



Carstairs-Bancroft United Church

March 5, 2021

**DAILY ENCOURAGEMENT
DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

By Rev. Maria Szabo Berces



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Beloved Carstairs Bancroft United Church Members,

Whether we are regular church goers or not, most of us have an idea in our heads about God, and the characteristics of the Almighty. Even many of those who don't consider themselves believers acknowledge the presence of a 'Power' that is greater than us, humans. I heard the expression several times – particularly from younger people – that *“the Universe”* did or didn't want something to happen.

When things go off the rails, we have an inner instinct to find support outside of our limited existence. You probably heard several sayings about it. E.g., *“There are no atheists in foxholes”* or *“There are no atheists on a plane that's going down.”*

In my understanding, what distinguishes Christianity from some other religions is that it is relational. We are called to develop a personal connection with Jesus, and through Him, with his Father in Heaven. The Almighty has personal traits that a mere 'power' doesn't have. While we are taught that God is all-knowing and all-powerful; that the Holy One is **“everlasting to everlasting”**; this God was willing to come close to us and reveal himself in the person of Jesus.

Some statements about the Sovereign Lord might raise red flags in our understanding. For example, we were taught the ordinances of the Ten Commandments. The very first one is this: **“You shall not make for yourself an image in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me...”** (Exodus 20:4-5)

Do we hear only this part of the command, or we are ready to consider what comes next: **“...but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments.”** (Exodus 20:6)?

We can come across with numerous statements and witnesses that is about the love and care of the Source of Life. **“... the Lord your God is gracious and compassionate.”** (2 Chronicles 30:9) - wrote King Hezekiah millennia ago. King David confirmed this message centuries later: **“The Lord is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love.”** (Psalm 103:8) Then we have the beautiful declaration through Jesus: **“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)

Which characteristics of God do we believe in more? The jealous and punishing, or the gracious and compassionate? Are we willing to take time to further inquire the truth about the King of the Universe? When we do, we will find what James formulated like this: **“Come near to God and he will come near to you.”** (James 4:8)

Grace and Peace to You All,

Rev. Maria



Knowing the Father

Jesus answered: "Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father."

John 14:9

READ JOHN 14:8-11

According to legend, British conductor Sir Thomas Beecham once saw a distinguished-looking woman in a hotel foyer. Believing he knew her but unable to remember her name, he paused to talk with her. As the two chatted, he vaguely recollected that she had a brother. Hoping for a clue, he asked how her brother was doing and whether he was still working at the same job. "Oh, he's very well," she said, "And still *king*."

A case of mistaken identity can be embarrassing, as it was for Sir Beecham. But at other times it may be more serious, as it was for Jesus' disciple Philip. The disciple knew Christ, of course, but he hadn't fully appreciated who He was. He wanted Jesus to "show [them] the Father," and Jesus responded, "Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father" (John 14:8-9). As God's unique Son, Christ reveals the Father so perfectly that to know one is to know the other (vv. 10-11).

If we ever wonder what God is like in His character, personality, or concern for others, we only need to look to Jesus to find out. Christ's character, kindness, love, and mercy reveal God's character. And although our amazing, awesome God is beyond our complete comprehension and understanding, we have a tremendous gift in what He's revealed of Himself in Jesus. – By **Con Campbell**

REFLECT & PRAY

Dear God, help me to grow in my knowledge and appreciation of who You are. Amen.

How well do you know God's character? How does it match your perception of who Jesus is?

SCRIPTURE INSIGHT

Jesus' response to Philip's request to "show us the Father" (John 14:8) likely echoes Moses' request in Exodus 33:18 ("show me your glory"). In response to Moses' request, God promised to "cause all [His] goodness to pass" before Moses, but Moses wasn't permitted to see His face (Exodus 33:20). Jesus' response to Philip in John 14:9—"Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father"—makes it clear that Jesus is the fullest possible encounter with God's glory. Echoes of Moses' request can also be heard in John 1:14, which describes witnessing in Christ "the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father." John explains, "No one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son, who is himself God and is in closest relationship with the Father, has made him known" (v. 18). – By **Monica La Rose**

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