

I've been feeling extremely tired for more than 2 weeks, so tired that when I leave work in the evening I have to ask God to PLEASE allow me to just put one foot in front of the other, so I can just make it to the train and get home. Every step came with heavy breathing, wheezing and more exhaustion. Saturday afternoon (3/14) I began coughing and wheezing louder. By Monday morning, I had developed a gurgle; it reminded me of that same gurgle I heard in my dear mother, when she was getting close to her transition.

With coronavirus being the topic of most conversations, I felt that I had contracted it based on my symptoms; I had fever, chills, dry cough (I coughed up blood), severe pain under my rib cage and back, and felt like I was suffocating at times, even though my nose was fairly clear. So I asked my doctor for the covid-19 test. I had ALL of the symptoms that the CDC listed on their website, except I hadn't traveled out of the country recently or been on a domestic flight, and didn't know who I might have come in contact with that would be infected with covid-19.

Now, my doctor is usually very accommodating, gives me pretty much whatever I ask for. But, he denied me the coronavirus test and told me to self-quarantine, which wasn't possible because my family would have technically, already been exposed. He ordered a chest xray, which I took last Wednesday, and the results were pneumonia. He prescribed two antibiotics and told me to take a second chest xray on Friday, which I did and it came back worse than the first chest xray, even though I was taking 2 antibiotics.

He called me immediately on Friday and instructed me to get to the emergency room. I took that opportunity to ask him again for the covid 19 test, and he said I still wasn't eligible due to that travel question. I said, are you kidding me? I have every physical symptom and I still can't be tested? All I heard was dead silence; I felt that he was also struggling with that decision, but trying to adhere to the CDC guidelines.

So, I packed a little overnight bag because I knew the hospital was going to keep me. It took me 3+ hours to pack that little bag that should have taken only 15 minutes to pack. My spirit kept saying "Lord, let this cup pass from me." My husband asked, "what's taking you so long? You got to get to the emergency room!" I began to cry and tell him that I didn't want to go to the hospital because coronavirus or not, I would surely catch it in a hospital. But at the same time, I felt that more was happening in my lungs than pneumonia, so I went.

I truly believe that it will be a glorious day when the Lord calls me home, but I had really hoped to be here to see my 2 boy's (now young men) in full bloom. I want to see them get married and have families. I wanted to be here to witness the birth of my first grandchild and spoil my grandchildren, and then send them back to their mommy and daddy. I wanted to see them take on our family traditions, and just sit back and enjoy the fruits of our seeds. I want to see good report cards from grandkids, and take them on nice vacations, take them to baseball practice, to the theatre, and movies. I want to take them to church, every Sunday. It hurt me to think that I would miss out on the joys that come with being a senior. I wanted these things to happen while I'm a young senior, while I have energy to do these things. But I just dried up my tears, and went to ER.

When I got to the Northwestern's emergency room, only 5 or 6 people were there. They took my info, called me to triage within 5 minutes, then told me they were keeping me. Then the triage nurse asked me if I had come in contact with someone infected with coronavirus and asked about my travel in or out of the country, and yada, yada. I finally laughed and said

"I don't know because most people that are infected probably don't even realize they are. And no I haven't been out of the country recently and no, I have not been on a domestic flight but I may as well have been because I ride the CTA Blue Line which services O'Hare Airport! People with

luggage are regularly on the CTA Blue line train and they cough uncovered, cough in their hands, cough like ain't nobody else is on that train but them!"

I didn't even mention the homeless, who also ride CTA, sleep on CTA, and many don't have access to soap, water, hand sanitizer. But I thought that was the end of that. I was being denied the test again.

Then I was immediately moved to a temporary bed, and nurse said "I'm going to give you the covid-19 test." She told me not to mention it, but that she was giving me the test anyhow because she felt strongly that the doctor would recommend it anyhow. I thanked her because at this point, I really needed to know one way or the other because the outcome would impact my family. But the beauty in God's works was that I didn't have to ask for the test again. I had been talking to my doctor all week, telling him that I needed that test because what if this isn't pneumonia. Denied! But God sent someone to administer the test anyhow.

When I was transported to my room, #1453, I was escorted by a different nurse. The elevator stopped on the 14th floor, and while transport was trying to maneuver my bed off the elevator I could see the **backs** of about 6 or 7 nurses, sitting at their workstations. My transport nurse stepped off the elevator and shouted to those sitting at the nursing station, "**THIS IS NUMBER 53**". Every nurse's head at that station turned in perfect unison to see patient #53, which was me, and you could hear a pin drop in this place. And their eyes continued to follow me until I was completely out of sight. I felt like a leper.

I got situated in my room, and the night nurse introduced herself. She made a point of telling me that I needed to think of everything I would be needing because she was only coming back once to my room tonight, and she'd like to cover everything on that one visit to my room. Yup, Northwestern Hospital was treating me like a leper, for sure. They didn't give a flying crap about my golden insurance, my Blue Cross PPO. All their eyes could see was a leper and they really didn't want to have anything to do with me. They said my door had to remain closed at all times. They entered my room wearing masks, gloves and plastic gowns over their scrubs as they should have. I expect healthcare workers to protect themselves, protect their families and also protect me from them. So, I appreciated seeing the nurses dressed in full gear. But it wasn't the masks, the gloves, and the gear which made me feel like a leper. It was their lack of spirit, their blank stares, their lack of compassion for the situation. I could see fear in their eyes.

No one returned to my room that night to check on me. There was no "do you need more water or would you like a snack?" There was no, "hang in there". They simply administered my medication and scurried out my room like little critters.

My husband had alerted Bro. Owens, who alerted the Brotherhood Chorale Watchmen, and I reached out to my prayer warriors, and my choir. That night, I cried and started to pray over myself. I told the Lord about how I was being treated, but I praised Him and thanked Him for everything He had done, for every miracle He performed and for always being there for me to talk to. I decided to praise Jesus through these dark times of disease that has reached biblical proportion. It's the type of disease that you'd think came straight from the Old Testament. But I thanked God over and over for what he had already done in my life, more than I ever expected and certainly more than I deserved. I continued to pray, feeling that no matter what happened, I could take comfort in knowing that I would get the victory no matter what. I prayed until I fell asleep.

The next morning I was awakened by the night nurse whose shift was ending, and she was introducing me to the next nurse, the day nurse. The day nurse was not timid, she wasn't a bit shy, she wasn't scared at all. She introduced herself, then wrote her name on my board. She told me she would be in and out my

room to check on me. She said, **“Let me know if you need anything. Press this button if you need me and I’ll be right here. I’m going to find you some breakfast because I see you didn’t get any.”**

I knew immediately that this nurse was different, there was something special about her. I just didn’t know just how special at the time. This nurse would come in my room with a boldness, singing the gospel, she would feel the holy spirit and break into her holy ghost dance in my room! She told me everything was going to be ok. Each time she walked into my room, she came in singing a different gospel song and would say “You know this. Gone and sing it, complete that song for me.” I was short of breath, so I could only speak the words. Not enough air to sing. Sometimes she would run around my room, which reminded me so much of our Dr. Valliaye.

This nurse talked to me about her little 12-person choir, and how they won the 2010 Verizon’s How Sweet The Sound contest. She attended church on the west side, and how she teaches Sunday school. When she mentioned the address of her church, it felt familiar. Then she said, it’s right down from Clair Church. Clair Church is where I attended church in my childhood and much of my family are still there. I thought, wow small world.

I told her how she had blessed my spirit, that the 14th floor nursing staff had treated me like a leper. She said to me “to God be the Glory” and ran straight out of my room and I laughed. Then she popped her head back in, through my room door and said, “you know, I don’t work on this floor.” I said “what?” She said, “I work a few floors down. I work with people that have had spinal surgery and mobility issues. I just volunteered to work this floor this weekend because I knew I was going to speak life into someone today.” Then she popped her head back out of my room, and I became tearful and realized at that moment that God had sent her with this message, to tell me I was going to be alright. I called my husband to tell him how God showed up and I couldn’t stop the tears from flowing because my mind went into playback mode, thinking through the chain of events:

- 1) Was denied the covid19 test for one week even though I had full blown symptoms.
- 2) God sends a compassionate nurse, who decided to just go ahead and give me the covid-19 test.
- 3) After being made to feel like a leper, the next morning God sends another compassionate nurse who is “SAVED” and filled with the holy spirit...singing, dancing, full of life, walking boldly in the Lord.
- 4) This compassionate nurse was not normally assigned to this floor, the 14th floor. She wasn’t even supposed to be my nurse. She volunteered to work on my floor because God told her to speak like into someone, which was me.

None of these events were by happenstance or coincidence, as Bishop used to say. That message from my good nurse was confirmation that Jesus was all over this situation and that I would be alright. It was confirmation to me that He heard my prayers, the prayers of my church family and friends, the prayers of the righteous. I felt unspeakable joy just knowing that He was answering back through my nurse. And that night, Jesus answered over my situation. I was breathing better, and more importantly my coronavirus test came back **negative - hallelujah!** My favorite nurse was there to hear the good news, and she said uh oh...I got to go full liturgical dance now. She ran around my room, and broke out into full liturgical dance. My spirit was so full.

I wanted to share my experience with you because I know we live in difficult times, and we need Jesus and the church more than ever. There’s a lot of fear wrapped around this coronavirus. But the key is having a relationship with the Lord, loving the Lord, trusting and obeying His word and remembering that

no matter what news we receive, we still get the Victory! We were purchased by His blood. If my body went 6ft under today, it's ok because my soul would have everlasting life in God's perfect Kingdom. So I'm holding onto this verse through it all and I hope you will internalize it for yourselves as we go through this troubled world:

***Fear not**, for I am with you; **Be not** dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, Yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand."*

~ Isaiah 41:10

Marilyn Foster