



Carstairs-Bancroft United Church

February 4, 2021

**DAILY ENCOURAGEMENT
DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

By Rev. Maria Szabo Berces



Source: en.wikipedia.org

Beloved Carstairs Bancroft United Church Members,

The Our Daily Bread meditation I share with you today reminded me a situation when I wanted to heat up a soup quickly for lunch. I watched, and watched, and watched ... and it didn't quicken the boiling process at all. On the contrary, it seemed that reaching the right temperature lasted forever!

Isn't it true as we yearn for the circumstances, which enable us to go back to 'good old ways', after the pandemic upset all areas of life? It's been almost a year since we had to interrupt the previous forms of social gatherings and connecting. I don't want to repeat all the aspects of the aftermath caused by the virus. We know it well as we watch the news and experience the results among our family and friends; and as we wait, and wait, and wait ... for relief.

The pain of waiting is not new for humanity. The Prophet who lived thousands of years before us had the same anguish: "**How long?**" he asked from the Lord.

The good news of his book is that it reports the answer that Habakkuk received from the Almighty. And as he received an assurance that God has been present in history all the way through, if we listen, we may also hear the encouragement to have endurance in our waiting for ease.

Whatever powerless and vulnerable we may feel in face of the avalanche-events caused by people, disasters or viruses, we are given the choice how we spend the days and months on the halt. We are advised by the Psalmist to "**Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for him; do not fret ...**" (Psalm 37:7)

When we read Psalm 33, we can find this statement: "**We wait in hope for the Lord; he is our help and our shield. In him our hearts rejoice, for we trust in his holy name.**" (verses 20-21). And this joy and trust is not without a foundation, because we may also know that "**the word of the Lord is right and true; he is faithful in all he does.**" (verse 4).

So, as we wait for circumstances to turn safe and better, let us actively put our trust in the Holy One, who promised to be with us "**always, to the very end of the age.**" (Matthew 28:20)

Grace and Peace to You All,

Rev. Maria



Waiting for a Blessing

Though it linger, wait for it.

Habakkuk 2:3

READ HABAKKUK 1:12–2:4

A popular restaurant in Bangkok serves soup from a broth that has been cooking for forty-five years and is replenished a bit each day. The practice, called “perpetual stew,” dates back to medieval times. Just as some “leftovers” taste better a few days later, the extended cooking time blends and creates unique flavors. The restaurant has won multiple awards for the most delicious broth in Thailand.

Good things often take time, but our human nature struggles with patience. The question “How long?” occurs throughout the Bible. One poignant example is from the prophet Habakkuk, who begins his book by asking, “How long, Lord, must I call for help, but you do not listen?” (Habakkuk 1:2). Habakkuk (whose name means “grappler”) prophesied God’s judgment on his country (Judah) through the invasion of the ruthless Babylonian Empire, and he wrestled with how God could allow corrupt people to prosper as they exploited others. But God promised hope and restoration in His own time: “For the revelation [of God’s help] awaits an appointed time . . . Though it linger, wait for it; it will certainly come and will not delay” (2:3).

The Babylonian captivity lasted seventy years. By human reckoning that’s a long time, but God is always faithful and true to His Word.

Some of God’s best blessings may be long in coming. Though they linger, keep looking to Him! He prepares every blessing with perfect wisdom and care—and He’s always worth waiting for. – By **James Banks**

REFLECT & PRAY

Abba, Father, thank You for Your kindness and faithfulness in every season and blessing of life. Help me to look forward to You most of all. Amen.

What blessings are you waiting for from God? How do you plan to worship Him regardless of when blessings come?

SCRIPTURE INSIGHT

The prophecy of Habakkuk is more than 2,600 years old, yet the prophet spoke for us all when he asked God, “Why do you tolerate wrongdoing?” (1:3). Habakkuk realized the people of Judah must be judged for rejecting God, but the Babylonians, who inflicted the judgment, were even worse. How could God use them? God sees all evil and will judge it. He called Babylon “guilty people, whose own strength is their god” (v. 11). God reminded His people that “the righteous person will live by his faithfulness” (2:4). To turn away from this life-affirming choice will lead to despair. – By **Tim Gustafson**

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