



Carstairs-Bancroft United Church
February 15, 2022
DAILY ENCOURAGEMENT
DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC
By Rev. Maria Szabone Berces



Photo: Our Daily Bread

Beloved Carstairs Bancroft United Church Members,

Today's Inspiration in one sentence
"... for love is as strong as death ..." (Song of Songs 8:7)

Did You Know?

- The title in the Hebrew text is "Solomon's **Song of Songs**", meaning a "song by, for or about Solomon". This implies that the authorship remains an open question for scholars.

- The date of Song of Songs is unknown, but possibly as early as the tenth century BC.

- The Song shares with the love poetry of many cultures its extensive use of highly sensuous and suggestive imagery drawn from nature. To find the key for unlocking the Song, interpreters have looked to prophetic, wisdom and apocalyptic passages of Scripture, as well as to ancient Egyptian and Babylonian love songs, traditional Semitic wedding songs, and songs related to ancient Mesopotamian fertility religions.

- The description of love in 8:6-7 seems to confirm that the Song belongs to Biblical wisdom literature and that it is wisdom's description of an amorous relationship. The Bible speaks of both wisdom and love as gifts of God, to be received with gratitude and celebration.

- In ancient Israel everything human came to expression in words: reverence, gratitude, anger, sorrow, suffering, trust, friendship, commitment, loyalty, hope, wisdom, moral outrage, repentance. In the Song, it is love that finds words that disclose its exquisite charm and beauty as one of God's choicest gifts.

(The NIV Study Bible; Song of Songs)

Personal Insight

Valentine's Day being with just one sleep behind us, the meditation below has a good relevance. Although our culture dedicates one day to celebrate love, we are reminded that love has always been surrounding us, and willing to stay with us even to **"old age and gray hairs."** (Isaiah 46:4)

We can feel to be blessed if this reality is reflected in our human relationships. Whether we have a soul mate, family members or friends to share in this emotion or not, we may know that our Creator God is always there for us. The Almighty is ready to cover us with protective feathers, as Psalm 91 expresses: **"... under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart."** (Psalm 91:4)

When we are able to remember this, and to rely on God's faithfulness, each day becomes "Valentine's Day". The Holy One is able to revive and boost our human relationships, and make us feel beloved even when we are 'alone' in social standards. May our hearts rejoice in God's gift, and resound the words of our hymn: *"... we thank you, God, O holy God, for all your love."* (VU # 520)

Grace and peace to you all,

Rev. Maria



The Power of Love

Many waters cannot quench love.

Song of Songs 8:7

READ Song of Songs 8:6–7

Two octogenarians, one from Germany and the other from Denmark, were an unlikely couple. They had each enjoyed sixty years of marriage before being widowed. Though living only fifteen minutes apart, their homes were in separate countries. Still, they fell in love, regularly cooking meals and spending time together. Sadly, in 2020, due to the coronavirus, the Danish government closed the border crossing. Undeterred, every day at 3:00 p.m., the two met at the border on a quiet country lane and, seated on their respective sides, shared a picnic. “We’re here because of love,” the man explained. Their love was stronger than borders, more powerful than a pandemic.

The Song of Songs offers an impressive display of love’s invincible power. “Love is as strong as death,” Solomon insisted (8:6). None of us escapes death; it arrives with a steely finality we can’t break. And yet love, the writer said, is every bit as strong. What’s more, love “burns like a blazing fire, like a mighty flame” (v. 6). Have you ever watched a fire exploding in feverish rage? Love—like fire—is impossible to contain. “Many waters cannot quench love.” Not even a raging river can sweep love away (v. 7).

Human love, whenever it’s selfless and true, offers reflections of these characteristics. However, only God’s love offers such potency, such limitless depths, such tenacious power. And here’s the stunner: God loves each of us with this unquenchable love. –
By **Winn Collier**

REFLECT & PRAY

God, I need Your powerful, deep love. I need Your love that won’t be extinguished and won’t let me go. Will You show me this love today? Amen.

How does love in this life reflect the love shared by God the Father, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit? How do you sense God loving you now?

SCRIPTURE INSIGHT

The Song of Songs, or Song of Solomon, has long mystified Bible students—particularly in terms of how we’re to understand its inclusion in the Scriptures. This sense of mystery has led to a variety of interpretations. Three main views are held regarding the purpose of the Song. One interpretation holds that it’s a metaphor describing God’s love for Israel and His care for her as His chosen people. Second, it’s historically been viewed by many Bible teachers to be a “type” (representative picture) of Christ and the church, perhaps even anticipating Paul’s expressions of Christ’s love for the church in Ephesians 5. Finally, it’s seen by some modern scholars as a celebration of the love between husband and wife and how that love manifests itself physically and intimately. - By **Bill Crowder**

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