



Carstairs-Bancroft United Church
August 6, 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 😊)

“Can a mother forget the baby at her breast and have no compassion on the child she has borne? Though she may forget, I will not forget you!” (Isaiah 49:15)

Did You Know?

- Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and the Twelve are together known in the Hebrew canon as the “Latter Prophets”, and are often further divided into two groups: 1. *The Major Prophets* (from Isaiah to Daniel); 2. *The Minor Prophets* (from Hosea to Malachi)
- The Twelve Minor Prophets are so called because of their small size by comparison with the major prophetic books of Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel, and not at all suggesting that they are of minor importance.
- **Isaiah**, son of Amoz, is often thought of as the greatest of the writing prophets. His name means **“The Lord is salvation”**. He was married and had at least two sons.
- He was a contemporary of Amos, Hosea and Micah, beginning his ministry in 740 BC, the year King Uzziah died. He lived during the stormy period marking the expansion of the Assyrian Empire and the decline of Israel.

(The NIV Study Bible)

Personal Insight

As a prophet, Isaiah saw the consequences of not paying attention to the Lord God's guidance and instructions on both political and personal level. And of course, the decisions of the kings had an influence on the ordinary people's lives. During sieges and defeat everybody was hurt.

Isaiah fathomed the suffering – the losses, pain, humiliation, which was the fate of the conquered – that was brought on them by their actions, which stemmed from disloyalty to their God. But despite of the unfaithful decisions and behaviour of God's chosen people, “the Holy One of Israel” haven't abandoned them. So, Isaiah also foresaw the return of the exiles, which happened in 538/537 BC, due to the decree of Cyrus.

If Isaiah had seen the full dimensions of God's judgement and salvation, how much more insight we may have after knowing Christ, whose mission and ministry extends across millennia? We may still suffer from bad political decisions, wars, human greed, and now the whole globe has to face the devastating costs of global warming. But I believe that the Eternal God, who is faithful by nature, still guides and watches over those of us who want it. The promise of the Almighty put down between 740 and 680 BC is still valid for us, who live in 2021: “... **I will not forget you!**” (Isaiah 49:15)

Grace and Peace to You All,

Rev. Maria



Not Forgotten

I will not forget you!

Isaiah 49:15

READ Isaiah 49:14–18

“Uncle Arthur, do you remember the day you took me to the barbershop and the supermarket? I was wearing tan khakis, a blue-plaid oxford shirt, a navy-blue cardigan, brown socks, and brown Rockport shoes. The date was Thursday, October 20, 2016.” My nephew Jared’s autism-related challenges are offset by his phenomenal memory that can recall details like days and dates and the clothes he was wearing years after an event took place.

Because of the way he’s wired, Jared possesses the kind of memory that reminds me of the all-knowing, loving God—the Keeper of time and eternity. He knows the facts and won’t forget His promises or His people. Have you had moments when you’ve questioned whether or not you’ve been forgotten by God? When others appear to be healthier or happier or more successful or otherwise better off?

Ancient Israel’s less-than-ideal situation caused her to say, “The Lord has forsaken me, the Lord has forgotten me” (Isaiah 49:14). But that wasn’t the case. God’s compassion and care exceeded the natural bonds of affection that mothers have for their children (v. 15). Before embracing labels like “forsaken” or “forgotten,” think again of what God has done in and through His Son, Jesus. In the gospel that brings forgiveness, God has clearly said, “I will not forget you!” (v. 15). – By **Arthur Jackson**

REFLECT & PRAY

Father, when I’m tempted to feel neglected, forgotten, and abandoned, help me to ponder again the love You demonstrated by sending Jesus to die for me. Amen.

When have you felt alone, forsaken, and forgotten by God? How does processing the love of God expressed by sending Jesus to die for your sins help to counter feelings of being forgotten by Him?

SCRIPTURE INSIGHT

In ancient Mesopotamia, tattooing often showed identity. To have a tattoo might indicate whom you belonged to as a slave, or it could be the markings of your god. In today’s passage (Isaiah 49:14–18), the prophet Isaiah flips that concept. God engraves the names of His people onto His palms (v. 16). The imagery is one of permanence and deep intimacy. We can’t be separated from God. The metaphor of God’s “hand” or “hands” is used often in Scripture as a reference to His authority and strength and the security found in Him. Jesus highlighted this security with His comforting words in John 10, when He said of His sheep (those who put their faith in Him), “No one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father’s hand. I and the Father are one” (vv. 28–30). – By **Tim Gustafson**

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