

***CRIBB<S>NOTE – June 1, 2008***

There is an ancient story that many of us learned as children. It is about a man named Noah. He was a good man. In fact, in the whole world, he was the only good person God could find. That's an incredibly frightening thought. I wonder how many good people are living on the earth today. Although the story of Noah is often told as a fairy tale, it is filled with horrible events and consequences.

God had created the world and looked at everything that was made and said, "It is indeed good." But, within ten generations, God took another look at what was happening to Creation and decided all was not good. There was a lot of bad going on. The people had turned evil and violent. It didn't take long for those 'good' humans who had been made in God's image to become something God never intended.

A brother, Cain, killed his brother, Abel. Greed and corruption became rampant. Wars broke out. Creation was defiled. Eventually, God lost pity for human beings and regretted making people. In anger, God decided to destroy every person because of the extent to which violence had spread across the world. I wonder how much violence there is today. People are fighting somewhere in almost every corner of the earth.

In the United States, although we don't live in a war zone crime touches nearly every community and neighborhood. We are one of the only nations that offer incentives to attract our children to join the military. They are promised an education, a job, a recruitment bonus, and whatever else can be imagined to get them to sign up.

Have you ever tried to find out just how much money is spent on the military in the United States? Do you ever wonder where that money goes and what it buys?

According to Fred Kaplan, PhD, a journalist and author who keeps tabs on the defense budget, we spend an estimated \$713 billion a year on the military. That does not include money spent on the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. It does not include more money spent on Homeland Security. On the low end, approximately 3.7 percent of every American dollar goes to feed the nation's military machine. Compare that to \$61 billion spent on education. Then, there is the matter of the national debt.

Last year, the federal government spent \$408 billion on interest payments. That was last year. This year, as of this week, the nation's debt reached \$9.4 trillion and soaring. I wonder how much money we will spend to wage peace. How much does it cost for the federal government to provide shelter for the homeless, food for the hungry, healthcare for the poor, or gasoline for 'hard-working' motorists driving to their jobs everyday?

The Noah story pre-dates the development of nuclear weapons and conventional weapons of mass destruction. It took place long before the last century with its seemingly endless stretch of wars and conflicts.

Have you ever tried to find out just how many people were killed in wars during the 20<sup>th</sup> Century? It is as difficult to get an accurate death count as it is to uncover the true and actual federal spending on war and its various support networks.

Some 'experts' place the last century's war casualties somewhere between 150 million and 250 million. But, in reality, nobody knows which figure comes closer to the exact number of people killed in the wars of the past 100 years. Let's just say too many people died and too many more suffered severe injuries.

Now, imagine how many people had died because of violence when God found Noah, the only good person worth saving. God said, "I will blot out from the earth the human beings I have created--people together with animals and creeping things and birds of the air, for I am sorry that I have made them." (Genesis 6:7)

When we think about it, the story of Noah is not just about a rainbow and cute, little animals on a boat. It warns us about human behavior that threatens Creation and puts all of us at risk.

By the way, did you hear the story about the cyclone? Or, the one about the earthquake? How about the one about the tornados? Or, the wildfires? How about the story regarding global warming? Or, the endangered species?

I wonder which one we should tell our children. Maybe we can teach them how to count, so they can help us find out just how much of our tax dollars is spent on wars and how many of God's children have died in them.