



Carstairs-Bancroft United Church

December 1, 2021

DAILY ENCOURAGEMENT

DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC

By Rev. Maria Szabone Berces



Source: unsplash.com

Beloved Carstairs Bancroft United Church Members,

Today's Inspiration in one sentence

"Show me the way I should go, for to you I entrust my life." (Psalm 143:8)

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 150 psalms gathered in the Psalms are divided into five books by scholars: Book I: Ps 1-41; Book II: Ps. 42-72; Book III: Ps. 73-89; Book IV-V: Ps. 90-150. A final collection of eight Davidic psalms - Psalm 138-145 - bring the Psalter toward its close. While much in some of these psalms points to a later, even postexilic date, they clearly echo the language and concerns of the earlier Davidic psalms. The collection is framed by two songs of praise. Within this frame have been placed six prayers, which belong to the individual psalms.
- In Psalm 143, the remembrance of God's past acts of deliverance encourages the author in his appeal.

(The NIV Study Bible; Psalms)

Personal Insight

A sentence grabbed my attention from the daily devotion you can read on the next page: *"Sometimes when you're disappointed by people, you turn to something else..."* And this reminded me about an online conversation in which someone brought up the cause of a number of ministers leaving their job: they prayed, and prayed, and their prayers hadn't been answered. So, can God, too, disappoint us to a measure that we just turn to something else? As I can see, it is a pitfall that ultimately causes us just as much pain as it causes to the Almighty.

Jesus was born to be the Emmanuel, which means "God is with us". In him we can see God's love; in his sacrifice we are presented with the perfect solution for reconciliation between humanity and the Creator. Despite of our alienation, God came to us to offer the unconditional love, available for us all. As Paul puts it: **"But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us."** (Romans 5:8) This is why the Christ Child was born on that first Christmas: to show us God's unconditional love, and to encourage us to turn to God when our "spirits grow faint".

Grace and Peace to You All,

Rev. Maria



Labrador Angel

Let the morning bring me word of your unfailing love.

Psalm 143:8

READ Psalm 143

In 2019, Cap Dashwood and his sweet black lab companion, Chaela (“Chae” in memory of his lab who died; “la,” Dashwood’s abbreviation for “Labrador angel”), accomplished something remarkable: reaching a mountain summit each day for 365 consecutive days.

Dashwood has a moving story to tell. He left home at sixteen, explaining simply, “Bad family life.” But these past wounds led him to find healing elsewhere. He explains, “Sometimes when you’re disappointed by people, you turn to something else. You know?” For Dashwood, mountain climbing and the unconditional love of his black lab companion has been a big part of that “something else.”

For those of us, like myself, who deeply love our animal companions, a big piece of why we do is the sweet, utterly unconditional love they pour out—a kind of love that’s rare. But I like to think the love they effortlessly give points to a much greater and deeper reality than the failures of others—God’s unshakable, boundless love upholding the universe.

In Psalm 143, as in many of his prayers, it’s only David’s faith in that unshakable, “unfailing love” (v. 12) that tethers him to hope in a time when he feels utterly alone. But a lifetime of walking with God gives him just enough strength to trust that the morning will “bring me word of your unfailing love” (v. 8).

Just enough hope to trust again and to let God lead the way to paths unknown (v. 8).
– By **Monica La Rose**

REFLECT & PRAY

Loving God, thank You for showing me how to believe in love and joy again. Help me to be a channel of that hope for others. Amen.

What signs of God’s unfailing, unending love do you see in the world around you? How have your experiences of the love of God through others or even animal companions given you renewed hope and courage?

SCRIPTURE INSIGHT

Church tradition has categorized Psalm 143 as one of the seven penitential psalms (psalms of confession) in which the writer expresses sorrow and repentance for sins. But only verse 2 fits that description neatly. The primary point of the poem is David’s desperate request for deliverance. Verses 3–4 outline the problem: he’s hiding from his enemy—quite possibly his own son Absalom. All the remaining verses address God directly, either appealing to Him for help or extolling His righteousness and recalling His previous help in times of need. The penitential aspect of the second verse provides a model for us in our own pleas to God for deliverance from danger. The greatest rescue we need is from our own sin.

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