

***CRIBB<S>NOTE – April 6, 2008***

In this Easter Season, what are we to make of the story that defines our faith in Jesus as Christ? Do we really believe he came back to life as the Scriptures describe?

There are many activities that consume our time and money. They have nothing to do with our faith, yet we spend so much of our lives engaged in things that leave us empty. Why?

When Jesus' followers experienced his return from death, they were frightened. They thought he was a ghost. Their fears quickly turned to astonishment, wonder and joy. They were nearly paralyzed by his appearance among them.

Cleopas and his companion did not recognize Jesus as they walked along the road to Emmaus from Jerusalem. Their hearts were broken and they were overcome with grief after the horrible events that ended with Jesus' crucifixion on the cross. They remained saddened even after the women had told them Jesus was alive. It was too hard to believe; so, they walked the seven miles back to their home deeply hurt and broken.

When Jesus met them on the road, he asked Cleopas and his companion why were they so sad. They explained what had happened to Jesus in Jerusalem. Then, still unrecognized by them, Jesus walked with them and talked about how the prophets and Scriptures foretold his death and resurrection.

What does all of that have to do with us today?

Jesus instructed those who believed in him to preach a message of "repentance and forgiveness... to all nations." That is what we must do today. We live everyday as the Body of Christ. As much as in any time in history, there is a great need for the world to know the importance of repentance and forgiveness.

It is not easy to recognize Christ in the world today. Often we are blinded from seeing the presence of goodness and mercy. We are encouraged to act in ways that demean other human beings and put the Earth at risk. Our behavior does not always represent our calling as people of God. So, we have to be reminded again about what it means to accept the cost of discipleship and bear the cross. We have to think seriously about why we have taken steps to become Christians.

There is a great need for repentance. There is a tremendous need for forgiveness. We are called to tell the truth for the purpose of helping each other have sufficient courage to stop what we are doing and turn our lives toward God. That means we have to ask difficult questions of ourselves and determine which path we will follow. At the same time, we are required to see Christ in the faces of everyone we meet. We must look in the mirror and see our authentic self and realize our own need to be forgiven.

If there are children close to us, we can discover new ways to help establish a meaningful relationship with them that inspires them to want to live without fear. When elders surround us, we can provide a loving presence that affirms their worth and appreciate their wisdom. Repentance gives us space to move in a new direction that elevates the quality of life. Forgiveness makes it possible for us to care about each other and enjoy the human experience.

Jesus gives us a model of how to be together in community. He pushes us to think of others instead of limiting ourselves to selfish motives. Jesus brings love to the world as a special gift from God. We are invited to receive the amazing generosity of divine presence and proclaim aloud the free, extravagant grace that brings new

possibilities to all of us. This is the Easter Season. Jesus lives and wants us to live fully without fear.