



## Carstairs-Bancroft United Church

March 2, 2021

**DAILY ENCOURAGEMENT  
DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

**By Rev. Maria Szabo Berces**



Source: Our Daily Bread

Beloved Carstairs Bancroft United Church Members,

I was glad to read today's Our Daily Bread message because of more than one reasons.

First, it reminded me of the times when my daughter was in the same age as the writer's son in her memories. Looking back, I smile as I recall the struggles we had around 'nap time'. It seems that Xavier was not the only kid who tried to avoid it with all possible tools. I hadn't always been so successful as his mother as I tried to put Anita to sleep. Sometimes, I had to say: "Okay, let's get up, because I got really tired of this afternoon nap."

Second, it quotes one of my favorite Psalms: Psalm 91. I have been appreciating this poetry for decades. So much so that I have learned it by heart in Hungarian about twenty years ago.

Have you ever considered memorizing Bible quotes apart from Sunday school obligations? It's not only good for our brain, but it can give us joy and comfort as we are able to recall the words: "**He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart.**" (verse 4)

We don't know who wrote Psalm 91. Scholars think that it was written by one of the temple personnel – a priest or a Levite - in Jerusalem. If you take time to read the whole text, you will see that it refers to being protected from both dangers afflicted by human enemies and dangers to life from diseases.

Although we live in a much more 'advanced' society than those people in whose timeline this hymn was written, perils caused by human warring or viruses like Covid-19 can be still real threats for us. How strengthening it can be to quote promises like these for ourselves as we face those dangers or challenges!

I believe it makes a huge difference if we can face all sorts of trials with the assurance of God's love and providence! When we know and remember that *we are not alone* in life threatening situations, we will have more strength and endurance to carry on, and to hold on until we can see the remedy to our circumstances.

The writer of this Psalm talks on behalf of the Almighty by these words: "**Because he loves me,**" says the Lord, "**I will rescue him; I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name. He will call on me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him and honor him.**" (verses 14-15)

May we also experience that as we love the Holy One and are willing to acknowledge his name, "**he will command his angels concerning**" us, to guard us in all our ways.

Grace and Peace to You All,

Rev. Maria



## Safe and Still

*Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty.*  
Psalm 91:1

### READ PSALM 91

As a full-of-energy preschooler, my son Xavier avoided afternoon quiet time. Being still often resulted in an unwanted, though much-needed, nap. So, he'd wiggle in his seat, slide off the sofa, scoot across the hardwood floor, and even roll across the room to evade the quiet. "Mom, I'm hungry . . . I'm thirsty . . . I have to go to the bathroom . . . I want a hug."

Understanding the benefits of stillness, I'd help Xavier settle down by inviting him to snuggle. Leaning into my side, he'd give in to sleep.

Early in my spiritual life, I mirrored my son's desire to remain active. Busyness made me feel accepted, important, and in control, while noise distracted me from fretting over my shortcomings and trials. Surrendering to rest only affirmed my frail humanity. So I avoided stillness and silence, doubting God could handle things without my help.

But He's our refuge, no matter how many troubles or uncertainties surround us. The path ahead may seem long, scary, or overwhelming, but His love envelops us. He hears us, answers us, and stays with us . . . now and forever into eternity (Psalm 91).

We can embrace the quiet and lean into God's unfailing love and constant presence. We can be still and rest in Him because we're safe under the shelter of His unchanging faithfulness (v. 4). – By **Xochitl Dixon**

### REFLECT & PRAY

**Heavenly Father, thank You for providing a safe haven of unfailing love. Amen.**

In what ways have you seen God's protection in your life? How can you face difficulties knowing that God has you under His wings?

### SCRIPTURE INSIGHT

In trying to get Jesus to sin in the wilderness, Satan told Him: "[God] will command his angels concerning you, and they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone" (Matthew 4:6). This is a quote from Psalm 91:11-12. Intriguingly, the next verse in Psalm 91 says, "You will trample the great lion and the serpent" (v. 13). The lion and the serpent are two images used in Scripture to refer to the devil (1 Peter 5:8; Revelation 12:9). Jesus countered the devil's misuse of Scripture by quoting Scripture accurately, thus effectively "trampling" His enemy. – By **Tim Gustafson**

*Used with permission*