



Carstairs-Bancroft United Church

March 17, 2021

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



Source: Our Daily Bread

Beloved Carstairs Bancroft United Church Members,

The story of Tee Unn - that you can read below - reminded me about the simplest miracles of life. We don't really think about breathing as an extraordinary ability. But Covid-19 has taught a huge number of people about the gift of breathing. If we are lucky, and haven't learned it from experience, we definitely could hear it from reports: this novel virus attacks the lungs. Many of those who contracted Covid-19 and had severe reactions needed the aid of a breathing machine to stay alive.

After someone goes through the frightening exposure to these diseases will evaluate differently the seemingly ordinary capability to take a breath. It raises the question to me: how many things do we tend to take for granted in life?

Twenty or even ten years ago I couldn't imagine that stairs could ever be a problem for anybody. Now, I have a faint idea what it feels like noticing each and every tread. We don't realize how blessed we are when we are completely healthy ... until we run into a health issue or a disease; or spend enough time on this earth for aging.

In my view, we shouldn't wait for an eye-opening experience to express our joy of gratefulness for all the abilities and gifts we received from the Creator. We have the option to re-evaluate the beauties and bounties of life, and to enjoy every breath that we are able to take.

I found the reference of Psalm 150 by the writer of this meditation very fitting. When we realize that our lives and our talents – even our breathing – comes from the Creator of the heaven and the earth, we become not only more grateful, but wiser.

In Psalm 111 we can read: **“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom...”** (Psalm 111:10a) And when we read “fear”, it doesn't mean terror. The Hebrew word used in this text means reverence for God. This reverence can open our eyes and hearts to an appreciative viewpoint. The synonym of being appreciative is being glad.

It is not by accident that our ancestors found a great value in counting blessings. It gives us capacity to esteem what we have. It makes us able to say with the Psalmist: **“Let everything that has breath praise the Lord.”** (Psalm 150:6) or sing with our upbeat hymn:

“... Praise the Lord in the time of sorrow,
praise the Lord in the time of joy,
praise the Lord every moment,
nothing let your praise destroy.
Praise the Lord in the peace and quiet,
praise the Lord in your work or play,
praise the Lord everywhere in every way!” (VU # 245; verse 2)

Grace and Peace to You All,

Rev. Maria



Every Breath

I will put breath in you.

Ezekiel 37:6

READ EZEKIEL 37:1-3, 7-10, 14

When Tee Unn came down with a rare autoimmune disease that weakened all his muscles and nearly killed him, he realized that being able to breathe was a gift. For more than a week, a machine had to pump air into his lungs every few seconds, which was a painful part of his treatment.

Tee Unn made a miraculous recovery, and today he reminds himself not to complain about life's challenges. "I'll just take a deep breath," he says, "and thank God I can."

How easy it is to focus on things we need or want, and forget that sometimes the smallest things in life can be the greatest miracles. In Ezekiel's vision (Ezekiel 37:1-14), God showed the prophet that only He could give life to dry bones. Even after tendons, flesh, and skin had appeared, "there was no breath in them" (v. 8). It was only when God gave them breath that they could live again (v. 10).

This vision illustrated God's promise to restore Israel from devastation. It also reminds me that anything I have, big or small, is useless unless God gives me breath.

How about thanking God for the simplest blessings in life today? Amid the daily struggle, let's stop occasionally to take a deep breath, and "let everything that has breath praise the Lord" (Psalm 150:6). – By **Leslie Koh**

REFLECT & PRAY

Thank You, God, for every breath You've given me. Thank You for the smallest things in life and the greatest miracles of life. Amen.

What will you thank God for right now? How can you remind yourself to thank Him more often today?

SCRIPTURE INSIGHT

In the record of Ezekiel's vision of the dry bones (Ezekiel 37:1-14), two repeated words paint the scene in particularly vivid imagery: *bones* and *breath(e)*. These words set up the contrast between what Ezekiel sees and what God does. Twelve times the word *bone(s)* is repeated in these verses. The repetition creates the unmistakable image of death, but not that of the recently deceased. The death shown to Ezekiel by the Spirit of God is that of the long dead—no skin, muscle, or tendons are left; the dry bones lay scattered on the valley floor, no longer connected to each other.

In contrast to the dry bones is the promise and power of God's breath. It alone undoes death. When "the bones came together" (v. 7) and were covered with sinew and flesh, they still weren't alive. It was only when the breath of God entered them that they became a living army once again. – by **J.R. Hudberg**

Used with permission