

A World Disaster That's an Important Teacher

By CC Huffhines

The History:

As the coronavirus outbreak consumed the city of Wuhan in China, cases of the virus began to spread out like sparks flung from a fire. Some landed thousands of miles away. Soon in January, one had popped up in Chicago, another one near Phoenix. Two others came down in the Los Angeles area. Through luck, those early flashes of the virus appear to have been snuffed out before they had a chance to take hold.

Not until a young man returning from a family visit in Wuhan arrived at the Seattle International Airport in January, did anyone suspect the danger that he posed. The man returned to work as usual before any symptoms arose: a slight cough, not bad, but enough to send him home.

Days later, he became the first person in the U.S. to test positive for the virus. Teams from federal, state and local agencies appeared at once. Their primary concerns were 68 people that had come into contact with the man after he had returned to Seattle. These people were monitored for weeks, thankfully none tested positive.

Researchers from the University of Washington rushed to identify the RNA sequence of the case, comparing this data with data coming in from around the world. They soon realized the virus was responsible for all known cases of community transmissions they examined in Washington state.

The virus had jumped. It was identified across several other states, as far as New England. With no major testing available, the detective work of the researchers in Seattle and their partners demonstrated how difficult it would be to contain.

The important fact about this particular virus was that we really did not know any facts about it. Supposedly, it attacked only the elderly ... an idea that was of great interest to me, being 92 years old. Symptoms included difficulty in breathing, coughing, fatigue, all symptoms that I often have.

What We Learned:

Time has passed, and more than 65,000 deaths in America have occurred from the virus, now called Covid-19. Millions more have tested positive around the entire globe. Our learned fact is that the virus passes easily from person to person, that we need to isolate ourselves by staying home. This is difficult for people accustomed to freedom for going anywhere, for mingling with others anytime. We now are maintaining a social distance of six feet between each other. We wear masks, primarily to avoid breathing on someone else.

We stayed home, meaning that we stopped going to work, stopped shopping, stopped traveling. This resulted in income loss and many business bankruptcies. Predictably, a big push for returning to "normal" life erupted.

There is danger in returning to “normal” before the virus is totally gone. The question becomes: *What is a human life worth?* If we return to “normal” too early, this important question arises. This is the decision we all must make.

Many lives will be sacrificed if we insist on opening up before the virus is completely gone. Current estimates from the White House indicate, in that event, predicted deaths will double in number.