives tend to be defined by our

highs, and our lows. Those moments that we achieve amazing victories... and those moments that we are struck with un-comprehensible tragedies. But it is not so much about what happens to us, as much as it is how we respond.

We paint the life we live on this earth, through response.

So lets look together one more time at our foundational scripture for this series. Please open your bibles with me to 1 Peter 5:10.

I think that I told you a couple weeks ago, but this verse is one of those verses that I take great comfort in, and yet am at the same time greatly disturbed by, and hopefully you will see why.

"after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you." -1 Peter 5:10

The word Peter uses here that is translated as establish is means to lay the foundation or to make stable. It's the same word that the writer of Hebrews (1:10) uses when saying "You, Lord, *laid the foundation* of the earth in the beginning"

So for reasons beyond any humans capacity to understand, in the same way that God laid the foundation of the earth, our foundation seems built on the moments that we don't understand. Why would it be this way? Why build a foundation on suffering?

Dr. Paul David Tripp explains it like this:

"God will take you where you have not chosen to go, in order to produce in you that which you can not produce on your own. Do you know what the bible calls that? Grace. But it's not a cool drink. It's not a soft pillow. There are times when we are crying out "where is the grace of God, when we are getting it... It's not the grace of relief, that is to come. Right now what we need is the grace of refinement."

I love that perspective. The grace of refinement. Refinement is the process of removing impurities or unwanted elements from a substance... so it can be used for the purpose it was created for.

We talked about it thoroughly when we studied the sermon on the mount.

God is leading us, all of us, somewhere that we can not go on our own. He is refining us all... And if you would allow me to take you on a little journey, I would like to show you how some of the ways that he refined Dawn and I, particularly over the four year period that we lived in New York City.

In the fall of 2012, **there was a storm**. The city closed all of the bridges. The mayor got on TV and told everybody in the Rockaways and other flood zones that they needed to leave immediately.

Nobody left.

Among nobody, included our family who had taken up residency in the Rockaway's only two months earlier. We had planned on leaving... But then discovered that everyone one of our neighbors was staying this time after the same warning turned out to be a false alarm the year before.

This time, it was not a false alarm.

We watched outside our window as our street became the ocean. On our street it is only four blocks between the ocean and the bay, and eventually, the water rose so much on both sides that bay and the ocean met.

They became one.

And we were right in the middle of it.

My wife and I gathered the kids together in our third floor apartment and we sat with candles lit in the darkness in our bedroom after the power had gone out. At one point in the night, all around the same time and basically in unison rang the sound of thousands of car alarms all being triggered at the same time as the water crept into the vehicles.

Do you ever sit in peace and quiet and suddenly your neighbors car alarm goes off? Such a disruption to your peaceful life. You want nothing more than for the beeping to stop, for the noise to go away.

But it didn't go away that night.

As the water rose, and the batteries grew faint, the alarms became distorted. It no longer was one frequency, but a range of frequencies caused by these electrical machines completely under water, all symbolizing the minutes left in each particular vehicles life.

And eventually the sounds faded. Each and every vehicle in the neighborhood had met its demise.

But they were just cars.

Out our windows in every direction were homes burning to the ground. The fact that all the streets were oceans made it impossible to get fire fighters there for quite some time, so the fire spread and spread. The fear of the spreading fires reaching us kept me up most of the night, but eventually I fell asleep with the rest of my family.

The next morning, when we woke up, and went outside, we felt like we were characters on the movie "Book of Eli"

The whole town was now filled with sand. Every basement flooded, many first floors flooded, some buildings had damage all the way on the second floor. Every storefront destroyed. Boats crashed into homes, cars flipped upside down. There was no phone service, or power anywhere. Looters came out as soon the water cleared and went to town on what hadn't been destroyed by the flood. Everyone was on high alert, anxious... aware. Always awake.

Firefighters were still putting out fires the next day and even days later.

The aerial view on google earth of our neighborhood showed only sand and destruction where streets and grass and life was the day before.

pictures showed only empty lots where the picturesque neighborhoods of breezy point were the day before, after over 100 homes all burnt down.

But as we walked the sandy streets and gathered our thoughts around the realization that life was going to be a lot different for a while, another picture began to be painted.

One of unity. Of community.

Of neighbors coming out of their powerless homes and working together, one home at a time to get the sand out, syphoning the water out, to save the homes before the mold set in.

Suddenly, something about our bizarre little town seemed to have gotten stronger.

And just like when the ocean met the bay, the town's people came together.

They became one.

We all needed each other and we all wanted to help each other.

A few months later, I was sitting at the beach one warm afternoon, when I overheard some locals talking, and one said the the other, "*Since the storm*, this town just hasn't been the same."

I walked to a hardware store one day to get a screwdriver, and the hardware store was closed. A man standing outside said to me, "since the storm, they haven't been able to open back up, I doubt they ever will!" and last time I asked my neighbor how he was doing he said "we haven't been able to use our basement since the storm!"

Our lives tend to be defined most by our victories and our tragedies.. And how we respond to both. This entire town describes their lives on a timeline based on Hurricane Sandy, similar to how we describe history as being "B.C." Or "A.D."

Their lives were one way.
Now their lives are a different way.

Since the storm.

I spoke to an elderly lady walking on the beach in tears the day after the storm and she said these words to me...

"Haven't we been through enough?"

You see the Rockaways are home to more firefighters and police officers than anywhere in New York City... So when terrorists attacked the World Trade Center on September 11, and it was the firefighters and officers who rushed in when everyone else rushed out, it was Rockaway that lost more fathers, brothers, uncles, sons, and friends, than any other community in all of New York City.

Just two months later, on November 12, 2001, American Airlines flight 587 actually crashed into the Belle Harbor neighborhood of the Rockaways.

Everyone on board, and five residents on the ground were all killed.

Haven't they been through enough?

On the end of our street was a small memorial to one of the firefighters who had passed away on 9/11. His brother lived a couple houses down from us, and when the storm ripped the memorial out from the ground and carried it across the island, you better believe that brother woke up the next morning and went looking for that memorial.

He found it.
Then he set it up in his front yard.

Why?

Because it's more than just a memorial to a man who sacrificed everything selflessly.

It's a reminder to everyone, that "we've been through enough."

And we need those reminders sometimes.

Reminders that "hey, we really went through it back there." But for whatever reason, we made it through, and we are here now, for this moment, in this time. In this community, for these people, for this reason.

There is a story in the bible about a King. He loved throwing extravagant parties that lasted for months at a time. One day, in the midst of one of these parties when the king's heart was "merry with wine" he sent for his wife to come and dance before all of the king's friends at his party. It is not hard to figure out what kind of "dancing" he was expecting of her, because she was very upset that he asked it.

Not wanting to be humiliated at the hand of her drunk husband, the queen refused. The King, in his anger, decided that she was no longer fit to be Queen, so he sent her away and decided to begin a search for a new queen. So the king's officers gathered all of the virgins, and among them was Esther, a Jew, but she did not disclose her kindred, at the advice of her uncle, a man named Mordecai.

Each of these women prepared for months and months, leading up to their one night with the King. Whoever pleased the King most would be made queen, and as fate would have it, Esther won.

The king appointed a man named **Haman, *the Agagite***, as his right hand man, above everyone else. One day, Haman went out and demanded that everyone bow down and pay homage to him, just as the king had commanded, but Esther's stubborn uncle Mordecai refused, saying that he is a Jew, and would not bow. Haman was so mad, the text says "Haman was filled with fury. But he disdained to lay hands on Mordecai alone. So, as they had made known to him the people of Mordecai, Haman sought to destroy all the Jews, the people of Mordecai, throughout the whole kingdom of Ahasuerus." (Esther 3:5-6)

Perhaps the king would not have gone along with it, had he known that his wife was Jewish...

but you live and you learn.

When Mordecai and Esther talked about the gravity of the situation, Esther tried to explain to her uncle that she could not simply go and ask the king to stop Haman. She explained that she had not seen her husband in over a month, and if anyone, even her, approaches him and he does not want to see that person, they were immediately put to death. In other words, the stakes were high, but Mordecai responded by he himself raising the stakes, even more:

"For if you keep silent at this time, relief and deliverance will rise for the Jews from another place, but you and your father's house will perish. And who knows whether you have not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?"

I can imagine Esther thinking in her mind after the inspirational speech:

"Such a time as this? Uncle. You got us into this mess. Because you were disrespectful to your leader, he now wants to kill us all."

But somebody had to do *something*.

The night of the storm I continuously reflected on how much of a mistake it was turning out to be, having moved to the Rockaways. And we certainly should not have stayed for the storm. It was starting to look like the whole thing was just a series of mistakes.

Why did we move to the Rockaways? Everyone thought it was a bad decision...

It is a long way from the church in Manhattan.

It is in Queens, which was probably reason enough not to move.

They get Hurricanes sometimes.

suddenly I agreed with them.

Why did we stay home during a Hurricane, when the Mayor told everyone on the peninsula to get off.

Really bad choice.

The next morning I realized that it maybe wasn't our decision at all.

Maybe we were there for such a time as this.

Maybe God used our stubborn and insistent hearts as another chance to show up, not just in our town, but in our own lives, in our story and in the lives of people he would place before us.

We got to be a part of something amazing that took place in the weeks that followed the storm, We got to rebuild peoples houses, we got to pray with people and comfort people and feed people... we were able to be on the front lines of the restoration.

Some things are within your control.

Others are not.

I think of Dawn's sister, Natalie. Who in a matter of only a few months went through a brutal separation and divorce, and in the middle of that her little two year old was diagnosed with leukemia.

And thank God that The cancer was treatable. but it seemed like they walked from one storm to the next during the two years that followed, so We encouraged her to move to New York with us. To start over again, in a place where you can be anyone you want to be... To allow something new to be birthed out of all the pain that she had fought through over the last few years.

Experiencing all of that must have made it easy for her, then, when this single mom moved with her two children to Rockaway only a week before the storm. It must have made it easy for this single mom who had rented a basement apartment in the house we rent from to be deemed homeless when the apartment was utterly destroyed two days before move-in.

Hasn't she been through enough?

I guess that is what James meant when he said:

"Dear brothers and sisters, whenever trouble comes your way, let it be an opportunity for joy. For when your faith is tested, your endurance has a chance to grow. So let it grow, for when your endurance is fully developed, you will be strong in character and ready for anything." -James 1:2-4 (NLT)

When I think about what happened to Dawn's sister... would she have been able to handle being homeless in New York? New York is already a beast... but if she wouldn't have just gone through everything that she went through before the storm, would she have been able to handle the storm? No.

I knew her before it all happened. She would not have been able to. She probably would have moved back home in the second week.

But now to this day she is still there, she finished college, and she is teaching her first year in the New York City public school system, living the dream that God birthed in her heart when you stepped out in faith.

Nobody likes the valley moments. Nobody likes them. Nobody likes to go through hard times. But James tells us that when you do, because YOU WILL... rejoice. Because it produces something in you!

Everyone wants to be on the mountaintop. They want the high. I don't know anyone who will tell you, "I love the valley moments" "I love feeling like things couldn't possibly get any lower... any worse"

but the truth is, where mountaintops make for great destinations with amazing views, when you get to the top you will find that not much grows there without a lot of work.

Fruit... it grows in the valley's.

Vegetation is promenant in the valley's.

and so it is in our lives.

IN THE MIDST OF PAIN

I have this old acoustic guitar that that we painted and I stuck this old picture on it, mainly to remind me of where I came from... Of the memories I have growing up. In this particular picture are: Andrew, Drew, Britton, Myself, Dave, Tony, John, Jordan, and Michael.

Expecting our third daughter any day, on a Saturday morning that summer I took my wife on a walk along the ocean. We walked for miles, and just talked and talked, dreamed about the new baby coming, and where our lives were going. While we were walking, one of the friends from the picture, Tony, called me. I did not answer. I was with my wife and when you have two tiny kids, moments alone with your wife are like gold. You protect them. I continued to feel more vibrations from my phone as we walked but left it in my pocket. When we got near our house I finally got it out, expecting just to see that I had a missed call and voicemail, I now had

about 8 different text messages from different people all saying basically the same thing, the one from Tony read "Hey man, Drew passed away last night." Another friend's text said "Jacob tell me this is not real. This can't be real. I just talked to him."

To say I was devastated would be the biggest understatement in the world. Of all of my friends, Drew was the one person that had no enemies. Everybody loved him. He was kind, generous, and a joy to be around. I think he picked the most expensive gift on our wedding registry and got that because he knew no one else would. He just loved going overboard for the people he loved.

After he died, I took a picture of my guitar with that picture tapped to it and posted it on Facebook. It didn't take long before Facebook was filled with similar pictures of Drew, because there were more memories than any photo could contain but we do our best to remember with things like pictures. Though they will never actually take us back to those times, for some, especially in this situation, those old still frames of the way things used to be are all they have left.

Now I want to remind you about what I told you about two weeks ago... about our youngest daughter.

Because only a few days after he died, she was born.

and as you all know, she was delivered at our house... by me... and no doctors. But that wasn't the way we had planned it. It wasn't what we wanted. We wanted to deliver with a midwife... The midwife just didn't make it on time to deliver.

One of the jobs of the husband in a home birth is to cook everyone dinner after the delivery... but I figured that since I did the midwife's job, it was only fair that they did my job. So I made them cook us dinner.

but here is the point... that moment was total chaos... but then Suddenly, Fiona was in my arms. Breathing. Crying. Alive.

So I had this amazing opportunity to deliver my daughter in our house. Nobody was there, just my wife and I. A moment that went from the highest stress level filled with more uncertainty than anybody could possibly experience, immediately followed by the greatest sense of pride that I have ever experienced in my entire life.

The contrasting realities of those few weeks will forever stay in my mind. Nothing has ever hit me as hard as hearing about my friend's death, and not being able to go home for the funeral due to it being so close to our baby's due date weighed heavily on me before she arrived. But then suddenly, in the midst of death, and sorrow, and pain, and sadness, and uncertainty, and end,

Was beginning
And excitement
And joy
And anticipation
And love
And life.

Because that is what Jesus does, he makes all things new. As the prophet Isaiah says, he gives you

"beauty for ashes"

And as much as my heart ached every day for my friend leading up to my daughter's birth, when it came time to have her I wasn't thinking about anything but her.

Rewind to just a few months earlier, I went with my wife (and dragged our two small daughters) to an ultrasound tech in Brooklyn, to see pictures of our third little baby growing inside her belly. It was one of those doctor visits that literally lasted for hours and it did not take long for our small children to become incredibly restless, and my stress began to rise. Finally they called Dawn in, but would not let me go with her.

So now I am all alone with our two restless little girls running around, climbing, jumping, screaming, crying, and making me crazy, when a lady

who had to of been at least 80 years old came up to me, and started asking questions about our daughters.

How old are they?

What are their names?

Are you raising them here in Brooklyn? Is that why you named one of them Brooklyn?

Right as the conversation was drawing to a close, and I am working to ease out of it and get back to my chaos, she looked at me with eyes that had seen more life than just about anybody I've ever met, and put my entire world into perspective when she said, "**sir, you are luckier than the guy who won 365 million dollars in the lottery last night.**"

The chaos didn't matter.

She reached into that chaos and she pulled out a reality.

That God entrusted me with something so much bigger than myself.

That I was entrusted with the lives of these precious children.

God trusted us, with life beyond our own.

and I can't help but wonder, when I think about that old lady at the ultrasound office in Brooklyn... where was she coming from when you said such a dramatic statement?

Was she saying it out of the memory of raising her own children?

Or out of remorse for not raising her children right, but trying to give me a perspective that ensured I would?

Or could it be she never had kids, but she always wanted them? and seeing me with them both reminded her of what she did not have, and caused her to go out of her way to remind me of what I do have.

Because it is easy to miss what you have been given, when you are chasing them around the doctors office. It is easy to miss that when everyone is looking at you thinking "that has to be the worst parent in the world."

and trust me, I feel that way, a lot.

I start to get discouraged, like I'm always so distracted I can't possibly be a good dad, but then my iPhone runs out of disk space. I know that this may sound like a strange wake up call, but its value is priceless.

See until recently, iPhones didn't sync automatically with your computer... and the phones with any decent amount of storage space was way more expensive... so I would constantly run out. and when that would happen,

I would plug my phone into my laptop and dump all of my photos, making room to capture the next few months of our lives. And the pictures would pop up on the computer screen as they imported... so as pictures dump onto my hard drive at more than a picture per second I am granted a front row seat to the last three or so months of our lives, if nothing less than to remind me that there are tens of thousands of those frames, frozen in time to remind me that I am doing just fine.

That my kids are going to be okay. That my family is going to be okay.

That I am going to be okay.

That we are creating new and fresh and memorable moments every single day, and that as long as my phone keeps filling with memories that have to be dumped, memories are being made that will always be remembered.

Because sometimes it feels like we just put our kids through so much. We moved them across the country.

But they will be fine.

It was so hard for us to leave New York... to tell our kids they were moving away from their cousins... away from their kids church that they loved...

it was hard for us to leave New York... because we had invested our lives into building something, that all of the sudden we weren't going to be around to see the fruit of all of that labor. We didn't want to do anything but that. We didn't plan on doing anything but that. We worked hard to create

something there. We lived through financial impossibilities where God miraculously showed up and carried us...

We had lived through literal hurricanes...

Leaving there after all that was hard. And it's easy to start to wonder... "God, why did you put us through all of that, there, only to move us on to something else right as it felt like the church is on the cusp of something amazing? Why go through all of that? Why lay that foundation? And then I realized, **that is the Jesus Foundation.**

It is the same way that God established the whole world, by creating life out of chaos, and it is the same way that Jesus established us as his bride, by bringing life to the whole world by going through chaos on our behalf. Becoming the chaos on our behalf.

It is the Jesus foundation.

There is this beautiful moment in John chapter 13 when Jesus is with his disciples having dinner. And the bible says that he knew his time was coming, the time that he would die... And so we find him in his place, finishing his dinner with his disciples..

He lays aside his outer garments,

And he takes a towel and wraps it around his waste, poured water into a basin and he began washing the disciples feet.

And when he got to Peter, Peter said to Jesus "you want to wash my feet? No, Jesus you shall not wash my feet" he was basically saying "I should be washing your feet" but Jesus responds to him in such an amazing way (v7)... He says "**You don't understand what I am doing, but someday you will.**"

and we read that and it is so easy to not think anything of it, and miss that Jesus is telling his best friend that there is a much bigger picture than just the current circumstances.

Yes, it would make much more sense for Peter to wash Jesus' feet. In that moment. But Jesus set the example of serving from the lowest position even while you are in the midst of a trial. Jesus knew where he was going, and he loved and served his way there.

That had to be the foundation, and it changed the whole world.

And suddenly... when you think of it like that... We have something worth suffering for. We have something worth working for, worth going where God calls us for, worth leaving our comfort zone for... Worth leaving the life you know and love for. The gospel, you guys, is the bottom line. What Jesus did..

And if it means telling more people about Jesus, sign me up.

And he may put you through a refinement process but the truth is that at the end of it he will use every last bit of your refined life.

Let me give you an example from history. It is a story about a fire.

On **October 8th, 1871**, a fire was believed to of started in the barn of Mr. Patrick O'Leary, and spread causing what we now know to be the Great Chicago Fire. A man named Horatio Gates Spafford was a wealthy business man in Chicago during that time, and had most of his assets invested in real estate in Chicago. He and his family lost almost everything to that fire, but like a good businessman, he slowly began to rebuild.

Two years later, after fighting and fighting and rebuilding and rebuilding, Spafford believed that it was time to take a real family vacation, to stop thinking about the fire and the business and everything that they had lost, and start focusing on what they do have. He chose England after learning that his friend D.L. Moody would be preaching there that fall.

Just before they departed, something came up in his business that he had to tend to, so he sent his wife and four daughters ahead, promising he would not be far behind. So the 5 Spafford women boarded a ship called the **Ville Du Havre**, and headed for England.

In a tragedy of the worst kind, the Ville Du Havre crashed into an iron sailing vessel, and hundreds of people were killed.

Horatio received word of the crash, but was given no information for quite some time before finally receiving a telegram from his wife, two words long.

"Saved Alone."

His four daughters were all gone, and his wife was waiting on the other side of the Atlantic, all alone for him.

He set sail himself for England to meet and hold his wife. Utterly heartbroken. Devastated. Destroyed.

It was while he was at sea that he penned the words to the song "Ville Du Havre" named after the ship that took his daughters away from him forever. The ship that he put them on but did not board himself.

The song is now known as **"It is well with my soul."**

"When peace like a river, attendeth my way
When sorrows like sea billows roll
Whatever my lot, though has taught me to say,
It is well, it is well, with my soul."

He took the worst situation that could have possibly happened to him, and he turned it into a song that the whole world now knows and takes comfort in.

I wrote a song once...

That may not have had the reach that "Ville Du Havre" has had, it had a reach that I never would have expected.

While living in Los Angeles, we did an illustrated sermon geared toward the church changing the way it presented itself to the people who needed it more than anything. We called it "Alter." For that illustrated sermon, I wrote a song called "Something Must Change" challenging Christians to change

themselves if they are going to actually make a difference in their friends lives. The response that day was amazing, but didn't come close to what was to come.

After my friend passed away, his family requested to play that song at his funeral. They had everybody sit quietly and listen to the words as it played.

I was not there, but suddenly I was there.

And suddenly, just like what happened with our discipleship video that we talked about last week...

a piece of art that was created for an entirely different purpose, was now serving a new purpose. And was in a small way helping bring hope and inspiration to a group of people that it was not necessarily intended for in the first place. And that day the gospel went out to hundreds and hundreds of people who loved that young man, in the midst of the devastation of losing him. And God use my hand print as his vessel.

That is the mystery of art.
It knows no boundaries.

That is the mystery of a life that Jesus has ahold of, and the fruit that it bares. It knows no boundaries. It can be in a million places and one all at the same time. It can be at a funeral bringing comfort, and at a birth, bringing newness, all at the same time.

And that is the kind of impact that I want my life to have. That is the kind of impact that I want this church to have in our city and in our world.

And who knows if we were not created for such a time as this?

Remember the story of Esther? Haman was an *Agagite*. Mordecai a Jew. In the book of Samuel there is this moment when God commands Saul (a Jew) to wipe the *Agagites* off the face of the planet. Saul did not do it. He wiped out most of them, but he saved some of the best livestock and spared King Agag which allowed the Agagite family line to continue.

And so generations later, the Jews, (Sauls people) were now being threatened with extinction at the hand of an *Agagite*, a people group that was not even suppose to be around anymore.

Why does that matter to this story?

Haman should have been a constant reminder to the Jewish people that they did not do what they were commanded, a scar, if you will. A scar that really did come back to haunt them, but all God saw was another chance to show up, to restore it all, to write a better story.

and I don't have time to tell you the entire story of Esther... but when you go home this week, read it. Read the whole thing, because it is amazing. But read it, knowing this:

The entire event in the book of Esther could have been avoided had Saul done what he was commanded. It could have all been avoided had Mordecai shown respect to Haman, or had Esther been honest about being Jewish from the beginning (what kind of a husband wipes out the entire race of his wife), but God took all of the shortcomings of his people, and he still crafted a beautiful story of redemption out of it.

And the same God who can take a drunken king who divorces his wife because she won't dance for his friends, and turns it into a such a time as this moment for a young lady who otherwise would be invisible, and the same God who promised those who mourn in Zion that he will give them beauty for ashes, is the same God who is with you and I today, in the moment when you hold your baby for he first time, and he is with you, at every funeral... Through every divorce, and at every wedding. in every transition and every promotion. In every storm, and every sickness. He is there with every lonely heart each night as they fall asleep broken, praying to wake up whole.

And He is with them in the morning, when they wake up, still feeling broken.

He is in with us in the quiet of our peaceful homes that are sometimes disrupted by the sound of the neighbors car alarm going off in the middle of the night and waking up our kids.

Because sometimes we need the disruptions. Sometimes we need the changes... Sometimes we need the storms, and the amazing image the next day of a city fallen but a hope rising on the realization that God is about to bring something beautiful out of everything you just watched burn.

Because how will you will ever experience beauty for ashes if nothing ever burns?

and even as it is burning, he is with us, painting a picture more grand than our imaginations can possibly grasp out of the things that we thought were going to end us, but in the end are what carry us.

because God is in the business of restoring people back to him.

He created life out of chaos, and can bring life to your messes.

SINCE THE STORM

I remember the spring after the Hurricane, ordering some pasta from a little italian restaurant on beach 129th street. A pasta that many would agree, in all seriousness, had not been as good since the storm.

My bike had been rusted over from the Hurricane, but it was so nice out that i convinced myself to try and ride it. The rusty chain fell off, and I walked it the rest of the way there, but still I knew I was a bit early, so I crossed the street to go look at the advertisements in the window for the homes for rent and for sale in my neighborhood.

As I was walking, I looked through the window of a place that looked brand new, it was a little coffee shop/bakery and it looked amazing. Quickly I dropped my bike and threw open the front door asking the lady at the counter, "is this place new? I've never seen it before... it looks amazing!" and her response?

"no, we've been here for years..."

but *since the storm....*

we redid everything.”