



Carstairs-Bancroft United Church

July 9, 2021

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



Source: Our Daily Bread

Beloved Carstairs Bancroft United Church Members,

Today's Our Daily Bread meditation brought another Sunday message into my mind. It's a part of July 4th worship service, when Don Holmes presided during my holiday. Isn't it a great detail! Our church family can enjoy meaningful and memorable services provided by gifted volunteer worship leaders, and it applies to other Sundays and other worship leaders as well! 😊

Coming back to this particular sermon, Don talked about a despairing teacher, Helen, and her unusual assignment for her class. It had an amazingly positive influence on the kids, which they carried into their adult lives. This is what his conclusion was on this project: *"Now who would have thought that what a teacher did, out of desperation on a Friday afternoon, would have had such an impact on her students? One never knows. You never know how something you or I might do could affect someone else. But the funny thing is, we may not even think that what we did was all that important, but to someone else...well it makes all the difference in the world."*

So, as I can see, Helen and Aubrey in the devotion below became a part of a wider story of God's beloved people, which chronicle goes back to millennia, and also includes Jacob and his ancestors. The common point in these people's life was that despite of their gloom they could become blessings to others, even unknowingly. The *"worn pieces of notebook papers"*, *"Aubrey's note and that \$20"* or Jacob's stone set up as a pillar are testimonies that we have a God, who promises: **"I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go..."** (Genesis 28:15)

Especially when we recognize and acknowledge that even in our desperation God is there with us, our actions and reactions can be driven by divine strength and wisdom. Our lives or what we do may actually become the blessing that the Lord foretold.

The ultimate blessing through Jacob to the whole humanity of course came in Jesus, by whom the Almighty God became approachable for us. As Apostle Paul put it: **"In him and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence."** (Ephesians 3:12)

Are you in a desperate situation? The Holy One offers you the divine presence and support that will help to find strength, guidance, hope or peace that surpasses understanding. We are all encouraged to call on the Divine, and as we incline to do so, we may hear what Jacob did, along with countless others who listened: **"I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go..."** (Genesis 28:15)

Grace and Peace to You All,

Rev. Maria



God Is There

If God will be with me and watch over me . . . then the Lord will be my God.

Genesis 28:20–21

READ Genesis 28:10–15, 20–22

Aubrey bought a fleece-lined coat for her aging father, but he died before he could wear it. So, she tucked a note of encouragement with a \$20 bill into the pocket and donated the jacket to charity.

Ninety miles away, unable to endure his family's dysfunction any longer, nineteen-year-old Kelly left his house without grabbing a coat. He knew of only one place to turn—the home of his grandmother who prayed for him. Hours later he stepped off a bus and into his grandma's arms. Shielding him from the winter wind, she said, "We've got to get you a coat!" At the mission store, Kelly tried on a coat he liked. Slipping his hands into the pockets he found an envelope—with a \$20 bill and Aubrey's note.

Jacob fled his dysfunctional family in fear for his life (Genesis 27:41–45). When he stopped for the night, God revealed Himself to Jacob in a dream. "I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go," God told him (28:15). Jacob vowed, "If God will . . . give me food to eat and clothes to wear . . . , then the Lord will be my God" (vv. 20–21).

Jacob made a rudimentary altar and named the spot "God's house" (v. 22). Kelly takes Aubrey's note and that \$20 wherever he goes. Each serves as a reminder that no matter where we run, God is there. – By **Tim Gustafson**

REFLECT & PRAY

Father, You're the One I can always run to. Help me turn to You first. Amen.

When you've had to "run," whether literally or metaphorically, where did you go and to whom did you turn? How can you remind yourself of God's presence in your life?

Read *Who's My Neighbor?* at DiscoverySeries.org/Q0308.

SCRIPTURE INSIGHT

The significance of the words, "All peoples on earth will be blessed through you and your offspring" (Genesis 28:14), must not be lost in the dynamics of Jacob's dream. Jacob wasn't the first to hear God's promise concerning the destiny of his offspring. Similar words were communicated to Jacob's grandfather, Abraham, in Genesis 12:3 (see also 22:16–18) and to Isaac (26:3–4). In the New Testament, Peter pointed to this promise in his preaching (Acts 3:25–26; see Genesis 22:18; 26:4). Paul's writings similarly show that these promises found their ultimate fulfillment in Jesus (Galatians 3:16). – By **Arthur Jackson**

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