

CRIBBS NOTE – March 9, 2008

What are we doing? More importantly, who have we become as a people and a nation? What do we represent? What do we truly believe?

This past week New York Times columnist Bob Herbert provided very disturbing facts about America's economy. He didn't write about the devaluation of the dollar or the soaring rate of home foreclosures. He didn't mention the price of gasoline or the associated increased cost of food and other necessities. Mr. Herbert outlined what is not being discussed: the devastating impact the expenditure of public funds is having on all of us at home and abroad.

"It's the economy, stupid!" was a cute ploy to define the terms of the 1992 presidential election between Bill Clinton and George H.W. Bush. Some pundits argued it turned the tables on the incumbent and gave Mr. Clinton, the challenger, a smooth ride into the White House.

Today, it is still the economy, but many of us are tuned out or so miserably distracted and dispirited we aren't paying attention to some of the vital facts affecting our lives and human history. And, it is not just about money. The core issue has to do with our values, priorities, and our ethics. It is about who we are as a people. There is virtually no argument that the United States stands alone as the single, most wealthy country in the world. That is where our economic problems begin.

We have so much money we are wasting it on a war that seems to have no end. Mr. Herbert explained findings by economists who have examined our nation's spending in Iraq and project it will eventually cost at least \$3 trillion. The warning of the late U.S. Senator Everett Dirksen is ringing true, "A billion here, billion there, pretty soon we will be talking about real money." Well, now, we are talking about real money.

Mr. Herbert points out, according to the fiscal experts, "Money spent on the war **each day** is enough to enroll an additional 58,000 children in Head Start for a year or make a year of college affordable for 160,000 low-income students." That's every day this war rages on, but that is not the worse part of this crime.

The cost in human life and suffering is great and escalating. Comparing the War in Iraq to Desert Storm, Mr. Herbert reports the estimated toll will far exceed that first war. 40 percent of the 700,000 troops became eligible for disability benefits after that earlier war which lasted only one month.

In two weeks, we will have been in this war for five years. Are we paying attention? Do we realize what we are doing? Where is all that money going? Into whose hands, pockets, and bank accounts is it being poured?

While we are a very wealthy nation, school teachers and educators in California are being threatened with the loss of their jobs. Many returning veterans are unable to function and now pose danger to their families and society without sufficient assistance from the very government that put them in harm's way.

All of this is more than a crime. It is a sin. Failure to care for our children, families, and the honorable men and women who gave their lives in service to their country puts us in the unenviable position of losing touch with our humanity and alienating us from the international community.

What must we do to be saved?

This morning, we are pleased to welcome the Reverend Paula McGee, a PhD candidate at the Claremont Graduate University. Paula brings a rich history of academic achievement and professional athletic success, including induction into the Women's National Basketball Association Hall of Fame. She is a preacher filled with God's love, mercy, and grace. She comes today to bring a Word that will help to inform us about how we are to be present during these difficult days of spiritual, political, and personal challenge. As we struggle with the questions before us, let us listen attentively to the Still Speaking God who has placed in us the answers and solutions to the problems we are witnessing and experiencing. Paula, we thank you for being with us.

-Pastor Art Cribbs