



DAILY ENCOURAGEMENTS

Carstairs-Bancroft United Church

December 14, 2023



Photo: Our Daily Bread

THE SKILL OF COMPASSION

Be devoted to one another in love . . . joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer.

Romans 12:10-12

READ Romans 12:9-21

“A thorn has entered your foot—that is why you weep at times at night,” wrote Catherine of Sienna in the fourteenth century. She continued, “There are some in this world who can pull it out. The skill that takes they have learned from [God].” Catherine devoted her life to cultivating that “skill,” and is still remembered today for her remarkable capacity for empathy and compassion for others in their pain.

That image of pain as a deeply embedded thorn that requires tenderness and skill to remove lingers with me. It’s a vivid reminder of how complex and wounded we are, and of our need to dig deeper to develop true compassion for others and ourselves.

Or, as the apostle Paul describes it, it’s an image that reminds us that loving others like Jesus does requires more than good intentions and well-wishes—it requires being “devoted to one another” (Romans 12:10), “joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer” (v. 12). It requires being willing to not only “rejoice with those who rejoice” but to “mourn with those who mourn” (v. 15). It requires all of us.

In a broken world, none of us escape unwounded—hurt and scars are deeply embedded in each of us. But deeper still is the love we find in Christ; love tender enough to draw out those thorns with the balm of compassion, willing to embrace both friend and enemy (v. 14) to find healing together.

By **Monica La Rose**

PRAY & REFLECT

Loving God, thank You for Your compassion. Help me to love others like that. Amen

When have you experienced the healing power of compassion? How can you cultivate a community of healing?

SCRIPTURE INSIGHT

Paul's description of a life of loving service in Romans 12:9-21 begins by emphasizing, "Love must be sincere" (v. 9). Sincere here is literally "not hypocritical." The word hypocritical at the time could refer to an actor's mask. So the idea the apostle is warning against is putting on a mask or pretense of loving each other that's only superficial. In his commentary on this passage, the Reformer John Calvin described how remarkable it is that almost everyone is prone to pretend to love others when they actually don't. He said, "they not only deceive others, but persuade themselves" that they love those whom they actually both neglect and treat badly. Because the danger of self-deception in how we relate to others is so great, Paul describes in detail what a life of genuinely loving and serving others looks like. – By **Monica La Rose**

Used with permission