



Carstairs-Bancroft United Church

September 16, 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

“Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.”

(Ephesians 4:32)

Did You Know?

- The author of **Ephesians** identifies himself as Paul. Although the usual personal greetings and references are absent in this letter, many scholars still think it was written by Paul, and intended to be a circular letter also for other churches. That is why the lack of the Pauline traits.
- Ephesus was the most important city in western Asia Minor (now Turkey). It had a harbor, and was also at an intersection of major trade routes, so Ephesus became a commercial center.
- The city took pride in hosting a pagan temple, dedicated to the Roman goddess Diana (Greek Artemis).
- In this letter Paul summarizes his gospel of salvation by grace through faith alone and describes the nature and role of the church in God's eternal plan.
(The NIV Study Bible; Ephesians)

Personal Insight

The daily devotion below reminded me about my appreciation of the “fix up times” our congregation undertook during the pandemic. All of our bathrooms were renovated along with the previous nursery, now commonly known as the ‘choir room’. Not to mention the minister’s study, which was the first among the modernized areas.

I believe, we shouldn’t take the time and efforts for granted that many of you spent to make our place of worship & gatherings nice and transformed. Thank you so much!

Apostle Paul reminded the people in Ephesus – and in the other communities of faith in which this letter was shared – that our hearts and spirits also need renewal and transformation. In case we are truly committed to become **“kind and compassionate to one another”** (Ephesians 4:32) and to be able to forgive each other, we have to let God’s Spirit to work in us and to shape us.

The good news is that when we yearn to be transformed this way, the Holy One is ready and willing to provide us with the assistance of the Spirit. As Jesus said: **“If you then ... know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!”** (Luke 11:13)

Grace and Peace to You All,

Rev. Maria



Fix Up Time

Be made new in the attitude of your minds.

Ephesians 4:23

READ Ephesians 4:20 – 32

It was time to give the inside of our home a fresh, new look. But just as I'd begun prepping a room for painting, our state government announced it would be halting the sale of many home-improvement items due to the COVID-19 pandemic. As soon as I heard the announcement, I rushed to the store and purchased the essential materials. You simply can't remodel without the proper supplies.

Paul had a bit of a remodeling project in mind when he wrote Ephesians 4. But the changes he was talking about went far beyond superficial alterations. Even though trusting Jesus as Savior makes us a new creation, there's still some ongoing work the Spirit needs to do. And it takes time and work for Him to accomplish "true righteousness and holiness" (Ephesians 4:24).

The presence of the Spirit makes needed changes on the inside that can help us reflect Jesus in our words and actions. He helps us replace lying with speaking "truthfully" (v. 25). He guides us to avoid sin in regard to anger (v. 26). And He directs us to speak words that are "helpful for building others up" (v. 29). These Spirit-controlled actions are part of the internal change that's manifested in things like kindness, compassion, and forgiveness (v. 32). The Spirit works in us to enable us to imitate Jesus Himself and reflect the heart of our heavenly Father (v. 24; 5:1). – By **Dave Branon**

REFLECT & PRAY

Loving God, thank You for making me a new creation in Christ. Help my actions, through Your guidance, to reflect the change You've made in me. Amen.

In what areas do you need the Holy Spirit to make real, heart-based improvement in you through His leading and strength? How will you get started?

SCRIPTURE INSIGHT

Ephesians 4:32 describes some of the evidence of a changed life: "Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you." Interestingly, these words were written to a culture very much like the world in which we live today. It was one in which the claims of Christ were disregarded, corruption was widespread throughout its institutions, and people were prone to use others to advance themselves. Yet, in the face of these problems the apostle Paul issued the challenge to believers in Christ for our heart-response to be in contrast to that culture. Kindness, compassion, and forgiveness express the countercultural life of Jesus Himself and remind us that our great goal and need is to be like Him. – By **Bill Crowder**

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