

CRIBB<S> NOTE September 21, 2008

In the midst of so much bad news, remember “Don’t be afraid. Be informed.” Don’t panic. Prioritize your life by always keeping God first, loving your family, and caring about your neighbor.

When I was anchoring the morning news in the Bay Area some years ago, one day our assistant news director came crashing through the newsroom back door around 7 o’clock in the morning. He had a scowl look on his face and was mumbling as he walked into his office.

At the end of my newscast I always signed off with words I had used everyday in three markets, “Go out and make this the best day of your life.”

That morning the assistant news director called me into his office, closed the door, and said, “Don’t ever say that again. This is a newscast. People don’t expect us to tell them to have a nice day.”

What do we expect when bad news seems to permeate so much of our society? No matter where you live in the United States, for example, people are not immune to the disasters that plague our nation. As the commentators like to say, “From Wall Street to Main Street....” There is trouble in more places than “River City.” It doesn’t always start with “P” and it isn’t limited to “pool.”

Financial firms are crashing with the thud of Humpty Dumpty and all the president’s men can’t put the economy back together. The neglected national infrastructure cannot sustain winds and rains; thus, whole regions are flooded and residents are displaced. There is plenty of bad news for everybody. At least, so it seems.

As a newscaster, I took pride in reporting the facts. Things happened. People’s lives were affected. I told the stories. The great thrill of scooping or being first on the air with the news had no parallel. Getting it first, telling it first, and having the facts accurate made news reporting a great career.

Imagine my disappointment as newscasters, political pundits, and commentators follow today’s events that are rocking our nation, but they fail to present the facts. They fail to tell the truth. They fail to question or challenge the ‘official’ line dished out by the very people most responsible for creating conditions that have led to the crises.

There is another word for bad news. It is sin. We don’t like to talk about sin anymore. When we examine the events gripping almost every aspect of American life, sin is at the root.

Greed is sin. Lies are sin. Deceit and deception are sin. Denying aid to the poor while bailing out corrupt businesses is sin. Allowing hard-working families to suffer and lose everything they have worked for all of their lives is sin. Pension funds are disappearing and jobs are being cut while the price of food, gasoline, and health care are skyrocketing. That’s sin.

Worse, turning a blind eye to the machinations and clever schemes to cover up bad decision-making and grossly flawed political leadership is sin. Sin is driving America into the dust.

The moral, ethical, and spiritual condition of this country is on life-support. It did not just happen in recent weeks. The very core of a society that built itself on slave labor and the slaughter of indigenous civilizations is rooted in sin.

Personal and corporate greed as a value to justify motives that ignore human bodies floating in the sea of ill-devised get rich plans is sin.

Any pretense to suggest the lack of knowledge about the actual harm and danger

done to children and families as a result of domestic and foreign policies is sin.

So, what are we supposed to do now? The voices in the upper echelons of government and big business viciously encourage us to keep shopping and over-extending our limited funds on goods and trinkets.

They disguise reality and urge us to take comfort in illusions and fantasies. They instruct us to think and care only about ourselves. Community and neighborhood are concepts that are not be given real consideration. All of this is sin.

We must reverse our course. We must confess and repent our sins. We must reclaim our humanity and seek to re-enter the international community. It is hard work, but it is necessary if we are to survive the tsunami of consequences caused by endless series of sinful behavior.

I am no longer a news reporter. I realize facts are not always the truth. They can be presented to portray a specific image of reality. They are often half-truths. But, facts can inform us and the truth is based on facts.

As a pastor, I am very interested in the truth. I am committed to telling the truth. The truth is disturbing and liberating. These days we need to know the truth. This is not a time to panic. This is a time when neighbors need to come together and think clearly and critically about ways we can help and support each other.

These are times that require people of integrity, honesty and faith to forge a campaign to put human beings above corporate profits and set a goal of developing and deepening our spiritual formation and growth.

Amid the bad news, the Gospel offers a “way out of no way” and a path to hope and recovery. I still believe you can “go out and make this the best day of your life.”