



Carstairs-Bancroft United Church

September 17, 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

"I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland."

(Isaiah 43:19)

Did You Know?

- We learned before - see August 6th daily message - that **Isaiah** belongs to the so called "*Major Prophets*" in the Hebrew Bible, and this is because of the length of the book connected to his name.
- Scholars date the Book of Isaiah between 740 and 680 BC. Many of them challenge the claim that Isaiah wrote both halves of the book (chapters 1-39 and chapters 40-66) that bears his name. Yet his is the only name attached to it.
- The strongest argument for the unity of Isaiah is the expression of "***the Holy One of Israel***", a title for God that occurs 12 times in chapter 1-39 and 14 times in chapters 40-66. Outside Isaiah it appears in the Old Testament only 6 times.
- In his book Isaiah predicts imminent judgement – but eventual restoration – for the people of Judah and Jerusalem

(The NIV Study Bible; Isaiah)

Personal Insight

The daily devotion below made me think of the complexity and changing seasons of our lives.

We endure several transitions in our personal existence from birth to death. All these shifts come with more or less anxiety and fear. Even if you don't remember how you felt when started kindergarten or school, you probably have more recent memories of your children/grandchildren/great-grandchildren being excited (and maybe a little bit scared) about the new challenges and peers as they entered into the education system. Then comes university and/or workforce market; having little kids of our own, then seeing them to grow, then leaving our 'nest'. We hardly blink a few and then comes retirement if we are blessed to get to that age. I believe, all these seasons have its blessings and beauties, especially when we are able to walk it along with God.

But it is not only us, individuals who undergo changing seasons. History in large goes through periodical transitions throughout the millennia. And during these shifts there are rules and practices that we got used to, and to which we cling to; just as the vicar's congregation in the attached story. In my experience, when our priority is to hang on to the Holy One in these stages, we may experience the needed renewal that the Almighty is willing to bring into our lives, both as individuals and as a community.

Grace and Peace to You All,

Rev. Maria



Move Your Fence

See, I am doing a new thing!

Isaiah 43:19

READ Isaiah 43:18 – 21

The village vicar couldn't sleep. As World War II raged, he'd told a small group of American soldiers they couldn't bury their fallen comrade inside the fenced cemetery next to his church. Only burials for church members were allowed. So, the men buried their beloved friend just outside the fence.

The next morning, however, the soldiers couldn't find the grave. "What happened? The grave is gone," one soldier told the reverend. "Oh, it's still there," he told him. The soldier was confused, but the churchman explained. "I regretted telling you no. So, last night, I got up—and I moved the fence."

God may give fresh perspective for our life challenges too—if we look for it. That was the prophet Isaiah's message to the downtrodden people of Israel. Instead of looking back with longing at their Red Sea rescue, they needed to shift their sight, seeing God doing new miracles, blazing new paths. "Do not dwell on the past," He urged them. "See, I am doing a new thing!" (Isaiah 43:18–19). He's our source of hope during doubts and battles. "I provide water in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland, [providing] drink to my people, my chosen [people]" (v. 20).

Refreshed with new vision, we too can see God's fresh direction in our lives. May we look with new eyes to see His new paths. Then, with courage, may we step onto new ground, bravely following Him. – By **Patricia Raybon**

REFLECT & PRAY

Merciful God, thank You for providing fresh perspective for my life in You. Refresh my sight to see new ground to walk with You. Amen.

What new thing would God like to accomplish in your life? What new ground has God led you to and what will you do with it?

SCRIPTURE INSIGHT

God refers to Israel as "my people, my chosen, the people I formed for myself" (Isaiah 43:20–21). But why would He select one family from all others, especially one so unworthy (vv. 22–28)? The answer, alluded to in verse 21, echoes God's explanation to Abraham in Genesis. He chose one family for a special role in His plan to bless all (Genesis 12:1–3). The story unfolds at Sinai where God tells His chosen people that as witnesses to His rescuing power, He's making them into a "kingdom of priests" (Exodus 19:4–6). Later, Peter would use similar words to explain how God is now choosing people of all nations to be a new kind of kingdom, priesthood, and witness to the One who calls us out of darkness into the light (1 Peter 1:1–2; 2:9–10). We're chosen to be witnesses to the living, all-powerful God of grace. – By **Mart DeHaan**

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