



## Carstairs-Bancroft United Church

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**DAILY ENCOURAGEMENT  
DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

**By Rev. Maria Szabo Berces**



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Beloved Carstairs Bancroft United Church Members,

We are still at the very beginning of 2021, and yesterday – if you watched the news – could see unsettling violence that occurred in the capital of our neighboring country. The plot hasn't been successful, but many people has been injured, and someone even lost her life. If we look at those events and the intentions behind what happened in Washington DC, we may figure that it is about human struggle for power and triumph.

Through history, and even watching or reading recent news, we may realize that many in our human societies can see success and strength in a different way than the Creator of this Universe. It is reassurance for us that the judgements and intents of the Almighty Lord are **“as far as the east is from the west”** (Psalm 103:22) from the justice of the powerful of this world. We can read several statements about it in the Bible. Let me share just two of these with you:

**“But from everlasting to everlasting the Lord’s love is with those who fear him, and his righteousness with their children’s children...”** (Psalm 103:17)

**“The Lord is trustworthy in all he promises and faithful in all he does. The Lord upholds all who fall and lifts up all who are bowed down. ... The Lord is righteous in all his ways and faithful in all he does.”** (Psalm 145:14-15; 17)

As we grow older year by year, we have the prospect - and we also have a call - to become more and more like our Heavenly Father. As Peter puts it in his first letter: **“As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: “Be holy, because I am holy.”** (1 Peter 1:14-16)

Apostle Paul describes the same principal with different words: **“Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.”** (Romans 12:2)

I admit that it is not easy to change, and to represent something that so often confronts human wisdom, experience and our natural instinct to succeed by simply using strength and power. We need God’s help in *“renewing our minds”*, and in the transformation that the Holy One would like to see in us. But it is possible when we ask for help in this process. If we yearn to bear the good fruit of the Spirit, - which is **“love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control”** based on Galatians 5:22-23 - we just have to request it from the One, who *“has created and is creating”* (New Creed). As Jesus said: **“Ask and it will be given to you...”** (Matthew 7:7) May we find joy and purpose in the fulfillment of this promise.

Grace and Peace to You All,

Rev. Maria



## True Success

*The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger,  
abounding in love and faithfulness.*

Exodus 34:6

### READ EXODUS 34:1-7

My interview guest politely answered my questions. I had a feeling, though, that something lurked beneath our interaction. A passing comment brought it out.

*"You're inspiring thousands of people,"* I said.

*"Not thousands,"* he muttered. *"Millions."*

And as if pitying my ignorance, my guest reminded me of his credentials—the titles he held, the things he'd achieved, the magazine he'd graced. It was an awkward moment.

Ever since that experience, I've been struck by how God revealed Himself to Moses on Mount Sinai (Exodus 34:5-7). Here was the Creator of the cosmos and Judge of humanity, but God didn't use His titles. Here was the Maker of 100 billion galaxies, but such feats weren't mentioned either. Instead, God introduced Himself as "the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness" (v. 6). When He reveals who He is, it isn't His titles or achievements He lists but the kind of character He has.

As people made in God's image and called to follow His example (Genesis 1:27; Ephesians 5:1-2), this is profound. Achievement is good, titles have their place, but what really matters is how compassionate, gracious, and loving we're becoming.

Like that interview guest, we too can base our significance on our achievements. I have. But our God has modeled what true success is—not what's written on our business cards and resumés, but how we're becoming like Him. – By **Sheridan Voysey**

### REFLECT & PRAY

**Spirit of God, make me compassionate, gracious, patient, and loving! Amen.**

How tempted are you to base your significance on your accomplishments? What aspect of God's character needs to grow in you today?

### SCRIPTURE INSIGHT

Moses was up on the mountain forty days and nights communing with God and receiving the law, which was to regulate the covenantal relationship He had with the Israelites (Exodus 24:18; 31:18). But down in the camp the people worshiped the golden calf and thereby broke the covenant. This severing was symbolized when Moses broke the two tablets containing God's law (32:19). Moses interceded and asked Him to forgive the people for their sin and not to abandon them (vv. 31-32; 33:12-17). Although God forgave the Israelites, He also meted out discipline (32:31-35). In chapter 34, the law is reissued and the covenant renewed (v. 1). God also gave the people a self-revelation of who He is: compassionate, gracious, slow to anger, loving, faithful, forgiving, and just (vv. 6-7). – By **K. T. Sim**

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