



## Carstairs-Bancroft United Church

October 21, 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

**“God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the Spirit and in truth.”**

(John 4:24)

#### Did You Know?

- The author is the apostle **John**, “the disciple whom Jesus loved” (13:23). He was prominent in the early church but is not mentioned by name in this Gospel - which would be natural if he wrote it, but hard to explain otherwise.
- The author knew Jewish life well, as seen from reference to popular Messianic speculations; to the hostility between Jews and Samaritans; and to Jewish customs, such as the duty of circumcision on the eighth day taking precedence over the prohibition of working on the Sabbath. He knew the geography of the Holy Land, locating Bethany about two miles from Jerusalem, and mentioning Cana, a village not referred to in any earlier writing known to us. The Gospel of John has many touches that appear to reflect the recollections of an eyewitness, such as the house at Bethany being filled with the fragrance of the broken perfume jar. Early writers like Irenaeus and Tertullian say that John wrote this gospel, and other evidence agrees.
- There are two views of the dating of this Gospel: 1. The traditional view places it toward the end of the first century, c. AD 85 or later. 2. More recently, some interpreters have suggested an earlier date, perhaps as early as the 50s and no later than 70.
- John presents Jesus as the Word, the Messiah and the incarnate Son of God, who has come to reveal the Father and bring eternal life to all who believe in him.

(The NIV Study Bible; 2 Corinthians)

#### Personal Insight

I remember the time - before Covid-19 - when members of our church family couldn't imagine and didn't feel comfortable with online or recorded worship services. And some of us still haven't been 'befriended' with this type of gathering. Technology can be a nuisance when it doesn't work, and not all of us have the experience or hardware to make a good use of the new methods we learned during the pandemic.

Still, many of you could hear from me how grateful I have been for Zoom and the novel ways of keeping in touch and worshipping together. It's nice to come together in our sanctuary. Nevertheless, we learned during the past eighteen months that *God is not limited* to our physical spaces. As Jesus explained it to Nicodemus **“The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going.”** (John 3:8) We can and are called to worship God anyplace we are. We just need to be resilient and not giving up being connected with the Holy One - and with one another - in any circumstances.

Grace and Peace to You All,

Rev. Maria



## Wherever We Worship

*A time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks.*

John 4:23

### READ John 4:7–24

Intense pain and a debilitating headache prevented me from attending services with my local church family . . . again. Grieving the loss of community worship, I watched an online sermon. At first, complaints soured my experience. The poor sound and video quality distracted me. But then a voice on the video warbled a familiar hymn. Tears flowed as I sang these words: “Be Thou my vision, O Lord of my heart. Naught be all else to me save that Thou art. Thou my best thought, by day or by night. Waking or sleeping, Thy presence my light.” Focusing on the gift of God’s constant presence, I worshiped Him while sitting in my living room.

While Scripture affirms the vital, essential nature of corporate worship (Hebrews 10:25), God’s not bound within the walls of a church building. During Jesus’ chat with the Samaritan woman at the well, He defied all expectations of the Messiah (John 4:9). Instead of condemnation, Jesus spoke truth and loved her as she stood next to that well (v. 10). He revealed His intimate and sovereign knowledge of His children (vv. 17–18). Proclaiming His deity, Jesus declared that the Holy Spirit evoked true worship from the hearts of God’s people, not from a specific physical location (vv. 23–24).

When we focus on who God is, what He’s done, and all He’s promised, we can rejoice in His constant presence as we worship Him with other believers, in our living rooms . . . and everywhere! – By **Xochitl Dixon**

### REFLECT & PRAY

**Amazing God, please help me worship You as I rejoice in who You are, what You’ve done, and all You promise to do. Amen.**

Where do you enjoy worshipping God? How do you enjoy His presence and experience joy while worshipping Him?

### SCRIPTURE INSIGHT

Who were the Samaritans? According to 2 Kings 17, after the Northern Kingdom of Israel was defeated by Assyria in 722 bc and most of its people taken into exile, other captured peoples were brought in to populate the region known as Samaria (v. 24). When they first arrived, they didn’t “worship the Lord,” and so God sent lions among them (v. 25). Then the king of Assyria sent a Jewish priest to the land to teach the people how to worship God, but the people continued to worship other gods (vv. 27–29). The Samaritans came from this exchange of peoples and mixture of beliefs. – By **Alyson Kieda**

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