

Oklahoma Pastor Gives Prophetic Message Before Deadly Tornado Strikes

Elevate Church Pastor Steven Earp didn't expect his Sunday sermon to be a prophetic message—at least not so soon.

Sunday's sermon, however—the first in a series—turned out to be a prelude of things to come for his congregation and the town of Moore, Okla. On Monday afternoon, what some are calling one of the worst storms in Oklahoma history left a huge path of destruction in its wake, leaving the town of a little more than 55,000 to mourn its dead and to seek God's comfort.

Earp's message was titled, "Strength From Struggles: Preparing for Struggles" (click on download latest sermon). He didn't realize the connection until mid-afternoon Tuesday.

"It didn't even dawn on me about that for a long time," says Earp, whose church is 19 months old. "I talked about how to prepare for struggles to come. It's amazing. The thing that jumps out specifically about it was that I said, 'While we're in this life, we're going to have struggles. If we're not prepared for them emotionally, the struggles are going to be intense.'

"I know that you can't prepare for something like this. But the big idea behind my message was when preparation meets problems, and how you can overcome them. It's going to obviously take a while to get over this, but this city is blessed, and we will recover."

The National Weather Service reported Tuesday that the tornado, which spanned 2 miles wide, was categorized as an

EF5, the topmost catastrophic tornado there is, with winds up to 200 mph.

Early Tuesday morning, Earp said his home didn't suffer a power outage, but he and his family were without running water. A few members of his congregation that had lost their homes in the storms were staying with the Earps.

"There are a number of people from our church that lost their homes. People are pretty numb right now," he says. "They realize just how close they came to meeting Jesus. I've lived here all of my life, and this is way worse than anything that has happened here during my lifetime.

"I think it's the hardest on people that have just moved here in the last five or 10 years. Oklahomans know the drill, and it's pretty much the norm with these tornadoes. The biggest thing for me is when these things happen, the landscape changes. What was once there isn't there anymore."

A family from Earp's congregation, the Smiths, avoided tragedy Monday when 7-year-old Kye Smith escaped with only minor injuries when his school, Briarwood Elementary, was flattened. [Click here](#) to find out what Kye's mother said his teacher did to save his life.

Earp says he has received dozens of phone calls and text messages since the storm hit, many from pastors throughout the country asking how they can help with the devastation.

For those looking to help, whether physically or by donations, please visit the Elevate Church website at .