



Carstairs-Bancroft United Church

January 20, 2021

**DAILY ENCOURAGEMENT
DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

By Rev. Maria Szabo Berces



Source: Our Daily Bread

Beloved Carstairs Bancroft United Church Members,

Today we could witness a historic event with the inauguration of the 46th President of the United States of America. Those of you who watched the ceremony and listen to President Biden's inaugural address could have a sense that his ideas about the way of leadership for his country is quite different from his predecessor's way.

In the figure of speech, we often identify life with a journey. As we are born to this world, we start a process of maturing. What looks ideal for us in this procedure is that we receive nurturing for our growth; to have access to good basic education; we have a chance to choose our occupation; to choose our spouse, and can live happily after with the people who love us, and whom we love; with a decent income to support our family.

Humanity however has always had the feeling that the 'journey of life' is more than the above simplified course, and the road leads beyond what we can see with our eyes. Ecclesiastes put it down as words of ancient wisdom: **"I have seen the burden God has laid on the human race. He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the human heart; yet no one can fathom what God has done from beginning to end."** (Ecclesiastes 3:10-11)

It is not by accident that we can read a story about Jesus and a rich man, – who had all the assets we would wish for to be happy and contented – whose main concern was formulated in the following question: **"Teacher, what good thing must I do to get eternal life?"** (Matthew 19:16) This same desire led Nicodemus to talk to Jesus secretly. And we all yearn to hear Jesus pronouncing: **"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."** (John 3:16)

Jesus offers us a sure way to restore our personal relationship with the One who **"created mankind in his own image, ... male and female he created them."** (Genesis 1:27); who **"also set eternity in the human heart"**. As we open our hearts and minds to the Son, we welcome the Creator as well.

"If you really know me, you will know my Father as well." (John 14:7) **"Because I live, you also will live."** (John 14:11) – said Jesus.

We have the freedom to choose different ways of life. However not all of them will lead us to satisfy our deepest desire of being unconditionally loved, and to receive the **"eternal life"** we long for. Let us listen to the One, who not just said, but also proved by his death, then by his victory over death: **"I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full."** (John 10:10)

Grace and Peace to You All,

Rev. Maria



All Roads?

Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life."

John 14:6

READ JOHN 14:1-7

"Don't get on the expressway!" That text came from my daughter one day as I was leaving work. The highway home had become a virtual parking lot. I began trying alternate routes, but after experiencing gridlock on other roads, I gave up. The trip home would have to wait till later in the day, so I drove in the opposite direction to an athletic event my granddaughter was involved in.

Discovering that no roads would lead me home made me think about people who say that all roads lead to an eternal relationship with God. Some believe the road of kindness and good behavior will get you there. Others choose the road of doing religious things.

Relying on those roads, however, leads to a dead end. There's only one road to take to God's eternal presence. Jesus clarified this when He said, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6). He was revealing that He was going to die to open the way for us to enter His Father's house—to His presence and the real life He provides for today and eternity.

Skip the blocked highways that don't lead to God's presence. Instead, trust Jesus as Savior, for "whoever believes in the Son has eternal life" (3:36). And for those who already believe in Him, rest in the way He's provided. – By **Dave Branon**

REFLECT & PRAY

Dear God, I want to trust You for eternity. Thank You for the salvation found in Jesus alone. Amen.

Read about the [difference between relationship with Jesus and religion](#).

Why is it vital to know that only Jesus can save us? Why are we prone to try to add to what it takes to be welcomed into His family?

SCRIPTURE INSIGHT

Before going to the cross, Jesus began His final teaching time with His disciples with these words of peace: "Do not let your hearts be troubled" (John 14:1). He knew what was coming and how troubling it would be for them. In addition to speaking of His return, Jesus also promised the coming of the Holy Spirit (vv. 15-31); a life of fruitfulness when connected to Him, the vine (ch. 15); and encouragement for upcoming challenges (ch. 16). Then, after describing the joys and struggles of living for Christ in a world that doesn't know Him, Jesus closed His message the way it began—with words of comfort and encouragement: "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world" (16:33). His victory secures our peace. – By **Bill Crowder**

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