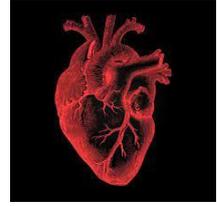




## Carstairs-Bancroft United Church

March 16, 2021

### DAILY ENCOURAGEMENT DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC By Rev. Maria Szabone Berces



Source: pinterest.com

Beloved Carstairs Bancroft United Church Members,

During one of the Vacation Bible Schools that I led in the past we learned the song "Remarkably Made" (Words and music by Jeremy Johnson and Paul Marino). The tune of its catchy refrain still pops into my mind time to time. Here you are the lyrics of the first verse:

Look at all the fishes swimming around  
Red and blue and green and yellow orange and brown  
So much imagination goes into God's creation  
It's beautiful, it's colorful and I can see how  
**I am, I am, I am Remarkably made.**  
**I am unique in each and every way.**  
**From my head down to my toes in my heart and in my soul**  
**I know I am, I am, I am Remarkably made.**

The Our Daily Bread meditation below made me to remember this song today. The book it mentions talks about the magnificence of creation, including ourselves. Although the devotion focuses on one single organ, the heart, we may know that from our head to our toes its true: we are all wonderfully and remarkably made!

If we think about the complexity of our body, and all the capacities that we have physically, mentally and spiritually it is fascinating! The medical sciences are still figuring out how our 'parts' work.

But it's even more amazing that when our physical reality might fail us, we still can find strength, hope and a future with our Creator God. It was formulated by someone way before the science has become as advanced as it is in our century. Asaph lived during the time of King David (1010-970 BC).

In our era, we know way much more about the world and the universe than those folks did. We might think that with this knowledge it is understandable to think and behave in more 'enlightened' ways. That we can trust the information; the medicine; and social security net we have; just to mention a few on the list.

However, people in those days also had their options to rely on other than their trust in the Almighty God. They could trust emperors and princes (political powers), horses and chariots (material means to gain and keep supremacy). In my view, humanity has always had the choice to pick in what to believe.

The good news for me that when we choose to trust in the Almighty God, we may experience the accuracy of King David's words: "**The Lord is near to all who call on him, to all who call on him in truth. ... The Lord watches over all who love him ...**" (Psalm 145:18; 20) And it's true even when our flesh and heart may fail.

Grace and Peace to You All,

Rev. Maria



## A Strong Heart

*My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.*

Psalm 73:26

### READ Psalm 73:21–28

In his book *Fearfully and Wonderfully Made*, co-authored with Philip Yancey, Dr. Paul Brand observed, “A hummingbird heart weighs a fraction of an ounce and beats eight hundred times a minute; a blue whale’s heart weighs half a ton, beats only ten times per minute, and can be heard two miles away. In contrast to either, the human heart seems dully functional, yet it does its job, beating 100,000 times a day [65–70 times a minute] with no time off for rest, to get most of us through seventy years or more.”

The amazing heart so thoroughly powers us through life that it has become a metaphor for our overall inner well-being. Yet, both our literal and metaphorical hearts are prone to failure. What can we do?

The psalmist Asaph, a worship leader of Israel, acknowledged in Psalm 73 that true strength comes from somewhere—Someone—else. He wrote, “My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever” (v. 26). Asaph was right. The living God is our ultimate and eternal strength. As the Maker of heaven and earth, He knows no such limitations to His perfect power.

In our times of difficulty and challenge, may we discover what Asaph learned through his own struggles: God is the true strength of our hearts. We can rest in that strength every day. – By **Bill Crowder**

### REFLECT & PRAY

**Heavenly Father, I thank You that when I’m weak, You’re strong. That when I’m overwhelmed, You’re enough. That when I’m confused, You have perfect clarity. Amen.**

How is your metaphorical heart like your spiritual heart? When you feel like you’re “losing heart,” how can you find strength in your loving, caring Father?

### SCRIPTURE INSIGHT

Asaph, whose name means “Jehovah has gathered,” is the author of twelve psalms (Psalms 50, 73–83). He was a Levite and one of David’s three chief musicians (1 Chronicles 6:31, 39–43; 15:16–17; 16:4–5; 25:1–2). He was also a prophet or seer (1 Samuel 9:9; 1 Chronicles 25:2; 2 Chronicles 29:30).

In Psalm 73—a Wisdom psalm that instructs readers on how to deal with life’s challenges and pain—Asaph is bitterly overwhelmed by the injustice of the prosperity of the wicked (vv. 1–14). But when he understands God’s presence in his life, his own glorious destiny, and the destined punishment of the wicked (vv. 23–28), his perspective on this present world changes. Certain that “earth has nothing” he desires (v. 25), Asaph embraces the sovereign God as his strength (literally “rock” in Hebrew), refuge, and permanent and eternal possession (vv. 25–28).

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