

CRIBBS NOTES – August 26, 2007

Sometimes you just want to get away. It's like that airline commercial which offers low fares to escape. In those moments, there is no hiding place. You feel trapped, locked in time and space, and nothing seems to protect you. You are exposed, vulnerable, out in the open. To make matters worse, people know you but offer no comfort. You are in a state of complete shame and embarrassment. What do you do? Where do you turn? Now what?

This happens to someone somewhere every day. If it is not you it is someone near you. We try to place ourselves in the shadows away from the crowd. Maybe, if we just keep quiet we can muddle through unnoticed. Our hearts race while our minds run wild. We begin to imagine the worse possibilities. We panic. It all happens so very quickly. We lose control.

The old Negro spiritual, "Nobody Knows the Trouble I've Seen," becomes our momentary theme song. Prayers rehearsed from childhood bubble up as we try to abate the potential impact of a sudden assault on our sensibilities. Nothing works. We are here in the midst of an overwhelming invasion that conquers our souls. We must find a way out. We have to gain control of our lives. This can't be happening. Not now. Not here.

We take in deep breaths in an effort to pull ourselves together. We think positive thoughts to slow our heart beat. We think of Jesus placing a warm hand on our shoulder. We realize this too shall pass. It eases up just a bit. We feel a calm starting to surface. Our sweaty hands are drying. Relief is near. We begin to feel better. It is going to be alright. We thank God for standing close by us and sustaining us through the crisis. It is over.

Have you ever experienced such an attack? Do you know the fear that comes when everything goes awry? Have you been there, done that?

Such instances provide instructive lessons to help us pay attention to others around us. We know the horror of lonely episodes when we desire a friendly face, a sincere word of concern, or a place of refuge. There have been times when we needed someone to respond to our cries. Important lessons to deepen our compassion and alert us to challenges so many people are facing.

There is the temptation to ignore or put off someone else's troubling moment. But, Jesus invites us to get involved, be concerned, and go to the aid of another person. Whenever he acted, especially on the Sabbath, the day of rest, and in proximity of the temple, Jesus usually got into trouble. The religious leaders demanded faithful obedience to the law, even if it meant a hurting human being would have to suffer just a while longer. For Jesus, that was unacceptable. The Sabbath was made for people to be revived and strengthen in spirit and body. It was not an excuse to leave people in a state of harm or discomfort.

We are called out of the shadows of life and into the glaring light of liberation. We are called to walk together as a source of presence, support and encouragement to each other. We are called out of the shadows without shame, fear, or apology; and we beckon others to join us.

Someone is searching for companionship, a community that welcomes the wholeness of their human presence. They are looking for you and us to be with them through a special period of disappointment and pain. Let us resolve to stand in solidarity with them as a blessing of God's love and grace.