

Anne Graham Lotz: Could National Revival Be Silver Lining in Black Cloud of Coronavirus?

"The Lord said to Moses, 'Indeed, I am going to come to you in a thick cloud, so that the people may hear when I speak with you'" (Ex. 19:9a).

It's springtime in the western North Carolina mountains where I was raised. There are days of beautiful sunshine, blue skies and cool breezes. On such days, the views of the surrounding Blue Ridge Mountains are spectacular. But there are also days when storms roll in, black clouds descend, views are obliterated and the thunder shakes the earth as it ricochets from peak to peak. When the storm passes, all of nature seems refreshed and renewed.

I'm reminded of those fierce storms now, because the threatening black cloud of the coronavirus has enveloped our nation. Its powerful impact is ricocheting from "peak to peak"—place to place—from our families to our homes, to our schools, to our businesses, to our sports, to our economy, to our churches, to our health care facilities ... to our entire way of life. It seems to be obliterating our view of freedom, of peace, of happiness. The swiftness of this storm's advance is stunning and almost breathtaking (pun intended).

As I have prayed, a dramatic scene from the Old Testament has unfolded before my mind's eye, which I would like to describe for you. It took place when the recently freed Israelite slaves were camped at the base of Mount Sinai. God spoke to Moses, the man He had used to liberate the people from bondage in Egypt. The Lord said He would come in a thick cloud to

Moses. The Bible then goes on to describe the thunder and lightning flashes and a thick cloud (Ex. 19:16, 18).

The people were terrified! But Moses encouraged them, "Do not fear, for God has come to test you, so that the fear of Him may be before you so that you do not sin" (Ex. 20:21). The people looked, and "the glory of the Lord appearing in the cloud" (Ex. 16:10b). The amazing climax was that Moses then approached and entered the cloud where God was (Ex. 20:21). And it was there, in the cloud, that God spoke to Moses.

In the past four years, I, too, have entered into a black, terrifying cloud. My husband's sudden, unexpected death; my father's death three years later; my diagnosis of cancer; and the subsequent surgery and follow-up treatments have been personal storms as fiercely threatening as the storm that has now broken upon all of us. But there was a silver lining to the black cloud in my life because it was in the cloud where I encountered God in a fresh way.

I have "seen" His glory—His character—in the dark cloud. I have experienced God's faithfulness to meet my needs, His grace to pour out His blessings through family and friends, His strength to enable me to endure triumphantly and His goodness to bring me through one day at a time. Throughout the four stormy years, I never once lost my joy, my inner peace or the steadfast hope that God was in control and would work out all things for my good (Rom. 8:28).

During this time, God spoke to me through His Word: "Anne, even though you walk through the valley of the shadow of death, you will fear no evil; for I am with you" (see Ps. 23:4). "Do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, I will help you, yes, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand" (Isa. 41:10).

In addition to the above promise, could it be that God is

using the coronavirus to get our attention so that we will listen to His message? This is what the Lord says: “When I shut up the heaven and there is no rain, or when I command the locusts to devour the land, or send pestilence on My people, if My people, who are called by My name, will humble themselves and pray, and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and will heal their land. Now My eyes will be open and My ears attentive to the prayer of this place” (2 Chr. 7:13-15).

It's time to pray! It's time to turn away from our sin, self-centeredness and secularism, and turn to God in faith and trust. Now. “Return to the Lord your God, for He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love; and He relents from punishing” (Joel 2:13b).

If we heed God's message, He can calm the storm and bring us through to a time of spiritual revival and national renewal.

Pray with me:

Lord God, as we sincerely place our faith in You, have mercy on us! Please! Hear our prayer. Forgive our sin. Heal our land.

As we repent of our sin and return to You, return to us! There is no one like You to help the powerless against this mighty disease. Help us, O Lord our God, for we rely on You and in Your name we come against this vast, invisible enemy (2 Chr. 14:11). Bring us through so that our faith in You is revived, and we experience a national spiritual renewal.

We pray in the name of the one who is the living proof that You truly care about us ... Jesus. Amen.

Could the silver lining in the black cloud of the coronavirus be this? That it causes America to look up and listen to what

God has to say, and therefore becomes the trigger for a national spiritual revival? May it be so! {eoa}

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