



Carstairs-Bancroft United Church
August 5, 2021
DAILY ENCOURAGEMENT
DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC
By Rev. Maria Szabone Berces



Source: Our Daily Bread

Beloved Carstairs Bancroft United Church Members,

Today's Inspiration in one sentence (or two 😊)

“And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.” (1 Corinthians 13:13)

Did You Know?

- The title in the Hebrew text is “Solomon’s Song of Songs”, meaning a “song by, for or about Solomon”. (The NIV Study Bible) This implies that the authorship remains an open question for scholars.
- The date of **Song of Songs** is unknown, but possibly as early as the tenth century BC. (The NIV Study Bible)
- The Song shares with the love poetry of many cultures its extensive use of highly sensuous and suggestive imagery drawn from nature. (The NIV Study Bible).
- The Bible – thus also this book – speaks of both wisdom and love as gifts of God, to be received with gratitude and celebration. In ancient Israel everything human came to expression in words: reverence, gratitude, anger, sorrow, suffering, trust, friendship, commitment, loyalty, hope, wisdom, moral outrage, repentance. In the Song, it is love that finds words that disclose its exquisite charm and beauty as one of God’s choicest gifts. (The NIV Study Bible)

Personal Insight

I found the story in the Our Daily Bread meditation below very moving and thrilling. What a thoughtfulness was put into this long-term planning by Alyssa’s dad! He made sure that his love of life will be celebrated at their wedding anniversaries and Valentine’s Days, even after he left this life to the next!

I agree with the NIV Study Bible’s point that *“both wisdom and love are gifts of God”*, and they are *“to be received with gratitude and celebration.”* I myself experienced that finding our soul mate and life-long companion is rather grace than our personal ‘achievement’. Many of us – especially the generations born beyond the 1950s - can probably remember dead ends while searching for such a partner.

As I can see, love between humans is a treasure that shouldn’t be taken for granted. But it also reminds us that beyond this ‘horizontal emotion’ we have also been created for a ‘vertical relationship’. The **„God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth”** (Genesis 14:22) would like us to remember what Moses put like this: **“Is he not your Father, your Creator, who made you and formed you?”** (Deuteronomy 32:6) The promise has been standing across the millennia: **“the Lord your God is God; he is the faithful God, keeping his covenant of love to a thousand generations of those who love him”** (Deuteronomy 7:9)

Grace and Peace to You All,
Rev. Maria



God's Love Is Stronger

Love is as strong as death.

Song of Songs 8:6

READ Song of Songs 8:6–7

In 2020, Alyssa Mendoza received a surprising email from her father in the middle of the night. The message had instructions about what to do for her mother on her parents' twenty-fifth anniversary. Why was this shocking? Alyssa's father had passed away ten months earlier. She discovered that he'd written and scheduled the email while he was sick, knowing he might not be there. He'd also arranged and paid for flowers to be sent to his wife for upcoming years on her birthday, future anniversaries, and Valentine's Day.

This story could stand as an example of the kind of love that's described in detail in Song of Songs. "Love is as strong as death, its jealousy unyielding as the grave" (8:6). Comparing graves and death to love seems odd, but they're strong because they don't give up their captives. However, neither will true love give up the loved one. The book reaches its peak in verses 6–7, describing marital love as one so strong that "many waters cannot quench [it]" (v. 7).

Throughout the Bible, the love of a husband and wife is compared to God's love (Isaiah 54:5; Ephesians 5:25; Revelation 21:2). Jesus is the groom and the church is His bride. God showed His love for us by sending Christ to face death so we wouldn't have to die for our sins (John 3:16). Whether we're married or single, we can remember that God's love is stronger than anything we could imagine. – By **Julie Schwab**

REFLECT & PRAY

Dear Jesus, thank You for loving me so much! Remind me of Your love each day and give me glimpses of it. Amen.

How do you feel knowing how much God loves you? What reminds you of His love for you?

SCRIPTURE INSIGHT

Song of Songs is traditionally attributed to Solomon (named in 1:1, 5; 3:7, 9, 11; 8:11–12). Therefore, this book is also called the Song of Solomon. Of the 1,005 songs composed by him (1 Kings 4:32), this is deemed his best. The New Living Translation begins the book by saying: "This is Solomon's song of songs, more wonderful than any other" (Song 1:1). The traditional view is that this book is an allegory of Christ's love for the church. But some interpreters today consider it an anthology of some twenty love poems, celebrating human love within the marital relationship (4:8–5:1). In Song 8:6–7, the bride celebrates her husband's exclusive and immeasurable love for her. This love "burns like blazing fire, like a mighty flame" (v. 6). The New International Version footnote gives an alternative rendering: "Like the very flame of the Lord" (which is how the NASB and ESV translate it), making this the only mention of God in this book. – By **K. T. Sim**

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