



Carstairs-Bancroft United Church

August 3, 2021

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



Source: Our Daily Bread

Beloved Carstairs Bancroft United Church Members,

This August, I plan to do the “daily encouragements” a bit differently, compared to the previous one-page messages. The emphasis will be on the Our Daily Bread devotion you can read below. The bits and pieces I plan to add to the meditations I choose are the followings:

- A focal thought/inspiration in one sentence.
- A little introduction (other than the Scripture insight at the bottom) to the book the meditation is based on. Fun facts – or just facts if you are not keen on data – that may increase our understanding of the time and circumstances in which these sacred texts were composed.
- My personal note on why I picked this particular devotion, and what I found particularly encouraging in the thoughts of the writer.

I trust that all these will give you food for thought, and will embolden and invigorate you in your everyday life and challenges.

Inspiration in one sentence

God’s words to Abram “**Do not be afraid, ... I am your shield, your very great reward.**” (Verse 1) are offered to all of us – thus to you as well - through Christ.

Did You Know?

- The Book of *Genesis* was written between 1446 and 1406 BC. In the thematic outline of these *fifty chapters*, today’s reading belongs to the first part of “Patriarchal History/The Life of Abraham” in sections 11-25 (The NIV Study Bible).
- By the time of Jesus, the first five books of the Bible were ascribed to Moses. In Hebrew, these five books are called the *Torah*, which means “teaching”, although it is often translated “law”. (Chalice Introduction to the Old Testament)

Personal Insight

I picked this devotion because it is connected to the theme of the previous two sermons, which is *prayer*. I believe that prayer to our faith is like breathing is to our bodies. As breathing provides us with life giving Oxygen, prayers are the living connection with the Holy One “in whom we live and have our being”.

How encouraging it is to appreciate that we are part of a greater correlation! That we are not alone, even when we or our lives are in a mess. The Source of Life encourages honest conversations and laments in all situations! And when we make efforts to take our heartbreaks or failures to God, our eyes might open to solutions; our hearts might gain strength and hope.

Grace and Peace to You All,

Rev. Maria



Of Prayer and Dust and Stars

Look up at the sky and count the stars.

Genesis 15:5

READ Genesis 15:1–6

Lara and Dave desperately wanted a baby, but their physician told them they were unable to have one. Lara confided to a friend: “I found myself having some very honest talks with God.” But it was after one of those “talks” that she and Dave spoke to their pastor, who told them about an adoption ministry at their church. A year later they were blessed with an adopted baby boy.

In Genesis 15, the Bible tells of another honest conversation—this one between Abram and God. God had told him, “Do not be afraid, Abram. I am . . . your very great reward” (v. 1). But Abram, uncertain of God’s promises about his future, answered candidly: “Sovereign Lord, what can you give me since I remain childless?” (v. 2).

Earlier God had promised Abram, “I will make your offspring like the dust of the earth” (13:16). Now Abram—in a very human moment—reminded God of that. But note God’s response: He assured Abram by telling him to look up and “count the stars—if indeed you can,” indicating his descendants would be beyond numbering (15:5).

How good is God, not only to allow such candid prayer but also to gently reassure Abram! Later, God would change his name to Abraham (“father of many”). Like Abraham, you and I can openly share our hearts with Him and know that we can trust Him to do what’s best for us and others. – By **James Banks**

REFLECT & PRAY

Loving heavenly Father, thank You for caring about even the most intimate details of my life. Help me to stay close to You in prayer today. Amen.

How do you think Abraham felt when God encouraged Him in such a difficult moment? What candid conversation do you need to have with God today?

SCRIPTURE INSIGHT

Abram was in Ur when God called him to go to Canaan (Genesis 15:7; Acts 7:2–4). God promised Abram a new land, numerous descendants, and great blessings (Genesis 12:1–3). At age seventy-five, Abram arrived in Canaan (vv. 4–6). After he parted ways with Lot, God reiterated His promises of property and posterity (13:14–17). Some years later (Abraham was probably in his early eighties, since Ishmael was born when he was eighty-six, 16:16), God incorporated these promises into a formal covenant (15:5–7). Since his wife Sarai was barren, and Abram remained childless, this was an impossible promise (11:30; 15:2). That “Abram believed the Lord, and he credited it to him as righteousness” (15:6) is the first expression of the doctrine of justification by faith in the Bible. Paul quoted Genesis 15:6 to show that even Abraham was justified by faith (Romans 4:3; Galatians 3:6; see also James 2:23). – By **K. T. Sim**

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