



Daniela Lamas is a critical care doctor at Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston. Recently she wrote an eye-opening article for the *New York Times* detailing what she is experiencing as patients who have survived severe cases of COVID-19 are trying to recover. Not only is this something that has not been reported on much, but it evokes both sadness and fear. She described one patient's rehabilitation this way:

"Behind a closed door, an elderly man hopes a test will show that he no longer has an active coronavirus infection so that he can return home to his wife of six decades. Until then, he gazes out the window where he can see the trees. Sometimes his mind wanders to the lurid, delirious nightmares of the intensive care unit. He tries to distract himself with poetry."

And a second patient:

"Down the hall, a younger man works to get stronger so he too can get back to his family. He feels better, he tells me, but he is so bored, and the Covid cough still bothers him, along with a burning in his hand - likely a nerve injury from the days spent lying on his chest when he was intubated. His face bears the scars of that lifesaving maneuver, blackened ulcers on his cheeks, nose and forehead. He too looks out the window. Waiting."

Thankfully, there are also victories. She wrote of a coronavirus patient being discharged from the hospital. "We rushed down the stairs to join the group that had already gathered, all of us in scrubs and masks, waiting. Someone turned the music on and 'Here Comes the Sun' filled the small lobby. Behind me, the patient's two adult sons radiated excitement. When they last saw their father he could not breathe.

"I watched as the elevator doors opened and a nurse emerged, pushing a small man in a wheelchair. He scanned the crowd, spotted his sons and gave us all this proud little wave, like royalty. I clapped as loud as I could for him, mouthing the song's refrain, 'It's all right,' behind my mask, not knowing what this virus would leave him with or what kind of life he would re-enter, but hoping the words were true."

I wonder if we are all living somewhere on this spectrum between fear and hope. We move back and forth depending on the circumstances of each day, or what we hear on the news, or who we've spoken with on the phone, or even the weather. (It's easier to feel hopeful when the sun is shining, right?) Now that we're a full two months into coronavirus lockdown it seems that more people are struggling to maintain good mental health. I hear people say it's hard to stay motivated, they miss their families and colleagues, days are long and boring, they're scared of getting sick. On the flip side I'm also hearing people say they hope for a new day when we are finally beyond the devastation caused by the virus. They are hoping to return to school, to get married, to have dinner at a restaurant, to attend a concert or sports event, for a robust economy, and a just society. For now, these things are just beyond our reach.

In his letter to the church at Rome Paul wrote, *"Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what is seen? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience. Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words."* Right now we are hoping for what we can't yet see. But God sent his Holy Spirit to help us in our weakness, to lift us up when we are feeling down, and to reassure us that the things we hope for today but cannot see, will one day become a reality that we will experience in full and utter joy.

This week I encourage you to intentionally choose to do something that will bring you hope. I appreciated President Bush's inspiring address on the pandemic, which can be found at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=knykOfcsYKE>, and I'm going to watch President Obama's graduation speech to this year's 2020 high school class. That event takes place on May 16 at 8:00 p.m. and is co-sponsored by the LeBron James Family Foundation. Whatever you choose, may it remind you of the hope we have in Jesus Christ, and the promise that even in the midst of hard times life continues to spring forth from the providence of our good and gracious God.

In Christ,

Pastor Chuck

Let us pray. Merciful God, we are living on the spectrum of fear and hope. We try to push away the fear and focus on what is hopeful. We are not always successful, but we do not give up. Help us in our weakness and forgive us when we falter. Fix our hearts and minds on the hope we have in Jesus, and keep us moving forward in faith. Amen