

*CRIBB<S>NOTE – January 20, 2008*

Is peace possible? This has been a very disturbing week. The world is aflame with the heat of war. Where combatants are not engaged in brutal, deadly fighting, crime and domestic violence continue to rage. There is nearly no escape from the ravages of broken peace. Who among us is not touched by the decadent activities that destroy human life and threaten nature? Who sleeps comfortably at night while children and innocent people live in terror? Is it possible to end the curse and restore civil life?

Events of this past week have been discouraging. While President Bush was in the Middle East for an announced effort to forge peace between Israelis and Palestinians, many of us prayed this would be a significant shift in his 'no engagement' policy that dominated the past seven years of his administration.

We hoped there would be a change in his attitude that has left the region reeling from horrible acts of barbarity. We had desired a new approach that could lead to untested practices of neighborly conduct. Yet, what we witnessed was the consistent, cynical, and shameful performance of a president who just doesn't get it.

Upon his departure from the divided and troubled lands of Abraham's children, Mr. Bush arrived in Saudi Arabia where he settled in with old family friends. His talk of peace slipped into the familiar bartering of weapons. The financial priority of placing 'made in America' systems of mass destruction in hands of dubious allies took precedence over any notion of peace without violence. The business of America provides weapons instead of diplomacy. It trumps any effort to cease conflicts or restore a vision of community and world order.

It is very difficult to imagine anyone who confesses Jesus as his Savior, mentor, and leader working so diligently to perpetuate war, division, and broken relationships. It is quite a challenge to the human soul to accept such flawed characteristics residing in the highest office of this nation. These are dangerous times. We are led by people who fail to demonstrate the necessary skills, vision, and capacity to properly deal with conditions that weaken the human spirit. More compassion and wisdom are required to meet the needs of today's world.

Peace is possible if all of us take a stake in the welfare of our sisters and brothers here at home and in other countries. We must be concerned about them and share in their experiences. The over expenditure of monies and resources to prosecute wars in Iraq and Afghanistan serves to verify our ability to do what is necessary to come to the aid of people who live with desperation. We can do better. We must become more responsive to the cries of those who suffer. Peace can be our first resort with the full commitment to stay the course until it is realized. In fact, peace has to become both our first and our last resort. There is nothing more pressing than to bring a halt to the butchery and destruction that prevail.

Perhaps that seems like too large a challenge. It is not. Peace is achieved within each of us. We can create space for peace through our interactions and conversations. We can visualize peace with every breath. If we are to take seriously our confession of faith, then we must practice the teachings of Jesus and model his way of living together with others. Peace is possible. It is up to us to make it so.