



Carstairs-Bancroft United Church

January 19, 2021

**DAILY ENCOURAGEMENT
DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

By Rev. Maria Szabo Berces



Source: Rev. Maria

Beloved Carstairs Bancroft United Church Members,

Some of the Our Daily Bread meditations speak more comforting to me than others, and this is the case with the one I forward to you today. In my experience, we all yearn for peace, and for an assurance of a divine loving care. But what shall we do – as the writer of this devotion puts it – *“when we feel like our lives are falling apart”*?

There can be a lot of life situations when we may run into this emotion. I don't even try listing them, because one page wouldn't be enough to name even the ones that is the most familiar to many of us. And the pandemic that had started last year, and still lingering around hasn't helped to ease the challenges that we might face in 'normal' circumstances.

The reason why I found today's Scriptures and meditation especially encouraging is that it reminds us about a truth, which we tend to forget, especially when our pain and trouble is fresh. It is that finding peace and strength is possible even in the midst of grieving of dreams or losses. Because they don't necessarily depend on a problem-free life. They depend more on the trust and faith we may – or may not – put into the Almighty God.

We have been continuously reminded that we are precious and beloved by the Holy One. So much so, that the Creator Trinity haven't resigned themselves with the breaking of the intimate relationship, which humanity used to have, but lost because of bad choices. God has built a way to get back to him, and to know and feel that even in this world - spoiled with violence, hatred, pain and death – we are offered God's divine presence and along with it: peace, hope, strength and an assurance of a life without death and tears.

I am confident that the following words of Revelation are renowned to many of you: **“Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, ... They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. 'He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death' or mourning or crying or pain, ...”** (Revelation 21:3-4)

And even until it is fulfilled, we may experience God's presence with us in our struggles. We may feel what many have witnessed during the human history: **“The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He will not grow tired or weary, and his understanding no one can fathom. He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak. Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall; but those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength.”** (Isaiah 40:28-31)

Those who dared to put their faith in God in their trials know that this promise is true, even in our life-time. May we also ask the Almighty to increase our faith to find hope and strength in the love, which **“endures forever”** (Psalm 136).

Grace and Peace to You All,

Rev. Maria



Unbreakable Faith

You will keep in perfect peace those whose minds are steadfast, because they trust in you.

Isaiah 26:3

READ ISAIAH 26:3-13

After doctors diagnosed their first-born son with autism, Diane Dokko Kim and her husband grieved facing a lifetime of caring for a cognitively disabled child. In her book *Unbroken Faith*, she admits to struggling with adjusting their dreams and expectations for their beloved son's future. Yet through this painful process, they learned that God can handle their anger, doubts, and fears. Now, with their son reaching adulthood, Diane uses her experiences to encourage parents of children with special needs. She tells others about God's unbreakable promises, limitless power, and loving faithfulness. She assures people that He gives us permission to grieve when we experience the death of a dream, an expectation, a way or a season of life.

In Isaiah 26, the prophet declares that God's people can trust in the Lord forever, "for the Lord . . . is the Rock eternal" (v. 4). He's able to sustain us with supernatural peace in every situation (v. 12). Focusing on His unchanging character and crying out to Him during troublesome times revitalizes our hope (v. 15).

When we face any loss, disappointment, or difficult circumstance, God invites us to be honest with Him. He can handle our ever-changing emotions and our questions. He remains with us and refreshes our spirits with enduring hope. Even when we feel like our lives are falling apart, God can make our faith unbreakable. – By **Xochitl Dixon**

REFLECT & PRAY

Loving God, please help me believe You can always be trusted with my honest emotions. Amen.

Have you ever struggled with being honest with God when life feels overwhelming? How has God helped you deal with the death of a dream or expectation?

SCRIPTURE INSIGHT

In calling His people to trust Him instead of trusting in other nations, God proclaimed Himself sovereign over all human history (Isaiah 24-27). God is at work behind the scenes, orchestrating events to the triumphant outcome He planned for the end of time. He'll judge and punish the wicked and the proud (24:16-23; 25:10-12), but will bless those who humble themselves and trust in Him (25:1-8). Isaiah 26 is a song of praise celebrating the salvation and blessings God will bestow on those who trust, obey, and honor Him (vv. 7-9). – By **K. T. Sim**

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