



Carstairs-Bancroft United Church

August 11, 2021

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



Source: pinterest.com

Beloved Carstairs Bancroft United Church Members,

Today's Inspiration in one sentence

“Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life.”

(John 14:6)

Did You Know?

- “The gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke are referred to as the **synoptic Gospels** because they include many of the same stories, often in a similar sequence and in similar or sometimes identical wording.” (Wikipedia)
- The date of this Gospel is argued among scholars. Some dates it between the 50s and 70s AD. Some says its date is 80-90 AD, because the author makes a reference to the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD. (The Chalice Introduction to the New Testament; pg. 152; The NIV Study Bible)
- The theologians agree that the writer is *not* one of the Apostles. There is one thing that is not argued, and it is his Jewish heritage. This is indicated by his familiarity with the Torah, the Jewish Law, as well as Jewish practices. (Knowing Christianity by A.R.C. Leaney; pg. 38; The Chalice Introduction to the New Testament; pg. 153)
- Matthew's main purpose is to confirm for his Jewish-Christian readers that Jesus is their Messiah. He does this primarily by showing how Jesus in his life and ministry fulfilled the OT Scriptures (The NIV Study Bible)

Personal Insight

The Scripture passage below supports the quote in our last Sunday's message: **“... man does not live by bread only,”** (Deuteronomy 8:3) We are spiritual creatures, in whom hearts “eternity” has been set by God (Ecclesiastes 3:11). This is the reason why we have spiritual needs besides our physical needs, whether we acknowledge it or not. And this is the very reason why - for many of us - this need is formulated in the question: **“what must I do to inherit eternal life?”** (Mark 10:17)

Several stories and movies include the theme of searching for the water/chalice/plant that helps humans to keep their life forever. The good news of the Bible and the meditation below is that God granted access for all of us to life, which doesn't end as we are buried. As Jesus prayed before his death: **“Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.”** (John 17:3)

Some may complain about the ‘narrowness’ of Jesus' statement: **“I am the way...”**

My viewpoint is from the other way around: Thank God, that THERE IS a way through which we receive a promise and the hope regarding the future of our loved ones and our own: **“Because I live, you also will live.”** (John 14:19)

Grace and Peace to You All,

Rev. Maria



Accessible to All

Small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.

Matthew 7:14

READ Matthew 7:13–14

From a manmade bridge on the small Caribbean Island of Eleuthera, visitors can admire the stark contrast between the roiling dark blue waters of the Atlantic and the calm turquoise waters of the Caribbean Sea. Over time, storms washed away the original strip of land once marked by a natural stone arch. The glass window bridge that now serves as a tourist attraction on Eleuthera is known as “the narrowest place on earth.”

The Bible describes the road that leads to eternal life as narrow “and only a few find it” (Matthew 7:14). The gate is considered small because God the Son is the only bridge that can reconcile fallen man and God the Father through the power of the Holy Spirit (vv. 13–14; see John 10:7–9; 16:13). However, Scripture also says that believers from every people, nation, and societal rank can enter heaven and will bow before the King of Kings and worship together around His throne (Revelation 5:9). This phenomenal image of contrast and unity includes all of God’s beautifully diverse people.

Though we’re separated from God by our sin, every person God created is invited to enter eternity in heaven by walking this narrow path of reconciliation through a personal relationship with Christ. His sacrifice on the cross, resurrection from the tomb, and ascension to heaven is the good news, accessible to all and worth sharing today and every day. – By **Xochitl Dixon**

REFLECT & PRAY

God the Father, please empower me through Your Holy Spirit so I can show others the accessible path that leads to Your approachable Son, Jesus. Amen.

How did you respond after hearing the good news? How can you be more intentional about sharing it with others?

SCRIPTURE INSIGHT

Today’s passage (Matthew 7:13–14) begins the last section of the Sermon on the Mount. Over the centuries, these words of Jesus have become foundational, but when we slow down and absorb the imagery Jesus paints, we begin to feel their true weight. The words Jesus uses to describe the gates and roads (wide and broad/small and narrow) bring with them comfort and challenge. The first pair gives the hearer a sense of comfort and ease. There’s no challenge to crossing through a broad gate, and a wide path leaves plenty of room for exploration and wandering. Those who walk the wide path don’t need to focus or be deliberate. The small gate and narrow path, on the other hand, express intentionality. Choosing this door and path requires a choice and a focus on one’s actions. – By **J.R. Hudberg**

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