

Communities for Immunity: Stories about COVID The Peale, Baltimore | 2022

Mama Linda Goss (00:08): (Singing) Well, oh, well, oh well. It's storytelling time. Well, oh, well, oh well. It's storytelling time. (Bells shaking) Gather around my people. Well, well, well. My bells are ringing, my soul is singing.

Mama Linda Goss (00:26): (Singing) Hello, everyone. My name is Mama Linda Goss. I am a storyteller, and I love to ring bells. The first story is called, "Waiting on the Lord." When my Granddaddy Murphy told me stories, he would begin by asking me a question. "Hey, youngen." He called me and my brother Barry youngens. "How many senses you got?" Before I could answer the question, Granddaddy would ask me another question. "Name all the senses you have." "Well, Granddaddy, I have sight. I have hearing. I can smell. I can taste. And I can touch." "Okay. Okay. Well, what else do you have? Keep on going." said Granddaddy. "Oh, I know what you mean. You mean ESP, the sixth sense, extra sensory perception." I felt good in saying that one. "Well, okay. Okay. I've heard about that one," said Granddaddy, "But I'm talking about another one, the most important sense of all. Do you know which one that is?" I paused. "No, Granddaddy, what is it?" "It is common sense."

Mama Linda Goss (01:53): "That makes sense, Granddaddy. And that makes seven senses." "Okay. If you say so. Seven then." And then Granddaddy went on to say, "Now the good Lord gave us all these senses and He expects us to use them. No matter how much book learning you get, don't ever forget your common sense. You hear me?" "Yes, Granddaddy. I hear you." "Well then, let me tell you a story about Old John. Old John lived in a nice house near the river. He was a very hard worker and he felt very blessed by the Lord. He prayed every night and went to church every Sunday. He didn't worry about anything because he said, 'No matter what happens, I'm not going to worry because the Lord is going to take care of me. I'm going to wait on the Lord.'

Mama Linda Goss (02:43): "Well, now, child, it was on a Thursday when all this started happening. It was Old John's day off from work, but he stuck to his usual schedule and got up early. He cleaned himself up and dressed and went to his front door to get the morning paper. He opened it up and the headline said, 'A big storm is coming.' He fixed himself, a cup of coffee and ate some breakfast. He turned his TV on to see the local news, and the weatherman was on talking about a major storm coming through this area. A message went across the TV screen that said, 'Tornado watch and possible flooding in effect for the following counties.' Old John's county flashed across the screen. But Old John wasn't worried. He said to himself, 'The Lord's going to take care of me. I'm going to wait on the Lord.'

Mama Linda Goss (03:34): "Well, the weatherman kept on talking. 'Those of you living in Riverview might want you board up your windows and evacuate. Get ready now.' Old John then heard some knocking on his door. He opened it and it was one of his neighbors from down the road. 'Hello, Brother John, how are you doing today?' 'I'm doing fine, Brother Williams. How can I help you?' 'Well, Brother John, I'm here to help you. I know you don't have a car and I'm on my way to the mall. Do you need me to get you anything from the grocery store? You know a big storm is coming through.' 'Oh yeah, Brother Williams. I heard about that, but you know, I ain't worried. I'm waiting on the Lord. He's going to help me. But thanks anyway.' 'Well, okay Brother John, you have my number. Call me if you need me.'

Mama Linda Goss (04:20): "Well, Old John's phone started ringing. It was his niece, Keisha. 'Uncle John, get ready. I'm coming to pick you up.' 'No you ain't, Keisha, I ain't going nowhere with you.' 'But Uncle John, a big storm is coming.' 'Now listen, Keisha. I'm fine. I'm waiting on the Lord. He's going to take care of me. I'll talk to you later. Bye, Keisha.' And Old John hung up the phone. Then old John heard some banging. He looked at his window. The noise was coming from his next door neighbor's house. It was Joe and his sons. They were boarding up their windows. They saw Old John looking at them. Joe came over. Old John opened the window. 'Hey John, my sons can board up your windows for you.' 'Oh no. That's okay, Joe.' 'But John, look at those clouds. It's going to start raining soon.' said Joe. 'I'm fine, Joe.' said, Old John. 'I'm waiting on the Lord. I don't have to worry about a thing.'"

Mama Linda Goss (05:10): "John closed the window and started singing. (singing) Well, now it began to rain. Lightly at first, a little drizzle, and then slightly harder than harder and harder and harder, and then boom. It began thundering and lightning. Old John could hear cars passing by. The TV showed people loading up their cars and pulling out from their driveways. John opened his front door. He could see lines of cars and trucks moving on the road. A van pulled up in front of his door and began blowing. The driver said, 'Hello, Mr. John, you want to come with us? We provide services for senior citizens.' But Old John said, 'No, I'm fine. I tell you, I'm waiting on the law. He's going to take care of me.' And John shut the door."

Mama Linda Goss (06:12): "Well, the rain was really pouring now, and the wind was really blowing. It rained all that day and throughout the night. Old John slept like a baby until he heard wind banging on his windows. He got up and flipped on the lights, but the lights wouldn't come on. He turned the TV on, but the TV didn't come on. His electricity was cut off. He picked up his phone, but he couldn't get a dial tone. The river had overflowed during the night. Old John opened the front door and water was all over the road and right at his doorsteps. The river kept on rising. The water started seeping into his living room and there was flooding in his basement."

Mama Linda Goss (06:53): "He heard a megaphone outside his home. He looked out and it was a rescue boat. 'John. John. We have a life jacket for you. A tornado is coming. It's heading this way very soon.' 'I don't need it,' said Old John. 'I'm waiting on the Lord. Now go away.' 'Okay, John, we'll be back to check on you later.' Well, as the saying goes, the rains came. The winds blew. The river continued to overflow. The roads flooded, and water was all in John's house, everywhere. Old John had to go up to the attic and climb up on the roof. All he could see was water and debris everywhere. And it was still raining harder and harder as ever."

Mama Linda Goss (07:42): John heard a sound above his head. It was a rescue helicopter. A rescuer called out, 'Mr. John, Mr. John, we're going to send a harness and a rescue basket for you to climb into it.' 'No, no,' said Old John. 'I don't need it. I am waiting on the Lord, I tell you. Leave me alone.' The helicopter kept flying over Old John, the rescue pleaded with Old John. 'I'll come down and help you Mr. John.' But Old John wouldn't listen. The rescue team received an emergency call and flew away, but they said, 'We'll be back. Mr. John.' Well, Old John stayed on top of that roof and the tornado came and the tornado went. The next day, the helicopter returned on a search and rescue mission for Old John. However, they didn't see him."

Mama Linda Goss (08:32): "Hours later, the rescue boat returned and did a search and recovery mission. And they found him. Yes, they found Old John. He didn't make it through the storm, but don't worry about Old John. He made it on to heaven. And when he got there, he saw Peter waiting for him at the"

Pearly Gates. 'Hello, John. Welcome. Welcome.' But John was not in a friendly mood. 'I don't want to see you.' 'What?' said Peter. 'What on Earth is the matter with you? Folks who usually come here are glad to see me.' 'Well, I ain't glad to see you. I want to see the Lord.' Said Old John, 'I want to see him now. I am mad.' 'Well, if that's your attitude, go on through those golden doors.' said Peter.

Mama Linda Goss (9:15): "John went through the golden doors and hollered out, 'Lord, Lord, where are You?' A voice like a roll of thunder surrounded John. 'Welcome, John.' 'Lord, I depended on You. I waited on You and this is what You do to me? Why Lord? Why? How come You didn't help me or save me?' 'Now, John,' said the Lord, 'Didn't you read the morning paper the day of the storm? Didn't you listen to the weatherman on the TV? Didn't you receive a phone call from your niece, Keisha? Didn't the neighbor from down the road stop by your house to see if you need anything from the store? Didn't your next door neighbor say that his sons would help you? Didn't the senior citizen van come to your home? Didn't the rescue boat come by for you? Didn't the rescue helicopter fly over you?' 'All of that was You, Lord?' Asked Old John. 'Who else do you think it was?' said the Lord. 'And since you didn't use the common sense that I gave you, I just assumed that you were dying to see me. And so here you are.'" (singing)