



Carstairs-Bancroft United Church

June 15, 2021

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



Source: Our Daily Bread

Beloved Carstairs Bancroft United Church Members,

Isiah's words from the Old Testament are just as well-known and encouraging as Jesus' assurance about God's love in John 3:16.

**1 "... Do not fear, for I have redeemed you;
I have summoned you by name; you are mine.
2 When you pass through the waters,
I will be with you;
and when you pass through the rivers,
they will not sweep over you.
When you walk through the fire,
you will not be burned;
the flames will not set you ablaze.
3 For I am the Lord your God,
the Holy One of Israel, your Savior; ..."**

(Isaiah 43:1-3)

God's patience and unconditional love towards every one of us amazes me whenever I bring it to mind.

We are not without err, generally speaking. It's most likely that all of us can recall times when we haven't done what was right, or could have been more faithful, kinder, or more compassionate. But God loves us regardless, and this love has the capacity to enkindle the best self in us.

As the words of being beloved, noticed and valued by the Holy One reaches our hearts, as we hear it as a personal message, it can provide us perseverance when we "**pass through the rivers**" or "**walk through the fire**". In my understanding it doesn't mean that we won't suffer or live in this body forever. But it means that "*God is with us in life, in death and life beyond death.*" (New Creed)

I believe we have to remember this especially in our challenges. In hard times, it is easy to lose heart, and we can become quick to feel abandoned or doomed. When our body suffers, when we grieve a dearly loved, when we don't feel control of our future, we have to hear "**... Do not fear...**".

The Lord our God has already given his one and only Son to redeemed us. Through Him people from every nation can consider themselves the recipients of the Almighty's message: "**... you are precious and honored in my sight, and ... I love you ...**" (Isaiah 43:4) Let us cling to this promise of the Holy One.

Grace and Peace to You All,

Rev. Maria



He Knows Your Name

I have summoned you by name; you are mine.

Isaiah 43:1

READ Isaiah 43:1-7

After breaking with our long-time church, my husband and I reunited with the fellowship after three long years. But how would people treat us? Would they welcome us back? Love us? Forgive us for leaving? We got our answer on a sunny Sunday morning. As we walked through the big church doors, we kept hearing our names. “Pat! Dan! It’s so great to see you!” As children’s author Kate DiCamillo wrote in one of her popular books, “Reader, nothing is sweeter in this sad world than the sound of someone you love calling your name.”

The same assurance was true for the people of Israel. We had chosen a different church for a time, but they had turned their backs on God. Yet He welcomed them back. He sent the prophet Isaiah to assure them, “Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine” (Isaiah 43:1).

In this world—where we can feel unseen, unappreciated, and even unknown—be assured that God knows each of us by name. “You are precious and honored in my sight,” He promises (v. 4). “When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you” (v. 2). This promise isn’t just for Israel. Jesus ransomed His life for us. He knows our names. Why? In love, we are His. – By **Patricia Raybon**

REFLECT & PRAY

Jesus, when I stray from Your arms and Your fellowship, summon me home by name. I’m so grateful to be Yours. Amen.

Why does God welcome His people back to Him? How has He shown that He knows you by name?

SCRIPTURE INSIGHT

In Isaiah 43, we see how the identity of God’s people is totally dependent upon the identity of God Himself. We might expect an Old Testament prophecy to be filled with dire warnings of cataclysmic judgment, and Isaiah certainly contains that. However, the book also provides immense comfort throughout its sixty-six chapters. In chapter 43, God promises to bring His exiled people back home (vv. 5–6). Typically, a conquered nation would be absorbed into the culture of their victorious enemies. But God’s people are different—even when being judged. Despite their long history of rebellion against God, the exiles remained His chosen people. God can’t deny His own character, and He tells His people, “I, even I, am he who blots out your transgressions, for my own sake, and remembers your sins no more” (v. 25). The identity of God’s people is wrapped up in His character. – By **Tim Gustafson**

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