

## **CRIBBS NOTE – JANUARY 27, 2008**

There has been a whole lot of talk this week about money and peace. Stock markets around the world took major hits in Asia, Europe, and the United States. Some observers say it was the worst, single day drop in prices in decades. At the same time, amid fabricated efforts to bring peace in the Middle East, we witnessed an escalation in violence and soaring death rates. People feel less safe and secure no matter where they are living. By all accounts, it was a difficult week. At some point, someone must ask, "What is going on?"

Quick fix schemes are not the answer even as politicians and financial experts try to lay out plans to address deep, lingering economic problems. Skyrocketing prices for food, gasoline, housing, medicine, healthcare, education, and basic necessities have not been sufficiently addressed. Instead, stockholders demand greater dividends and corporate executives continue to receive extreme compensation packages of more than 1,000 percent of their employees' salaries.

While so-called peace talks were underway in the Middle East, arms sales were brokered and incursions into occupied territories took place along with violent attacks on settlers and innocent civilians in Israel. Refugees in sub-Saharan Africa increased in numbers in Kenya, Somalia, the Congo, and other regions on that continent as civil unrest spread across lands and violated borders. It has been a very painful week.

In the United States, we are not exempt from the brutal force of injustice and broken promises. The lines outside food banks are growing as families with women and children join the ranks of America's homeless poor. At the same time, the working poor are unable to make ends meet although they go to jobs everyday. They too are affected by an economy designed to make the rich richer and the poor poorer. Suffering knows no bounds. It does not discriminate by age, gender, race, or geography. It touches the lives of many people, even those who once knew the comfort of being middle-class. Their lifestyle has eroded.

While government leaders direct resources to wage war on multiple fronts, they have demonstrated a repeated practice of neglecting the needs of people residing in the United States. Rather than delivering aid to elevate life, they prefer to drop bombs and devastate civilizations. Something terribly wrong is happening. Even as we celebrated this past week the life and legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., who challenged our society to alter our purpose and change our priorities to enhance life, we make a mockery of his vision and prophetic voice. We sing his praises and go right on doing the exact opposite for what he sacrificed his life.

Children are paying very close attention to the actions of adults who articulate expressions of concern and compassion, but who behave contrary to their platitudes. These are dangerous times in which the inconsistencies of our words and deeds are colliding. Every act of butchery and brutality is preventable and can be avoided. The manufactured and manipulated economic bumps that send prices higher and descend human life into an eddy of worry and

disappointment need not take place. Greed and insensitivity direct the motives of those faceless, unnamed personalities who reap cruel personal gains at the expense of mass humanity.

It is into this scenario Jesus calls his people to follow him. He calls us away from comfort and security to follow him on a journey of significance and purpose. We are called to listen carefully to the cries of those who are harmed by domestic and foreign policies. We are called to respond to our sisters and brothers who are near or far away desperately eking a living against the odds. We are called by Jesus to follow him into the Public Square and speak with truth and power to those who ignore God's suffering children.

This is what it means to follow Jesus: to take a stand for justice and righteousness on behalf of persons who have fallen under the grinding shaft of corrupt political and financial machines. Are you willing to follow Jesus? Will you stand up for those whose spirits have been crushed and knocked down? Jesus is calling. How will you answer?

-Pastor Art Cribbs