



Carstairs-Bancroft United Church

September 2, 2021

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



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Beloved Carstairs Bancroft United Church Members,

Today's Inspiration in one sentence

“Restore us, God Almighty; make your face shine on us, that we may be saved.” (Psalm 80:7)

Did You Know?

- Although the individual psalms in the **Psalter** are quite diverse in length and style, they all share a few core characteristics. First, they are poetry: densely written, packed with striking images, often alluding rather than spelling things out plainly.
- While Hebrew poetry does not exhibit the strict patterns of rhythm, rhyme, and stanza division that characterize much English poetry, the lines are usually approximately balanced in length, and the Hebrew text often contains sound-plays.
- The word psalm is Greek for “song”, and in ancient time many or most of the psalms were probably sung. A number of psalms have musical instructions at the top.
- The final feature that all the psalms have in common is that they are *worship literature*. The majority are prayers, addressed directly to God. The rest are praises and meditations that speak about God. Many of the psalms are structured for communal use, but e.g., Psalm 119 may have been used in individual meditation, using personal pronoun “I” and not “we”.

(Chalice Introduction to the Old Testament; page 184)

Personal Insight

During the previous weeks many of us experienced severe thunderstorms, even hail storms. It is heartbreaking to farmers or gardeners seeing the work of their hands to be vanished in a volatile strike by natural forces. And it can get even worse. We just have to switch on TV and see the destruction that Ida has been causing on the East coast of this continent.

Storms, both in nature and in life aren't new to humanity. We can see our fragility in comparison with those powers. Facing these enormous threats, we don't stand a chance. This is why the wisdom of the Scriptures, and the understanding of people of faith are so amazing to me. We can mutter along with David in awe: **“Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth! ... what is mankind that you are mindful of them, human beings that you care for them?”** (Psalm 8:1; 4)

We are assured that we have a Creator God who is mindful of us, and cares for us. When we turn to the Holy One in our thunderstorms, we also may get to this conclusion: **“I will give you thanks, for you answered me; you have become my salvation.”** (Psalm 118:21)

Grace and Peace to You All,

Rev. Maria



Carried Through the Storm

He stilled the storm to a whisper; the waves of the sea were hushed.

Psalm 107:29

READ Psalm 107:1–3, 23–32

During Scottish missionary Alexander Duff's first voyage to India in 1830, he was shipwrecked in a storm off the coast of South Africa. He and his fellow passengers made it to a small, desolate island; and a short time later, one of the crew found a copy of a Bible belonging to Duff washed ashore on the beach. When the book dried, Duff read Psalm 107 to his fellow survivors, and they took courage. Finally, after a rescue and yet another shipwreck, Duff arrived in India.

Psalm 107 lists some of the ways God delivered the Israelites. Duff and his shipmates no doubt identified with and took comfort in the words: "He stilled the storm to a whisper; the waves of the sea were hushed. They were glad when it grew calm, and he guided them to their desired haven" (vv. 29–30). And, like the Israelites, they too "[gave] thanks to the Lord for his unfailing love and his wonderful deeds for mankind" (v. 31).

We see a parallel to Psalm 107:28–30 in the New Testament (Matthew 8:23–27; Mark 4:35–41). Jesus and His disciples were in a boat at sea when a violent storm began. His disciples cried out in fear, and Jesus—God in flesh—calmed the sea. We too can take courage! Our powerful God and Savior hears and responds to our cries and comforts us in the midst of our storms. – By **Alyson Kieda**

REFLECT & PRAY

Thank You, God, for not leaving me to face the storms on my own. I need You! Amen.

When have you cried out to God in a "storm"? What was the result?

SCRIPTURE INSIGHT

The Hebrew word *yâm*, translated "sea" in Psalm 107:23, occurs nearly four hundred times in the Old Testament. The root word from which *yâm* is derived means "to roar." As is the case in Psalm 107:23, on many occasions the word is used of bodies of water—seas, rivers, lakes, etc. Biblical uses of the word sea, however, also aptly picture chaos—roaring, troublesome, untamed waters (see Psalm 46:2–3). Wycliffe Bible Encyclopedia comments: "To the land-loving Hebrews the sea was a dangerous and stormy place, and it furnished an apt simile for the troubled restless soul of the sinner (Isaiah 57:20) and for the rebellious, seething nations of the world (Daniel 7:2; Matthew 13:47; Revelation 13:1)." With such an understanding, some Bible scholars interpret the phrase "there was no longer any sea" in Revelation 21:1 to mean the absence of "restless godlessness." – By **Arthur Jackson**

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