

### CHRIST IS CHANGING THE WORLD

The world is sure in a big mess, isn't it? At times it even seems chaotic. Terrorists are still trying to cause havoc. Millions of people don't have enough to eat. It has been a bumpy ride on Wall Street in recent months. And then throw in the chaos in our personal lives - and it does seem like one big mess.

So what do we mean when we confess that Christ is King? Are we trying to say that Christ is in charge? And if he is in charge, why is there such a big mess?

To be sure, Christ rules with all the power of God! He could quiet the terrorists and feed the hungry and heal the sick and provide jobs for everyone. He could do it. And he could do it in an instant. But he has chosen to rule in a different way. Not with mass demonstrations of power. Not with executive orders. Not with huge bailouts. Not even with amazing miracles. Rather, Christ has chosen to rule in the hearts and lives of people, and to work through folks like you and me.

We get a glimpse of how Christ works through Jilla. Jilla lives in Iran. She grew up in a devout Moslem family. She desperately wanted to know God and she tried everything to gain God's favor. She memorized the entire Koran. She prayed five different times each day, from early morning until late at night. She bowed 400 times in four different directions. When she woke up in the morning, her knees hurt from praying so much. But none of this gave her any peace.

There was a large house in her neighborhood dedicated to the Muslim prophet Hussein. Jilla wanted God in her life so badly she thought, "I'll dedicate myself to wash all of the carpets in the house." She washed carpets from morning till night. When she went to bed at night her hands were so swollen she had to wrap them in cloths. She thought this would get her to heaven.

Then one day someone gave her a movie about the life of Christ. While watching how Jesus loved people, she began to cry. "This is what I am looking for," she thought. And for the first time in her life she began to be at peace. She eagerly learned about Jesus and her life began to change.

It is against the law in Iran to convert to Christianity. Jilla, though, became a Christian. And she was determined to openly serve Christ. She shared her faith with others, even strangers on the bus. She knew what a difference Christ had made in her life and she wanted others to have the same experience. Her prayer was "Lord, I don't want to waste any time. Let every word be something that becomes like a mountain of strength to someone."

Christ is making a difference in Iran through Jilla.

When the communist era in Central and Eastern Europe came to an end, the Church faced a tremendous challenge. In the Czech Republic only 30% of the population has any affiliation with Christianity. How could a church, in such a place, begin to fulfill Christ's command to love when most people have nothing to do with the church?

"Christians are viewed with suspicion in our secularized society," says former Bishop Volny. "The average person will not meet us where we Christians are - in our church buildings. So we must meet people where they are. They will come to recognize Christ through our acts of love and compassion for the poorest of the poor and for those in greatest need."

The tiny church, numbering only 35,000, set out to do just that. In 1990, it had no social service institutions. Today, the church has 43 service institutions, including centers for the disabled, orphanages, after school programs, and elder care facilities. Its workers and volunteers meet people where they are.

Christ is making a difference in the Czech Republic through acts of love and compassion. And Christ is making a difference right here. Among us. In your life. In my life. Sometimes dramatically. Sometimes quietly. Sometimes rapidly. Sometimes slowly.

One person at a time. It is happening. Lives are changing. Families are changing. Communities are changing. Nations are changing. And the world is changing. It is the way of Christ.

We get impatient. We want to see immediate results. We want something big and dramatic. We want Christ to clean up our messy world and set things right and to do it instantly. But Christ chooses to work through you and me. This happens when we tell others the story of God's love which comes to people through Jesus. When we pray for those in need. When we feed the hungry and give drink to the thirsty. When we welcome the stranger and clothe the naked. When we care for the sick and visit those in prison. Simple acts. Acts of love and compassion.

This is how the Kingdom of God comes. This is how Christ rules. This is how the world is being changed. So get on board. Be part of the team. Together, we'll make a difference in the world.