

I had no idea on February 29th when I wrote the article on coronavirus for the March church bulletin how this disease would upend nearly all aspects of life on earth. But God knew the road each one of us would walk during this time. He set a path before me that took me right into the heart of the battle in our country.

It was really difficult for me, as a medical person, to sit in front of the television and watch the steady increase in the number of people infected with the disease and the number of people dying from its complications. I asked God to show me what I should do. I really hadn't felt any guidance from Him, so I set off down several paths that ended with closed doors. Then Pastor Rod asked all of us to pray together one Wednesday evening, and I heard the Lord tell me to look into Samaritan's Purse. The next day I filled out an on line application, and two days later I was officially hired by them as part of their Gideon 300 initiative. Evidently I was one of them that lapped the water like a dog. (See Judges Chapter 7) Samaritan's Purse was looking for 300 medical personnel to join in the battle in New York City.

I would be lying if I told you I was ready to suit up and jump into the battle without a second thought. Immediately after sending the signed on line contract I wanted to reach into cyber space and take it back. When I told my family about what I was going to do most of them were concerned about my well being. One family member told me that my odds of getting the disease and dying were very high. I never thought for one minute that I would get sick. The disease didn't frighten me at all. I trusted God could protect me from the coronavirus. But I really didn't believe He could protect me from myself.

My contract with Samaritan's Purse didn't start until April 10th so my anxiety had a week to simmer. Part of me hoped they would realize hiring me to go into battle was a mistake. I was no warrior. I was a fake. But at 7:30 in the morning on April 10th they called and asked me to go to New York on Easter Sunday. I wanted to tell them I never intended to actually go to New York. I wanted to tell them the truth. I was willing to help, but actually going wasn't really part of my plan. But those aren't the words that came out of my mouth. Like Isaiah, I answered God's call by accepting. No one was more surprised than me.

The next two days were excruciating. I felt more like a prisoner on death row than someone God has called to serve Him. I couldn't stop ruminating about my own limitations. I am not an adventurous person. I like to sleep in my own bed with all of the things in my life that make me comfortable. I like my Diet Cokes and my favorite foods when and how I want them. How would I ever make it to New York City? Would someone really be there to pick me up from LaGuardia Airport and make sure I got to where I needed to be? These uncertainties and trusting people I hadn't met yet for my own wellbeing threatened to overwhelm me.

But what was even worse was my insecurity in my ability to be able to care for these sick people. I haven't worked in a hospital setting in almost thirty years. (That is like 200 in dog years.) I didn't want to show up there and end up being more of a liability than an asset. I didn't want confirmation that I really was irrelevant. When I voiced my concerns to people they would tell me I was being foolish. Nursing was like riding a bike. I would be running the place pretty soon. (As if- I just wanted to survive, not lead the troops into battle.)

So I'm sure most of you can see that I forgot who called me into this battle in the first place; the One who equips those whom He calls.

And Jesus said to them, "Follow me, and I will make you become fishers of men."
Mark 1:17

And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus. Philippians 4:19

But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift.
Ephesians 4:7

Now may the God of peace...equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Hebrews 13:20-21

Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth. 2 Timothy 2:15

For he whom God has sent utters the words of God, for he gives the Spirit without measure. John 3:34

So you get the picture. God through His son and His Holy Spirit showed up in this really insecure but totally willing woman. And it was amazing. And I was truly blessed.

In the nearly three weeks I was there I saw the Lord move through others and I knew He moved through me, though that was more difficult for me to see as I was busy doing the work that was set before me.

For a couple of days I cared for a man who was a Muslim; his beliefs strong enough that he would only eat a diet specifically labeled halal, which is the dietary standard as prescribed in the Qur'an. He had been through a tough fight with the coronavirus, but by the time he came down to our unit in the lobby of Mount Sinai Hospital his condition was improving. He just needed a little time to be weaned off of oxygen and get some physical therapy to help increase his strength.

He was very specific in how and when he wanted his bed made up, directing me with a pointed finger or a single word command, never saying please or thank you. I helped him in and out of bed, set up his tray at meal times, monitored his vital signs while slowly turning down his oxygen, encouraged him to sit up more and take a few steps. I tried to help him charge his phone with several different chargers, but his phone was dead, so I let him use mine. (We had our phones in the “Hot Zone,” but we had to put them in zip lock bags.) I emptied his urinal and took him to the bathroom when he had to do “number two.” (Number two is how most people tell their nurse they have to, well, you know.) And I had to clean him up after he did number two because he was too weak to clean himself. Then I had to pretty much lift him up off the toilet because he was too weak to get up on his feet from the toilet.

For two days I never got a thank you for all the things I did for him, which was pretty unusual because almost everyone else thanked me nearly every time I entered their room. I didn't need him to thank me, but his way of ordering me to do things and his pointing at things unnerved me a little bit.

On the day of his discharge I was helping him get ready and I heard him say, “Thank you for everything you did for me.” I accepted his thanks and then moved on to completing more tasks. Then he said it again and he added something about how much he appreciated the kindness I showed him. He asked to use my phone and he called his wife. He spoke in a foreign language for a little bit before handing me the phone, telling me his wife was on the other end. I assumed she wanted me to tell her how to take care of him once he returned home, so I quickly introduced myself and rattled off the checklist of things she needed to know about life after COVID-19. When I was done this small voice said, “Thank you, but that's not why I wanted to talk to you. My husband wanted me to thank you. He said you made a big difference in his life.” I was truly befuddled by her words.

An hour later I was getting ready to wheel him out of our unit to meet the hospital staff person who would take him out of the hospital. He grabbed me by the hand and said, “I will never forget you.” I shook my head, embarrassed by the earnestness of his words. “No, really. You need to know this. I will never forget you.”

I do know I was never rude to him and did everything he asked me to do down to the tiniest detail of how he wanted his sheets folded. But I also know that I wasn't especially loving or kind to him. Caring for him was challenging, like embracing a porcupine. I performed the tasks that were expected of me. He got adequate and competent care, but I believe that is all that I gave him. But now I realize that through me, somehow, Jesus gave this man so much more. I can't tell you what He did through me, or how He did it. It's good enough for me to know that He did. My patient wasn't

telling me he would never forget me. He was telling Jesus that he would never forget Him. And I got to be a part of that. And all I had to do was show up.

I hope each one of you gets moments like these because they are really amazing. And we don't deserve it, but He lets us be part of His work anyway. So please be open to what He is calling you to do.

I hope in this hour of uncertainty you turn to the God who remains and always will be our sure thing.

Be well,

Lisa.