



Carstairs-Bancroft United Church

April 22, 2022

**DAILY ENCOURAGEMENT
DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC
By Rev. Maria Szabone Berces**



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Beloved Ones,

Today's Inspiration in one sentence

“Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.”

(Hebrews 2:18; NIV)

Did You Know?

AUTHOR

Not stated (contrary to Paul's usual practice). The Letter to the **Hebrews** was commonly called “*The Epistle of Paul to the Hebrews*” from about AD 400 to 1600. Since the Reformation it has been widely recognized that Paul could not have been the writer.

Luke, Barnabas, and Apollos have all been suggested as possible authors, all associated with Paul. The readers certainly knew who the author was, as evidenced by his personal comments.

DATE

Theologians date the letter about AD 67-70, before the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple. Their reason is that if it had been written after this date, the author almost certainly would have mentioned this significant event.

DETAILS

The recipients of this letter were primarily Jewish converts (hence the name “Hebrews”) who were familiar with the Old Testament and who were being tempted to revert to Judaism or to Judaize the gospel.

This letter emphasizes the superiority of Christianity to Old Testament Judaism. Jewish Christians, some of whom were apparently wavering in their commitment to Jesus, are reminded that Christ “is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises” (8:6) - a once-for-all sacrifice on the cross that provides “eternal redemption for us (9:12).

(The NIV Study Bible; Hebrews; & Know Your Bible; Barbour Publishing)

Personal Insight

Don't we all want to be loved and valued? In my understanding this is one of the deepest and most crucial human desires. Those of us who grow up without supportive love are permanently marred by that experience.

The devotion below reminds us that beyond our human relationships, love is offered for us in a very tangible and personal way. We have a God, who in his great love came as close to us as possible. Kate Bowler formulated it very nicely in her “Good Enough” book: “*This is a God who knows my humanity inside and out. ... Not simply because the Word formed us (Genesis 1:27), knit us together in our mothers' wombs (Psalm 139:13), ... but because God wore our skin.*” (Good Enough; pages 156-157) If you doubt that God loves you, remember Jesus, who was born as a baby, and was ready to face a violent death. “**For God so loved the world...**” (John 3:16) - and *you* in this world.

Grace and peace to you all, Rev. Maria



Like Us, for Us

For this reason, he had to be made like them, fully human in every way.

Hebrews 2:17

READ Hebrews 2:10 – 18

Derek noticed his son didn't want to take off his shirt to swim and realized it was because he was self-conscious about a birthmark that covers parts of his chest, belly, and left arm. Determined to help his son, Derek underwent a lengthy and painful tattooing process to create an identical mark on his own body.

Derek's love for his son reflects God's love for His sons and daughters. Because we, His children, "have flesh and blood" (Hebrews 2:14), Jesus became like us and took on a human form and "shared in [our] humanity" to free us from the power of death (v. 14). "He had to be made like [us], fully human in every way" (v. 17) to make things right with God for us.

Derek wanted to help his son overcome his self-consciousness and so made himself "like" him. Jesus helped us overcome our far greater problem—slavery to death. He overcame it for us by making Himself like us, bearing the consequence of our sin by dying in our place.

Jesus' willingness to share in our humanity not only secured our right relationship with God but enables us to trust Him in our moments of struggle. When we face temptation and hardship, we can lean on Him for strength and support because "he is able to help" (v. 18). Like a loving father, He understands and cares. – By **Kirsten Holmberg**

REFLECT & PRAY

Thank You, Jesus, for taking on a human form to relate to me in my struggles and pay for my wrongdoings. I want to trust You more. Amen.

How might Jesus relate to the struggle you're facing right now? What keeps you from leaning on Him in this moment?

SCRIPTURE INSIGHT

In Hebrews 2, the writer points to the "pioneer" of salvation—Jesus Himself (v. 10). Hebrews 12:2 uses the same word (*archēgos*) to speak of Him as the pioneer of our faith. Other translations render the term as "author," "originator," "founder," or "captain." The term connotes one who initiates. In Romans 8:29, the apostle Paul calls Jesus "the firstborn among many brothers and sisters." Integral to His pioneering work is the fact that "both the one who makes people holy [Christ] and those who are made holy [those who believe in Him] are of the same family. So, Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers and sisters" (Hebrews 2:11). Not only are we brothers and sisters with each other, but also with Christ Himself. – By **Tim Gustafson**

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