

## **CRIBB<s>NOTE**

Sometimes things fall apart. When we least expect it, something happens and our world is turned upside down. In that moment, we are lost and off-balance. We feel forsaken and misunderstood. It is as if nobody knows or cares about us. We are left all alone. Nothing can fill the void in our soul.

When we are most vulnerable, we also are most ready to acknowledge our dependency on God. When we have no place else to turn, we discover the importance of friendship and relationship. Only when we are so totally helpless, we realize what it means to be a social being. It is then we become aware of God's love and grace.

What does it mean to be part of a nation that has lost its soul? How do we recover our humanity when we continue to neglect the poor and blame people who are struggling everyday to eke out a living?

Our children are paying very close attention to events taking place around them. They know we do not put a premium on their lives. It is not lost on them the number of times they are accused of society's ills. They are forced to make their own way without parental guidance to help them in their decision-making. Then, there are our elderly who are too afraid to leave their homes because of violence on our streets.

Too many families are shoved to the edges of society, threatened by economic loss as prices for commodities and necessities soar beyond their ability to pay. They suffer while advocates for cost containment are silent. Our nation's economy is rife with bandit-style policies that protect corporations and harm human beings. We live in an era when robber barons have been resurrected and are dictating the state of life for people all over the world.

These are treacherous times. Extraordinary efforts are made to distract us from the living conditions of persons who work in fields picking food for our tables. They labor without water, toilets, or safe environments. The clothes we purchase most likely were sewn together in sweatshops where primarily women are enslaved and exist under threat of deportation.

Things fall apart in lands where war rages and the most vulnerable have no hiding place. They cannot escape the undeserved torturous assaults meted against them, leaving them trapped without relief.

It is into these realities God intervenes and declares a new world is coming into being. Just when so many innocent people are on the verge of giving up, God proclaims there will be a change. The righteous will not be forsaken. Their cries have been heard. God knows their suffering. There is a vision of peace, goodwill, and everything is made new. However, for such a change to take place, a great catastrophe must occur. There is no cheering as horrible events happen.

What can we do? Where does this put us?

When we fail to address the very real crises festering around us, we risk destruction of life, civilization, and all we hold precious. To ignore God's requirement to attend to the needs of the poor, the most vulnerable, the weakest; our children and elders, places all of us in a predicament we dare not imagine.

It is in times like these we need to think again about what is really going on and consider seriously the cost of discipleship. Listen to the crying voices of people who are acutely affected by domestic and international policies that defy and destroy human life. We are called to stand up and speak out for anyone whose life is denied validity and access to the fruits of their efforts. If we refuse to do more to deliver mercy and justice, then their hope will come with God's declaration of a new heaven and a new earth. At that point, we can only pray God will have mercy on our souls.