

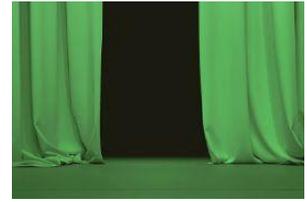


## Carstairs-Bancroft United Church

January 21, 2021

**DAILY ENCOURAGEMENT  
DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

**By Rev. Maria Szabo Berces**



Source: Our Daily Bread

Beloved Carstairs Bancroft United Church Members,

Watching the news on a variety of channels and having conversations with my parents including recent events strengthened my realization how different viewpoints we may have on what's going around us.

Sometimes we look at the very same thing and see a totally different picture. Sometimes the 'filters' – namely news channels and social media - we use make us to get to a dissimilar conclusion, and even conviction. Some people truly believed that freedom had been taken from them by the US elections and they had to fight to get it back.

It is a basic method of marketing that when you repeat something often enough, it becomes truth for those who hear it. The big question is whether that 'something' is right or not; harmful or not. It is not always easy to judge the correct from the incorrect, especially when the information sources we use are limited or one-sided. And it is also a challenge when we are not in the position to test the evidence with our own eyes. It is up to us in these cases whom we believe. It is tough even regarding 'earthly' things, and it is even tougher when we ponder on any 'supernatural'.

When we contemplate on God, "*who has created and is creating*" (A New Creed) we might say that we have to rely on resources that are old, and reflect standards of societies that don't exist any longer. In my view, it is only a partly accurate viewpoint. It is true that the books of the Bible were canonized centuries ago. However, the Holy One "**who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty**" (Revelation 1:8) has been accompanying those who put their trust in his name to this present age.

Unlike the people of the 1<sup>st</sup> Century AD, we mightn't fully understand the language and symbolics that Revelation uses. But the Spirit of the Living God is ready to provide guidance, wisdom and strength to all of those who believe in God in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century as well. When we are open to hear what the Almighty wants to communicate to all humans, we can experience the ever-present support and peace of the Creating Power.

We can choose to listen to those sources who have witnessed the reality of God's life changing love in their lives; not just way back in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century but in our times, too. When we are curious and ask for this wisdom, we gain ability to distinguish between the fraud gods and the really Wonderful One. Our eyes may be open to see what David put like this, and our hearts may pray with him: "**For you are great and do marvelous deeds; you alone are God. Teach me your way, Lord, that I may rely on your faithfulness...**" (Psalm 86:10-11)

Grace and Peace to You All,

Rev. Maria



## The Wonderful One

*There before me was a throne in heaven with someone sitting on it.*

Revelation 4:2

### READ REVELATION 4:4-11

In “*The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*”, Dorothy, the Scarecrow, the Tin Man, and the Cowardly Lion return to Oz with the broomstick that empowered the Wicked Witch of the West. The Wizard had promised, in return for the broomstick, that he would give the four their deepest desires: a ride home for Dorothy, a brain for the Scarecrow, a heart for the Tin Man, and courage for the Cowardly Lion. But the Wizard stalls and tells them to come back the next day.

While they plead with the Wizard, Dorothy’s dog Toto pulls back the curtain, behind which the Wizard spoke, to reveal that the Wizard isn’t a wizard at all, he’s just a fearful, fidgety man from Nebraska.

It’s said that the author, L. Frank Baum, had a serious problem with God, so he wanted to send the message that only we have the power to solve our problems.

In contrast, the apostle John pulls back the veil to reveal the truly Wonderful One behind the “curtain.” Words fail John (note the repeated use of the preposition *like* in the passage), but the point is well made: God is seated on His throne, surrounded by a sea of glass (Revelation 4:2, 6). Despite the troubles that plague us here on earth (chs. 2-3), God isn’t pacing the floor and biting His nails. He’s actively at work for our good, so we can experience His peace. – By **David H. Roper**

#### REFLECT & PRAY

**I’m grateful, God, that I can count on You to walk with me through everything. Thank You for Your peace. Amen.**

What do you fear today? How does it help you to know that God controls the troubles that surround you? How can you better trust and surrender to Him?

#### SCRIPTURE INSIGHT

In Revelation 4:8-11, the elders, angels, and four living creatures remind us God is worthy of worship. “The Lord God Almighty” (v. 8) is a term that means “powerful and immovable.” Additionally, God’s eternity and authority are reflected in the reference to Him as the one “who was, and is, and is to come” (v. 8). This indicates that He’s sovereign over time—past, present, and future. The elders show their honor of God by laying down their crowns—their symbols of authority—before Him (v. 10). He’s worthy of the praise of His creation (v. 11). – By **Julie Schwab**

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