

THE FIRST EPISTLE

VOLUME 42, NUMBER 10

MARCH 13, 2009



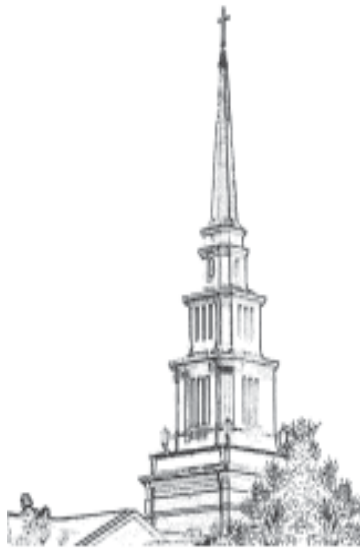
Dr. J. Ligon Duncan III PREACHING SCHEDULE

Baptism Sunday, March 15
8:30 & 11:00 a.m.

Dr. Ligon Duncan
“John Came Preaching”
Luke 3:1-20

6:00 p.m.
Dr. Derek Thomas
“Rejoicing in the Lord”
1 Samuel 2:1-11

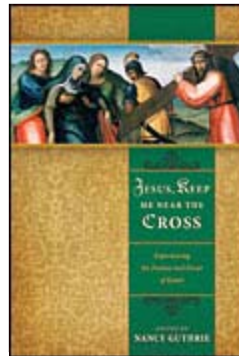
Wednesday, March 18
6:30 p.m.
Rev. Jeremy Smith
The Gospel and Personal
Evangelism No. 9
“Who Makes a Christian/What
Does it Look Like When
Someone Comes to Christ?”



EASTER IS COMING



Easter is coming! Before you know it, April 12th will be here. You could find yourself lost in the trappings of the day having given little thought to the meaning of the celebration, and not having done any spiritual preparation to worship the Savior and feed your soul. Let me recommend a small, but wonderful, little book (available in The Presbyterian Bookstore) to help us focus on what Christ has done. These brief meditations will help tune our hearts to sing His praise.



JESUS, KEEP ME NEAR THE CROSS:

Experiencing the Passion and Power of Easter

EDITED BY: NANCY GUTHRIE

“In a culture where crosses have become little more than fashion accessories, it’s easy for even the best-intentioned among us to rush from Palm Sunday to Easter Sunday without contemplating all that the cross means. We miss out on tremendous spiritual riches when we do.”

“Nancy Guthrie has compiled this special anthology to lead you and your family into an experience of Christ’s passion. The brief meditations in this book are sure to draw you to the cross—and keep you near it the whole year through.”

The contributions in this book include: John Piper, Timothy Keller, Jonathan Edwards, John Owen, Martin Luther, Philip Ryken, Martyn Lloyd-Jones, Ligon Duncan, Charles Spurgeon, J. I. Packer, John Calvin, Alistar Begg, John MacArthur, Francis Schaeffer, James Boice, R. C. Sproul, and more.

—by Donna Dobbs, Director of Christian Education

Peggy Noonan wrote an amazing piece for the *Wall Street Journal* last week [March 6, 2009 Opinion: Declarations, "A Tragedy of Errors, and an Accounting: After a crash, the Marines set an example"]. It spoke of taking responsibility for what we have done. She applied the moral of the story to the government, but I want you to think about what it might say to us as Christians. How do we take responsibility when we blow it? Well, here's the story. {I'm just paraphrasing and abbreviating her longer and more elegantly told account, so go read her!}

On Dec. 8, 2008, in the late morning, a young Marine pilot takes off from an aircraft carrier, the USS Abraham Lincoln, on a routine training flight. The carrier is about 90 miles southwest of San Diego. Minutes into the flight, the pilot notices low oil pressure in one of the two engines. He shuts it down. Then the light shows low fuel for the other engine. He's talking to air traffic control and given options and suggestions on where to make an emergency landing. He can go to the naval air station at North Island, the route to which takes him over San Diego Bay, or he can go to the Marine air station at Miramar, with which he is more familiar, but which takes him over heavily populated land. He goes for Miramar. The second engine flames out. About three miles from the runway, the electrical system dies. The pilot tries to aim the jet toward a canyon, and ejects at what all seem to agree is the last possible moment. The jet crashed nose down in the University City neighborhood of San Diego, hitting two homes and damaging three. Four people, all members of a Korean immigrant family, were killed—36-year-old Youngmi Lee; her daughters, Grace, 15 months, and Rachel, 2 months, and her 60-year-old mother, Seokim Kim.

Lee's husband, a grocer named Dong Yun Yoon, was at work. The day after he'd lost his family, he humbled and awed San Diego by publicly forgiving the pilot—"I know he did everything he could"—and speaking of his faith—"I know God is taking care of my family." His grace and generosity were staggering, but there was growing

local anger at the military. Why was the disabled plane over land? The Marines launched an investigation—of themselves.

This [past] Wednesday the results were announced. They could not have been tougher. The crash, said Maj. Gen. Randolph Alles [*Randy is a former elder at Capitol Hill Baptist Church in DC, where Mark Dever is pastor*], the assistant wing commander for the Third Marine Aircraft Wing, was "clearly avoidable," the result of "a chain of wrong decisions." Mechanics had known since July of a glitch in the jet's fuel-transfer system; the plane should have been removed from service and fixed, and was not. The young pilot failed to read the safety checklist. He relied on guidance from Marines at Miramar who did not have complete knowledge or understanding of his situation. He should have been ordered to land at North Island. He took an unusual approach to Miramar, taking a long left loop instead of a shorter turn to the right, which ate up time and fuel. Twelve Marines were disciplined; four senior officers, including the squadron commander, were removed from duty. Their military careers are, essentially, over. The pilot is grounded while a board reviews his future.

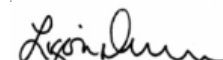
Residents told the San Diego Union-Tribune that they were taken aback by the report. Bob Johnson, who lived behind the Yoons and barely escaped the crash, said, "The Marines aren't trying to hide from it or duck it. They took it on the chin." A retired Navy pilot who lives less than a block from the crash and had formed, with neighbors, a group to push the Marines for an investigation, and for limiting flights over University City, said after the briefing, "I think we're out of business." In a later story the paper quoted a retired general, Bob Butcher, chairman of a society of former Marine aviators, calling the report "as open and frank a discussion of an accident as I've seen." "It was a lot more candid than many people expected." This wasn't damage control, it was taking honest responsibility. And as such, in any modern American institution, it was stunning.

At the end they were impressed with

the public nature of the criticism, and its candor: "There are still elements within the government that take personal responsibility seriously." He found himself wondering if the Marines had been "too hard on themselves." "But they are, after all, Marines."

Thus far, Peggy Noonan's story. Now here's my question. What if we took responsibility like that for our own sins? What if we repented like that? And what if people said: "They were hard on themselves. But after all, they're Christians."

Your friend,


Ligon Duncan

In the Library and Bookstore

■ **Men of the Covenant**—Tapes from MOC meetings since 2006 have all been converted to CD and are now available for checkout.



■ **Children's Easter Books**—A good selection of children's Easter books is now available in The Presbyterian Bookstore. We invite you to come and browse.



■ **Special Sale**—The next time you visit the bookstore, please note the special sale on the Calvin's Commentaries 500 Year Anniversary Edition. This 22 volume Collector's Set, issued in honor of the 500th anniversary of Calvin's birth, will be available from the publisher in early May. Prepublication orders are being taken until the end of April.

The Learning Resource Center is open Monday through Friday during regular business hours and Wednesdays from 8:30 a.m.-7:45 p.m. According to Session policy, no Sunday book sales. The library is open Sunday mornings and evenings.

UNDERSTANDING THE TIMES

Lessons in Male Insensitivity—from the Bible! by Dr. Derek W.H. Thomas

Blame the senior minister's wife – we obviously think alike because reading 1 Samuel 1 on Sunday evening she pointed out to me afterwards what I had also noticed: that poor Hannah is surrounded by insensitive men. First, her husband (Elkanah) remonstrates with her after noticing that she's crying all the time and off her food, that she really ought to be grateful for having such a fine husband. The fact that he's married another woman (in addition to Hannah) -- a younger and more fertile model – seemed to have eluded him: "Am I not more to you than ten sons," he says (1 Sam. 1:8). As one of my favorite characters is heard to say, "What a plonker!"

And, to add insult to injury, the priest (Eli) at the local temple (Shiloh), observing the poor woman move her mouth but without uttering a word, jumps to the obvious conclusion that she must have been drinking too much communion wine (or its equivalent in the eleventh century BC temple at Shiloh).

Poor Hannah! The one thing she wants most of all is the one thing she does not have – a baby. And her husband has legitimized his "affair" with a younger woman by the convenience of polygamy. The younger wife is, well, mouthy, barely able to contain her joy in Hannah's downfall and disgrace. And when she goes to the one place of refuge, the holy temple at Shiloh, she's met with a priest who can't see piety even if it were to hit him in the face.

And you think you have problems?

Truth is, some of God's richest characters in the Bible have emerged from the darkest places. Indeed, it is almost a truism: that if we expect to be godly, we can expect to be tested, sometimes with severity. Suffering in the form of cross-bearing and self-denial is the pathway Jesus promised: "If anyone would come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it." (Matt. 16:24-25).

As Calvin wrote in a comment on 1 Peter 1:11, "the Church of Christ has been from the beginning so constituted, that the cross has been the way to victory, and death a passage to life." To view suffering in this light, as God's providence to shape us into His glorious image, requires faith. As Samuel Rutherford once put it, "To believe Christ's cross to be a friend, as He Himself is a friend, is also a special act of faith."

Hannah emerges from this passage victoriously. When God grants her a son, Samuel, she gives him back to the Lord as an act of consecration as she had promised to do. The prayer she uttered is one of the finest, most selfless prayers in the Scriptures: "If You will indeed look on the affliction of Your servant and remember me and not forget Your servant, but will give to Your servant a son, then I will give him to the LORD all the days of his life" (1 Sam. 1:11). In effect she is saying, "Lord, if You give him to me, I will give him back to You."

Think about it: where is the recrimination, the bitterness, the anger? It is not there. For Hannah learned to place her sufferings beneath the overarching purposes of God and found peace.

Have you?

PROS, March 26

March PROS will meet Thursday, March 26, at 11:00 a.m. in Miller Hall. We will have the pleasure of hearing our own Day School's 5th and 6th grades Honors Choir lead by Marsha Glover who has promised a program of sacred, folk, spiritual, and patriotic music. We encourage and welcome parents, grandparents, and friends to join us for the program and lunch. Our lunch menu: chicken tetrazzini, green salad, homemade french bread and fresh strawberry pie. If you plan to stay for lunch, please make reservations through the church office (601-353-8316) by Wednesday, March 25. Lunch is \$3 and, of course, there is no charge for the program.

Faith Promise for Missions 2009-2010



As of Sunday, March 8, 267 cards were received for a total of \$716,914.40. If you have not turned in your Faith Promise card, we encourage you to bring it this Sunday and place it in the regular offering plate as an act of worship.

Interested in Joining FPC?

If you are interested in joining First Presbyterian Church, please note that our next joining date is Sunday, April 5. Each person joining FPC is asked to fill out a new member form and turn it in two weeks before the joining date (March 23). The new member forms can be obtained either from Shannon Craft in Pastoral Care or in the Session Room after the morning worship services. Applications for membership received after March 23 will be held until the next joining date of June 7. Interviews will take place March 23-April 3. If you have any questions, please contact Shannon Craft at 601-326-9243 or shannonc@fpcjackson.org



Sew and Sow

Sew and Sow is currently making blankets for Peruvian babies. The blankets are to be distributed through Peru Mission, and they are in need of flannel/fleece. If you happen to have an unused stash of flannel or fleece in your closet with patterns/colors appropriate for babies and would like to donate them to the cause, please drop the fabric by the C.E. office during the month of March.

Attention, Parents!

Since we now have the benefit of Daylight Savings Time, the children will go to the playground from 5:30-6:30 p.m. on Wednesday nights. They gym will only be used in case of inclement weather.