

One New Podcast for the Preacher

Floodlines: The story of an unnatural disaster;
<https://www.theatlantic.com/podcasts/floodlines/>

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I am a prolific consumer of podcasts. I find them immensely helpful for preaching because they are designed to be listened to rather than read or seen. If forced to name my all-time favorite podcast, I would probably choose *Floodlines*. This eight-part series from *The Atlantic* tells the story of what happened to the people of New Orleans in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. We follow those who lived through the catastrophe of the levees breaking and, through their lives, look at what it all says about America.

We hear the voices of people who lived through it, such as Alice Craft-Kerney, a nurse at Charity Hospital, and Fred Johnson, who took refuge in the Hyatt Hotel and got deputized to protect it. (“The level of fear that was in that room, I was trying not to visualize it,” he says.)

Chaos shapes the story: chaos generated by extreme weather and human-made chaos. The podcast invites us to ponder why the negative consequences of that chaos do not fall equally on the residents of New Orleans.

The podcast explores issues of systemic racism, media consumption and bias, and how the federal government responds to national disasters in a way that never strays too far from the stories of people who lived through it all.

The podcast’s host, Vann R. Newkirk II, is a revelation. He is wise and warm as he spins a compelling story. The podcast is beautifully edited and scored by New Orleans jazz trumpeter Christian Scott aTunde Adjuah.

Much of the power of this podcast lies in the way it’s able to link the big picture to more personal, intimate stories. It is masterful storytelling and a great resource for the teacher and preacher. I invited my congregation to listen to it and then I hosted a discussion. The podcast also provides compelling stories that can be integrated into sermons that touch on chaos, fear, the fragility and power of community, death and rebirth.