



Carstairs-Bancroft United Church

January 14, 2021

DAILY ENCOURAGEMENT DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC By Rev. Maria Szabo Berces



Source: Our Daily Bread

Beloved Carstairs Bancroft United Church Members,

Today's Our Daily Bread devotion adds one more assurance to the encouragements we could hear in the previous days. As the writer put it: *"Nothing we struggle with is beyond our Savior's concern."* It seems that we need this extra 'cheering' as we start 2021 with the still ongoing health, and economic challenges caused by Covid-19.

Many wise men and women contemplated on the challenges that all of us experience at certain points of our lives. Let me share some of these words of wisdom with you:

"Hardships often prepare ordinary people for an extraordinary destiny..." - C.S. Lewis;

"Life's challenges are not supposed to paralyze you, they're supposed to help you discover who you are." - Bernice Johnson Reagon

"I have always grown from my problems and challenges, from the things that don't work out, that's when I've really learned." - Carol Burnett

"Problems are not stop signs; they are guidelines." - Robert H. Schuller

[\(https://www.wisesayings.com/challenges-quotes/\)](https://www.wisesayings.com/challenges-quotes/)

These are positive and inspiring thoughts on our struggles. While they convey truth, and are based on real experiences of people who had gone through trials, when we are in the middle of one, we mightn't notice its 'rightness' as we gasp for air amidst the giant waves of distress. We have to be reminded of God's ever-present compassion for us in order to notice the hand that is reaching out to help us.

In my experience, the more we work on to get to know our divine Friend daily, the more we are able to notice and rely on the Holy One's providence when the storms hit. At the same time, we become more attentive to the needs and pain of others in our environment. As we rest on the assurance that God is with us always, and ready to "stretch out" his hands to help us, we can fulfill Jesus' call found in his Sermon on the Mount: **"You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead, they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven."** (Matthew 15:14-16)

Our church family has proved to be a caring and loving Christian community. And as we join together –year by year – in worship and in loving God and our neighbors, we may grow in experiencing the divine presence and providence, as well.

Grace and Peace to You All,

Rev. Maria



Our Compassionate God

You stretch out your hand against the anger of my foes.

Psalm 138:7

READ PSALM 138

The winter night was cold when someone threw a large stone through a Jewish child's bedroom window. A star of David had been displayed in the window, along with a menorah to celebrate Hanukkah, the Jewish Festival of Lights. In the child's town of Billings, Montana, thousands of people—many of them believers in Jesus—responded to the hateful act with compassion. Choosing to identify with the hurt and fear of their Jewish neighbors, they pasted pictures of menorahs in their own windows.

As believers in Jesus, we too receive great compassion. Our Savior humbled Himself to live among us (John 1:14), identifying with us. On our behalf, He, "being in very nature God . . . made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant" (Philippians 2:6-7). Then, feeling as we feel and weeping as we weep, He died on a cross, sacrificing His life to save ours.

Nothing we struggle with is beyond our Savior's concern. If someone "throws rocks" at our lives, He comforts us. If life brings disappointments, He walks with us through despair. "Though the Lord is exalted, he looks kindly on the lowly; though lofty, he sees them from afar" (Psalm 138:6). In our troubles, He preserves us, stretching out His hand against both "the anger of [our] foes" (v. 7) and our own deepest fears. Thank You, God, for Your compassionate love. – By **Patricia Raybon**

REFLECT & PRAY

O God, I thank You for understanding my struggles and comforting me with loving care. Remind me always to share Your compassion with others. Amen.

Learn to [love like Jesus](#).

In what areas of your life do you need God's compassion? How can you show His care and love to others?

SCRIPTURE INSIGHT

In Psalm 138:4-5, David calls the kings of the earth to praise God. The surrounding verses explain the reasons he issues this call: God is loving and faithful and answers those who call (vv. 1-3); He's kind and compassionate to "the lowly"; He saves those who are oppressed (vv. 6-8).

David's call to the kings of the earth in verses 4-5 could be considered a hopeful calling. In the days of the Old Testament, kings (outside of Israel) didn't praise God. They were, more often than not, rebellious and resistant to Him (see Psalms 2 and 48). In Revelation, however, David's hope is fulfilled as the kings of the earth bring their riches to the New Jerusalem (Revelation 21:24). – By **J.R. Hudberg**

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