



Carstairs-Bancroft United Church

August 13, 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

“Give ear and come to me; listen, that you may live.”

(Isaiah 55:3)

Did You Know?

- The book of **Psalms** contains ancient Israel's favorite hymns and prayers, which were used in their worship of the Lord, the Great King.
- The titles “Psalms” and “Psalter” come from the Septuagint, the pre-Christian Greek translation of the Old Testament. The traditional Hebrew title is “*tehillim*”, meaning “*praises*”.
- The book was put into its final form in the 4th century BC. It has been often called the prayer book of the second temple, and was used in the synagogues as well.
- At the core of the theology of the Psalms is the conviction that the center of human life, history, and of the whole creation is God. The Lord created all things and preserves them. (The NIV Study Bible)

Personal Insight

During one of our Coffee and Conversations gatherings this May, we watched together Bill Hart's video titled “Shoulder Taps.” If you missed being part of this discussion, I recommend to search this recording on the YouTube. As it came up, there can be two reactions to these “shoulder taps”, when we feel the nudging in our hearts to do something. We either follow it, – even if it involves the risk of being embarrassed - or we shoo it off. It's not a good feeling when we could have done something good, and failed to use the opportunity. On the other hand, there is a question worth examining: are all of our promptings in accordance with loving the Lord and our neighbour?

As I can see, to make the right decisions in varied situations we need wisdom. We have to tune our ears to good advice. And the writers of Psalm 85 suggest that listening to the Lord helps us to choose the right path, to maintain resilience even in difficult or disheartening situations.

Through Isaiah, the Holy One invites us to “give ear” to his advice, which leads to prosperity and life. We need God's word and presence whether we relax or work hard; whether we enjoy happiness and success, or ask with the sons of Korah: **“Will you not revive us again, that your people may rejoice in you?”** (vs. 6)

Listening is something which requires our will, intention and time. We have to learn and practice effective listening. But when we **“listen to what God the Lord says”**, we find life and joy – as it is promised by the Almighty.

Grace and Peace to You All,

Rev. Maria



Listening Matters

I will listen to what God the Lord says.

Psalm 85:8

READ Psalm 85

“Come at once. We have struck a berg.” Those were the first words Harold Cottam, the wireless operator on the RMS Carpathia, received from the sinking RMS Titanic at 12:25 a.m. on April 15, 1912. The Carpathia would be the first ship to the disaster scene, saving 706 lives.

In the US Senate hearings days later, the Carpathia’s captain Arthur Rostron testified, “The whole thing was absolutely providential. . . . The wireless operator was in his cabin at the time, not on official business at all, but just simply listening as he was undressing. . . . In ten minutes maybe he would have been in bed, and we would not have heard the message.”

Listening matters—especially listening to God. The writers of Psalm 85, the sons of Korah, urged attentive obedience when they wrote, “I will listen to what God the Lord says; he promises peace to his people, his faithful servants—but let them not turn to folly. Surely his salvation is near those who fear him” (vv. 8–9). Their admonition is especially poignant because their ancestor Korah had rebelled against God and had perished in the wilderness (Numbers 16:1–35).

The night the Titanic sank, another ship was much closer, but its wireless operator had gone to bed. Had he heard the distress signal, perhaps more lives would have been saved. When we listen to God by obeying His teaching, He’ll help us navigate even life’s most troubled waters. – By **James Banks**

REFLECT & PRAY

Father, help me to stay close to You in my thoughts, words, and actions. Please use me as Your servant to bring Your hope to others. Amen.

In what ways will you stay attentive to God and the Scriptures today? How can doing so help you to help others?

SCRIPTURE INSIGHT

When the book of Psalms was being collected, it was organized into five books: 1–41; 42–72; 73–89; 90–106; and 107–150. Each book concludes with a statement of praise or blessing to God Himself. For example, Book III ends with Psalm 89:52: “Praise be to the Lord forever! Amen and Amen.” David is the most well known of the psalmists and most (though not all) of his psalms are found in Books I and II.

Each book is gathered around a particular theme. Book III, which contains Psalm 85, is one of the shorter books but is heavy with psalms of lament—many of which were composed by Asaph or the sons of Korah. With its emphasis on lament, Psalm 85, written by the sons of Korah as a cry for God’s rescue and renewal, fits very well in Book III. – By **Bill Crowder**

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