

It is impossible to escape the impact of the current economy on so many families and individuals. Yet, there seems to be a profound dismissal of the severe pain, suffering, and burden the financial crisis has caused. Job losses, home foreclosures, bankruptcies, and interminable uncertainty sweep across the nation like a tornado wreaking havoc in its wake.

Unanswerable questions spew from quivering lips by people seeking the slightest modicum of hope. A scrap of possible relief is the single desire in our search for compassion. A polarized reality maps our course toward resolution. But, can we find solutions when trust is broken and betrayal is rampant? Can we find our way to build community?

Many of us placed a lot of energy, time, and resources in our efforts to shield us from calamity. We labored long, hard, and honestly. We saved money and planned our retirements. We followed our dream of home ownership and provided for our families. Our children went to college and didn't burden us with socially deviate or criminal behaviors. By every measure of 'success', we have accomplished to the best of our ability. Now, it all seems like a nightmare.

We are not asleep. Every waking day we witness the erosion of our ideals for a safe, peaceful society. We watch public officials cast their votes against our well-being and increase the probability of threats against our way of life. We wonder whether there is an end to expedience that lacks loyalty, justice, and care for all people. We find ourselves in the throes of a protracted state of denied opportunities, and we want to know does anybody really understand what is happening to us.

That is merely the surface of our extremely deep and complex well of personal discomfort and befuddlement. We waddle our way through tidal waves of emotional turbulence. We ask, "Who knows we are here? Who really cares about us?"

Although these are the times in which we live, the conditions that surround us and affect our lives are not new. In fact, the litany of human travail runs the gamut of horrible experiences that we cannot begin to imagine. But, we realize life is not a comparative adventure in which we weigh and measure human struggle and suffering.

We endure and persevere through moments of doubt and disappointment. We go on despite the overwhelming odds against our survival. We trudge through the midnight of impossible outcomes because our faith drives us onward. We know with confidence we are not alone; God is with us. And, yes, the greatest gift we have is the presence of each other. We are the beloved community that supports, inspires, encourages, and holds us together.

We do not pretend things are not as they are. We accept and face what is in front of us. We stand prayerfully together and do not falter in our covenant to abide by each other. Jesus offers a model of loving friendship in which every need is acknowledged, and as a community we work together to meet those needs and attend to one another.

Amid the financial and health crises that touch all of us, we believe God will carry us through. We have come this far by faith and we do not believe God has brought us this far just to leave us. In the Spirit, we are urged to keep the faith and keep on walking. Through God's grace, we will not give up or give in to temptations that make us feel small, powerless and helpless. With God's help, we will extend a hand and pull each other up and restore the human will of goodness, righteousness, and loving mercy.

Yes, we can do this. In times like these, our anchor in faith makes it possible for us to stand together and bring assistance to our brothers and sisters who are trapped in the mire of despair. Yes, we can make the positive difference that comes when people of faith act in accordance with God's will and intention for us all. Yes, we can be the beloved community during this special period in which lies are exposed and Truth is ready to come forward. Let us open our lives and receive what God has in store for us right now.

-Pastor Art Cribbs