

CRIBB<S>NOTE – June 14, 2009

Things are not always what they seem. No breaking news there, but it is a pretty good reminder that we can't always depend on our five senses to accurately inform us about an experience. In fact, what we think we know about something may be way off the mark.

The Biblical stories this week give us an excellent glimpse into situations that seemed pretty straight forward but offered a very different and unexpected result.

In the Hebrew reading from 1 Samuel 15, the prophet is sent to Bethlehem to meet an old shepherd named Jesse who has some sons. They are tall, handsome, strong, and apparently capable of handling difficult tasks. Later, we learn they also are warriors. The prophet Samuel goes to Jesse's home in search of a new king anointed by God to lead the people of Israel.

When the prophet arrives, he asks to meet Jesse's sons. Samuel examines each one and thinks they are well qualified to become king. But, God is not satisfied with any of them. Finally, Samuel asks Jesse if he has any more sons. There is only one left, but he is young and away tending sheep. After Samuel demands to see the smallest of Jesse's sons, God selects that child to become Israel's next king. David did not fit the appearance of a king; after all, he was just a young boy.

The second reading is found in the Christian gospel of Mark, Chapter Four, in which Jesus tells one of his famous parables. It is the story about the mustard seed, a tiny kernel that grows into a large uncontrollable bush. The sight of the minute mustard seed does not reveal its true nature. Jesus describes the mustard plant as capable of providing shelter for every fowl. It also can produce food to feed crowds of people.

Things are not always as they seem.

These are challenging and terrible times for many of our neighbors and families. From the economic crisis to health problems, our lives are filled with events that give us pause. We are facing unprecedented occurrences which many of us are not prepared. Yet, we are undaunted because our faith informs us not to "lean on our own understanding." We depend on the invisible hand of God to guide our steps and carry us through the storms of difficult experiences. We may not know how to handle situations that crop up in our lives, but we depend on the Infinite Imagination that is God "to make a way out of no way."

There are examples about times when something appeared to be one way but turned out to be something quite different. Perhaps you were going through an undesirable moment that was beyond your control when suddenly there was an inexplicable intervention. We look back and see how things unfolded and we are able to laugh, smile, or remember with a sense of joy the discomfort that was caused.

It really depends on a number of factors to help us understand what is going on. Perspective gives us a point of view, and proximity determines the level of priority we assign to the matter. But we realize eventually that we are not always well equipped to rely on our five senses to give us an accurate account of what is taking place.

Prayer, meditation, and reflection are helpful disciplines. Forming community and strengthening family ties make it possible for us to be sustained through great controversy and hardship.

Fortunately, God anticipates our needs and moves ahead of us to make it possible for us to overcome. Our task is to stay focused on the eternal mercy and everlasting love God gives us. That is the Ultimate Source of our ability to make sense of what is happening, even during tough, unbearable episodes in our lives. That is Good News!