



## Carstairs-Bancroft United Church

April 2, 2021

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



Source: Our Daily Bread

Beloved Carstairs Bancroft United Church Members,

On this Good Friday when we still remember and celebrate only via the Internet; when the past year seems so unbelievable, and the future still unfathomable, the Our Daily Bread message below feels a tangible encouragement for me.

It's good to be reminded that God has been always at work in our world, which is his creation.

It was true at that Good Friday when **“the Son of Man [was] lifted up, that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him.”** (John 3:14-15) And it is true during the upheavals of this pandemic.

As we remember the events of that long ago day, may we draw near to the Holy One who is crying with us in our heartaches, but also offers us companionship and comfort. May we yearn for the presence of the Spirit who is able to reveal us the bigger picture, which **“surpasses knowledge”** (Ephesians 3:19).

**“Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.”** (Ephesians 3:20-21)

Grace and Peace to You All,

Rev. Maria



## God at Work

*Surely, he was the Son of God!*

Matthew 27:54

### READ Matthew 27:50–54

“God is crying.” Those were the words whispered by Bill Haley’s ten-year-old daughter as she stood in the rain with a group of multiethnic believers in Jesus. They had come to Virginia’s Shenandoah Valley to seek God and make sense of the legacy of racial discord in America. As they stood on the grounds where former slaves were buried, they joined hands in prayer. Then suddenly the wind began to blow, and it started to rain. As the leader called out for racial healing, the rain began to fall even harder. Those gathered believed that God was at work to bring reconciliation and forgiveness.

And so was it at Calvary—God was at work. After the crucified Jesus breathed His last, “The earth shook, the rocks split and the tombs broke open” (Matthew 27:51–52). Though some had denied who Jesus was, a centurion assigned to guard Him had

come to a different conclusion: “When the centurion and those with him . . . saw the earthquake and all that had happened, they were terrified, and exclaimed, ‘Surely, he was the Son of God!’” (v. 54).

In the death of Jesus, God was at work providing forgiveness of sin for all who believe in Him. “God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people’s sins against them” (2 Corinthians 5:19). And what better way to demonstrate that we’ve been forgiven by God than to extend forgiveness to each other. – By **Arthur Jackson**

### **REFLECT & PRAY**

**Father, thank You for loving the world so much that You sent Jesus so I can be forgiven. Help me to demonstrate forgiveness toward others by the way I live. Amen.**

In what ways have you shared the forgiveness you’ve received from God with others, even those who are different from you? If you haven’t received forgiveness from God through the death of Jesus, what’s keeping you from doing so today?

### **SCRIPTURE INSIGHT**

Matthew records three events and their aftereffects that occurred at the moment of Jesus’ death (Matthew 27:51–53). First, the temple curtain that separated the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place was torn from top to bottom. Many theologians have written that this symbolized God removing the barrier that separated people from His presence (only the high priest was allowed to enter the Most Holy Place, and only once a year with a blood sacrifice). Second, there was an earthquake. This caused rocks to split and tombs to open. An earthquake was a fitting response of creation to the death of its Creator. Finally, after Jesus’ resurrection, the dead from the open tombs were brought back to life and entered the city—another fitting result. When the Giver of life defeated death, the power that raised Him spread to others who had died.

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