

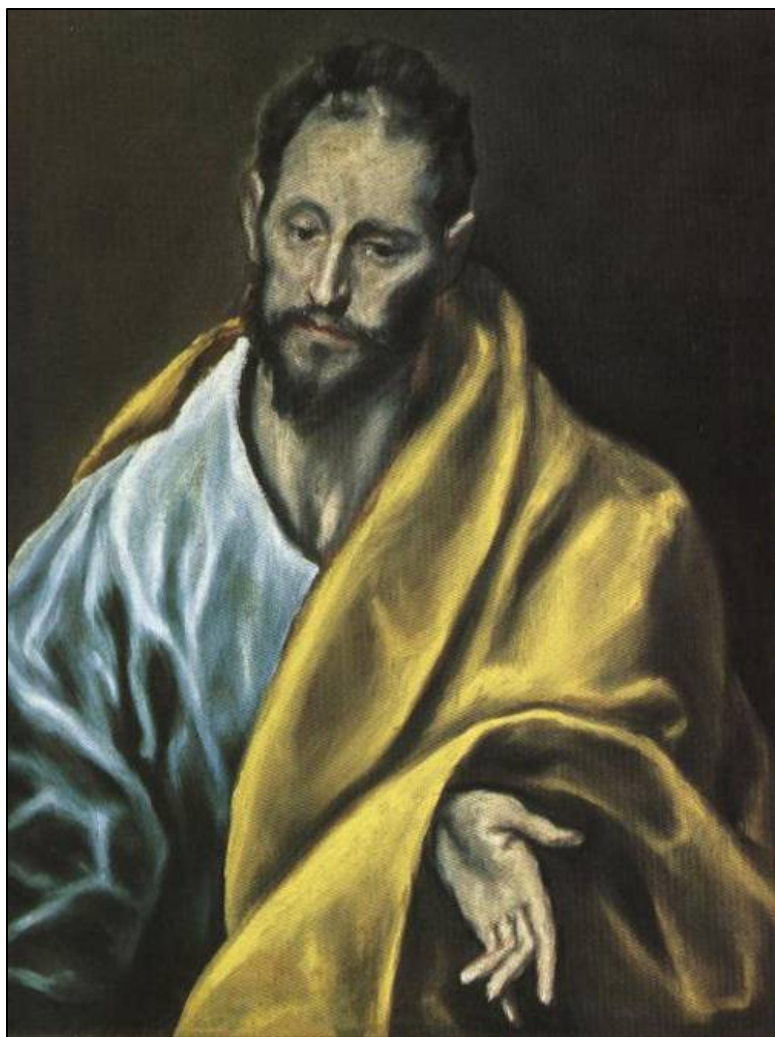
THE EPISTLE

Saint James' Episcopal Church
Livingston, Alabama



Volume XXII, Number 9

October 2015



October 2015

This Month's Cover

Our cover picture this month is El Greco's *Saint James the Less*, also titled *James the Brother of the Lord*. It is in honor of the Feast of St. James of Jerusalem (October 23). In El Greco's day (the 16th century) it was thought that James of Jerusalem and James the Less were the same person, but today most scholars rejected that. El Greco did many paintings of all the several Saints James.

James the Just, the first Bishop of Jerusalem, is often called the Brother of the Lord. In Hebrew there is no word for cousin, so brother (*'ach*, אח) is used. This often makes it difficult to interpret some passages, because the terms brother and sister could mean blood siblings, half- or stepsiblings, cousins, or even intimate friends. The gospels were written in Greek, so the writers translated *'ach* as *adelphos* (ἄδελφος), brother. It has been argued for centuries whether James was Jesus' cousin, his younger brother, or his stepbrother from an earlier marriage of Joseph. He was almost certainly not, however, the same person as James the Greater, James the Less, James the son of Alphaeus or James the son of Zebedee. He was converted after the Resurrection, and was the first Bishop of Jerusalem. According to the Jewish historian Flavius Josephus, James "who was the brother of the one called Christ" was martyred at the order of Herod Agrippa I.

El Greco ("The Greek") was born Doménikos Theotokópoulos in 1541 in Crete. Although he was known as El Greco, he signed his paintings with his full name in Greek, adding *Kres*, "Cretan." At that time Crete was part of the Republic of Venice and the center of post-Byzantine art. Although subjects of an Italian republic, Cretans were fiercely proud of their Greek heritage. El Greco studied on Crete until he went to Venice in 1567 at the age of 26. In 1570 he moved to Rome, where he opened a workshop. There he was strongly influenced by the style of the Venetian Renaissance. In 1577

he moved to Toledo, Spain, where he remained the rest of his life. There he received most of his major commissions and executed his most famous works. His revolutionary style was strongly criticized, although many also appreciated it. It was not until the 20th century that his genius was truly recognized. He is regarded as a precursor of two important 19th and early 20th century styles, impressionism and cubism. He is particularly noted for the distorted elongation of his figures.¹

While El Greco is generally remembered as a painter, he was also a very accomplished architect and sculptor. Unfortunately, although they have been well described by contemporaries, most of his sculptures have perished. He died in 1614. Although he never lost touch with his Greek heritage, he was buried in the Church of Santo Domingo de Antiguo in Toledo.

Richard R. Losch+

A Word From the Editor

Recently the news reported that midget raisins are now considered racist because the name insults “little people,” who are offended by the term midget. Racist? When did diminutive size become a race? To show how ridiculous political correctness has become, the discussion went on to argue that the term “little people” should not be used because that is what the Irish call elves, pixies and fairies, and those words are homophobic. Give me a break!

The whole concept of political correctness is destructive, because it is based on the idea that no one should ever have to be offended by anything. That is not only ridiculous, but also it is in itself destructive. We learn and grow by being offended. As a child I was highly offended when my parents punished me for doing something that offended them. Thank God

¹ The American Ophthalmological Society¹ has determined that El Greco suffered from an acute astigmatism, and he painted what he saw. When viewed through astigmatic corrective lenses, his figures appear to be quite normal.

for those offenses! I might be spoiled today, but I hate to think of how much more so I would be if my parents had not offended me so often as a child.

There is no justification for intentionally trying to hurt someone by offending him, but there are times when a little offense is called for and might wake someone up. John the Baptist was not afraid to offend the Pharisees and Sadducees when he called them a brood of vipers, and Jesus certainly knew he was offending when he called them hypocrites or when he drove the moneychangers and merchants out of the temple. On the other side, I am bitterly offended when I see people desecrating the American flag, but that does not justify my trying to deny them their civil right to do so (I find some consolation in the fact that they accomplish little more than to make a public display of what fools they are). Offense usually goes both ways. I am sorry that Confederate graveyards offend some who do not understand their history, but those who want to have them plowed under offend me at least as much. As Jonathan Cahn said, “If I offend you, I apologize for not being willing to apologize for offending you.”

I call for a rebellion against hypersensitivity—for an offensive against the easily offended! I have yet to find anyone who doesn’t think that political correctness has run completely amok, yet I constantly hear people using awkward politically correct terms. There is no excuse for the use of intentionally offensive language such as hateful racist or homophobic words, but when we get to the point of twisting our language or banning expressions simply because some tiny minority might be offended by them, it is time for a change. I am tired of people staying up at night just to dream up new ways to be offended. I for one intend to continue eating midget raisins, telling blonde jokes, enjoying “Dukes of Hazzard” reruns, and rooting for the Washington Redskins. As the expression goes, if you’re offended, suck it up and live with it! You will probably be a lot stronger because of it.

Father Rick Losch

Men's Breakfast

The Interfaith Men's Breakfast will meet on the first Sunday, October 4, at 7:45 a.m. at the Livingston First Presbyterian Church. This is an important gathering, because we will discuss future plans for our Men's Breakfast. Our options are to continue meeting monthly as usual, to meet less often, or to discontinue it altogether. Since the Methodist Church dropped out of the rotation our attendance has consisted only of a very small handful of regulars. Come and share your ideas as to the direction you would like to see us go.

Richard R. Losch+

ECW United Thank Offering

The United Thank Offering (UTO) is a ministry of the Episcopal Church for the mission of the whole church. Through United Thank Offering, men, women and children nurture the habit of giving daily thanks to God. These prayers of thanksgiving start when we recognize and name our many daily blessings. Those who participate in UTO discover that thankfulness leads to generosity. United Thank Offering is entrusted to promote thank offerings, to receive the offerings, and to distribute the UTO monies to support missions and ministries impacting the lives of women and children throughout the Episcopal Church and in invited Provinces of the Anglican Communion in the developing world.

The Episcopal Church Women's ingathering of the United Thank Offering will be on Sunday, October 11th. Envelopes for contributions are available on the table at the rear of the church and may be placed in the alms basins or given to Ethel Scott, UTO Coordinator. Checks should be payable to Episcopal Church Women or ECW.

Hiram Patrenos

"Do not believe a political rumor until it has been officially denied."

—Otto von Bismarck

Blessing of the Animals

In honor of the Feast of Saint Francis of Assisi, we will have a service of the Blessing of the Animals on Sunday, October 4, 2015 at 2:00 p.m. in the courtyard. While altercations between animals are extremely rare at these services, we ask that your animals be leashed, tethered or caged. Please invite your friends and neighbors to this happy occasion.

Hiram Patrenos

Gideons International

During the month of October we will be receiving contributions for the work of the Gideons International. We will not have a speaker from the Gideons, but we will hold all contributions and forward them to the local chapter following our service on October 25th. Envelopes are available for contributions on the table at the rear of the church and may be placed in the Alms Basins at the Offertory. Checks should be made payable to “The Gideons.”

Hiram Patrenos

Altar Flowers

Volunteers are needed to provide Altar Flowers through the season of Pentecost. A sign-up chart is located in the sacristy. You may use flowers from your yard or, if you wish, make arrangements with a florist to provide them. For more information, please speak with Carolyn Patrenos.

Hiram Patrenos

Be Wordly Wise

Mumbo Jumbo

The phrase mumbo jumbo is used to signify language or ritual that is intentionally confusing. It originated in a West African legend of a bogeyman who has to deal with several unmanageable wives. The original Mandingo name of the character is Maama Jomboo, the latter word referring to the

jumbo tree to which he is tied in the legend. In Mandingo ceremonial dances men put on masks and costumes that characterize Maama Jombo.¹

In the early 19th century the legend of Maama Jombo came to be well known in England. The name was corrupted to Mumbo Jumbo and came to be used in its current sense of obfuscatory language or ritual, probably because of the frenetic masked dancing that the Mandingo people associate with the legend. Also, a large, clumsy or stupid person came to be known as a jumbo. In 1892 the London Zoo sold an elephant named Jumbo to the Barnum and Bailey Circus, and Jumbo the Elephant became world famous. Because of the elephant the name came to be used as an adjective meaning enormous, and is still so used today (as in “jumbo shrimp”).

In 1899 Helen Bannerman, the Scottish author of children's books, published a Mandingo legend of a little boy named Saambo. She titled it “Little Black Sambo” (it is now considered the epitome of political incorrectness). In her version of the story, Sambo's parents are Mumbo and Jumbo.

Richard R. Losch+

One God

Judaism, Christianity and Islam are the world's three primary monotheistic religions, and it is often said that all three worship the same God. Judaism is essentially the first monotheistic religion, and Christianity is its fulfillment.² Islam is deeply influenced by Judaism and Christianity, although

¹ One of Africa's largest safari excursion companies is Maamajombo Safaris, based in Uganda.

² The first of which we have any historic record was Atonism in 14th century BC Egypt, but it lasted only about 20 years before it was suppressed. It survived as an underground cult for another century or so and then disappeared completely. Some historians think that Atonism's monotheism might have had some influence on Moses during the time that he was raised in the Pharaoh's palace, preparing him for the time that his future father-in-law Jethro told him about the God of Abraham (Ex. 2:15ff).

Muslims deny that claim. Notwithstanding, a reading of the Qur'an makes it patently clear that it is true.

The claim that all three religions worship the same God is true only on the most basic level, but the issue is considerably more complex than that. Theologians from ancient times have agreed that a belief in deity is “hard-wired” into the human mind, and modern psychological research has confirmed that. While there have been atheists from the beginning of recorded history, true atheists, those who believe that there is no god and that none has ever existed, are very few in number and always have been so. Psychological research, again, has shown that most people who identify themselves as atheists are not really so. They may be rejecters of religion, but deep down they believe that there is a power beyond themselves that transcends nature. This is why so many self-identified atheists are active opponents of any sign of religion. Down inside they do believe in God, and they are terrified of that belief to the extent that they feel they must remove any reminder of it from the public square. It is said that we hate most in others what we fear most in ourselves. A true atheist would not be upset by, for example, a Nativity scene in the town square at Christmastime, because it would be no threat to him. He might think it foolish, but not threatening.

Of the three monotheistic religions, both Judaism and Islam are Unitarian. That means that they believe in one divine person operating one divine nature.¹ What makes Christianity unique is that it is the only religion in history that is Trinitarian. We believe that God is three Divine Persons, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, operating one Divine Nature. A theological explanation of the Holy Trinity is beyond the scope of this article, but suffice it to say that the Trinity is the

1 The Unitarian religion (the Unitarian-Universalist Church) is so named because even though they neither affirm nor deny the existence of God, they teach that if there is a God he is one person in one divine nature—i.e., not Trinity. The “U-U” Church does not claim to be Christian, although they honor the moral teachings of Jesus.

essence of Christianity. Without the Trinity Jesus Christ could be nothing more than one of two things. He would be either a human being selected by God for a specific mission (i.e. a prophet) and made divine,¹ or he is God taking on the semblance of humanity and appearing in human form on earth (rather like Zeus appearing to Leda in the form of a swan).² Trinitarian Christianity, on the other hand, teaches that God the Son, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, took upon himself full human nature, while retaining his Divine Nature. He did not simply appear to be human, he is human as well as being divine. He was miraculously conceived in the womb of the Blessed Virgin, went through normal gestation and birth, and lived a fully human life with a fully human nature, although still retaining his Divine Nature. This is the Doctrine of the Incarnation, and is essential orthodox belief.

This is heady stuff, and again a theological explanation of it is well beyond the scope of this article. Volumes have been written on it, and great theologians have pondered it for centuries. Notwithstanding, it is the essence of Christianity, and without it we are not Christians, but just a sect of Judaism.

Unitarian monotheism is a paradox if we believe that God is love. Creation has a beginning—there was a time when it did not exist—and thus before creation God was alone. Before creation he was the only being in existence, and since time is a part of creation, he was alone for eternity. This is an absurdity for a loving God. However, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, the three Persons of the one God, are perfectly bonded in mutual love and accord. God was never alone, because he is eternally not only the giver, but also the recipient of divine love. Each Person is unique and separate, yet eternally loves the other two Persons and receives their love.

In the period of the Enlightenment philosophers maintained that God could be known through pure human reason. They

¹ This is Adoptionism. It was condemned as heresy in the 2nd century.

² This is Docetism. It was also condemned as heresy in the 2nd century.

argued that human intellect alone is sufficient to know God. To some extent this is true. It is basic to human nature to believe in deity, and reason and intellect can easily bring us to a the realization that there is a God, and that he is One. Polytheism is satisfactory if we do no more than simply observe nature, but it does not stand up under the careful scrutiny of human reason. This is why the Jews scorned the Greeks. For all their cultural, political, and intellectual achievements, they had completely missed the point when it came to an understanding of divinity. Socrates, Plato and Aristotle, the greatest of all the Greek philosophers, came very close to monotheism, but their thinking about deity never reached down to the common people. Aristotle, for example, usually referred to God rather than the gods. He saw the Greek gods as different manifestations of an all-pervading divine force, not unlike the Force in “Star Wars.”

While the recognition of God can be achieved through reason, the concept of the Trinity cannot. It is not self-evident, and therefore must be reached through revelation and faith rather than through intellect. It is not logical except in retrospect. We can grasp it once it is revealed to us, but we cannot find it through pure reason. This is what Saint Paul was talking about in 1 Cor. 1:27: “God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the mighty.” In worldly terms, Christianity is foolish. It makes no worldly sense to pray for one’s enemies, to turn the other cheek, or to consider giving more blessed than receiving. Nature tells us to exchange an eye for an eye. Faith tells us to forgive those who trespass against us. Nature tells us that there is a God. Faith tells us that he is One and that he is Love, and therefore that he must exist in Trinity. This comes to us only through revelation, and not by reason.

Richard R. Losch+

What disease was cured ham cured of?

What Good Grain and Weeds Reveal

Sometimes destruction can be a good thing. This sounds strange for a civilized man to say, but in the case of archaeology it is often true. In ancient times individual homes and whole villages or even cities were often abandoned. This would have been for a great variety of reasons, including climatic changes, famine, geographic change (such as the shifting or drying up of a river), tribal migration, or even the approach of a formidable enemy. When people move out, they usually take with them all their valuables and their reusable items (such as clothing, furniture, cooking vessels, farming equipment, etc.). After the place is abandoned, others often move in later and rebuild. They either move into the abandoned buildings or they tear them down, using the stones and timbers for their own buildings. Eventually no trace is left of the original place, its people, and their culture. When a city is destroyed, on the other hand, the people either die or flee as quickly as possible, taking with them only the bare essentials if anything at all. The cause of destruction might be fire, flood, earthquake or an enemy.¹ Most ancient buildings were not designed to withstand natural disasters, and the custom of conquerors was to level a vanquished city so that its inhabitants could not return and seek revenge. When later arrivals prepared to rebuild on the site, they would usually level off the rubble and build on top of it, so only the useable materials that were on the surface were re-used. All the rest remained preserved beneath the new city. This is why in so many archaeological digs we find several levels, each containing the remains of an earlier city. For the archaeologist, such places are treasure troves of relics and information about the cultures of the people who inhabited the places.

The Philistines (known by the ancients as the Sea People) invaded the east coast of the Mediterranean in about the 12th

¹ The classic of destroyed yet preserved cities was Pompeii, which was completely buried in volcanic ash in a few hours in 79 AD.

century BC. This was roughly the same time that the Israelites were invading Canaan from the east. The Philistines clashed with the Israelites for at least two centuries until David finally subdued them. They flourished in the region that today is known as the Gaza Strip, where many remained.¹ Scholars believe that they were from the Aegean area, possibly Crete. They built five major cities along the coast, one of the most important being Ashkelon, whose ruins are situated on the coast a little south of the modern Israeli city of Tel Aviv.²

In the early 7th century BC the Babylonians defeated the Assyrians and gained control of the whole of Mesopotamia (modern Iraq), with an eye to expanding to the south and west. They were smart enough to avoid any conflict with the mighty Persian Empire to the east (modern Iran). The old northern Jewish kingdom of Israel had fallen to the Assyrians a century earlier, and had been absorbed into their empire. The southern Jewish kingdom, Judah, along with Philistia, the land of the Philistines, had been vassals of Assyria. During the waning years of Assyria, as it weakened in power, they had fallen under Egyptian hegemony. The Egyptians and Assyrians had been bitter enemies, and with the fall of Assyria the Egyptians were happy to take on the Babylonians as prime foes. A major struggle took place, climaxing in one of the most famous battles of ancient times, the Battle of Carchemish in 609 BC. Nebuchadnezzar II of Babylonia defeated the Egyptians at Carchemish, and immediately moved south, launching a campaign of destruction. Judah rebelled against Egypt and paid tribute to Nebuchadnezzar, so he spared Jerusalem (which he would level a few years later), but he wiped

¹ The Romans called the Sea People *Palestinae*, from which we get the names Philistine and Palestine. Modern Palestinians are not their descendants, but immigrated from the neighboring Middle Eastern regions in the late 19th and early 20th centuries AD, after Jewish immigrants, mainly from Russia and eastern Europe, had settled the land earlier.

² The others were Gaza, Ashdod, Ekron and Gath. Only Gaza and Ashdod survive today as modern cities.

out the five cities of Philistia, including Ashkelon. Ashkelon fell in November or December of 604 BC. We know the date because of a Babylonian inscription: “[Nebuchadrezzar] marched to the city of Ashkelon and captured it in the month of Kislev [November/December]. He captured its king and plundered it and carried off [spoil from it ...]. He turned the city into a mound and heaps of ruins.”

Today Ashkelon is a highly prized archaeological site under the control of the extremely competent Israel Antiquities Authority. The city’s destruction was to become an archaeologist’s dream come true. The burial of buildings and the fire froze the 150-acre site in time for 2600 years, even preserving charred building timbers and carbonized seeds and fruits. The area that is being most intensely studied today is a section of the city adjacent to the sea, properly known as Grid 50, but commonly called the Market. It contains four buildings separated by streets and a plaza. The buildings are an administrative center, a counting house, a warehouse and a shop building that is rather like the ancient equivalent of a strip mall. In the shop building are, among other things, a wine shop and a butcher shop. We know that it was a butcher shop because it contains animal bones that indicate their having been butchered into various cuts of meat that are much like the cuts we use today.¹ The other we know to be a wine shop because the floor is littered with wine jars and small “juglets” that were used as dippers. Outside the entrance to the shop was found an ostrakon (a pottery shard with an inscription on it)² that refers to wine and other strong drinks.³ The warehouse con-

¹ While the ruins of Ashkelon are in Israel, when it was destroyed it was a pagan Philistine city, so the Jewish dietary laws were not observed.

² During the First Temple period (1000-587 BC) people often kept records by writing in ink on broken pottery shards. Archaeologists use the Greek word *ostrakon* (ὄστρακον, potshard, plural *ostraca*).

³ The ancients did not distill spirits as we know the process today, but they had developed ways to brew very strong wines and beers.

sisted of several long, narrow rooms called magazines. Its specific use is unclear, but similar finds in other sites confirm that it was a storage building. The magazines may have been rented out to individual merchants for storage of their wares.

The counting house was a place where financial and business records were kept. It was not the equivalent of a modern bank (most of our modern banking techniques were developed in the Middle Ages), but it probably served as a central records office used in common by merchants. It contained scale weights, part of the bronze beam of a beam balance, and fragments of bronze pans used for weighing. There is also an ostrakon recording the exchange of grain for silver.

One of the most interesting finds in Grid 50 was 138 botanical samples containing over 20,000 plant remains. Most of them were charred by fire, which is what preserved them. These samples included over 7,000 cereal grains, 9,000 fruit seeds, nearly 2,000 weed seeds and 2,000 pulses (leguminous seeds such as peas, beans and lentils). These finds are consistent with what had already been determined from other sites, that their primary diet was vegetarian, consisting of wheat, barley, almonds, figs, grapes, olives, pomegranates, chickpeas and lentils. No date seeds were found, but since date palms were cultivated in the Middle East since at least 4000 BC, it is likely that dates were also part of the diet. It is also likely that their diet included melons and onions, which were staples throughout the Levant. The butcher shop shows that meat was also in the diet, but it is probable that as in other ancient cultures, meat was a luxury that generally only the rich could afford.¹ Bay laurel leaves were also found in the counting house. Bay laurel does not grow in the region of Ashkelon, and as far as all evidence shows, it never has. The

¹ In many ancient Middle Eastern cultures, and thus probably also in that of the Philistines, soldiers were given rations of meat as a source of protein, often a form of jerky (dried salted meat). This was most common in time of war, when their strength and endurance was especially important.

nearest that it grew was in the Judean hills about 40 miles to the east. It was used medicinally in a number of ways, and its presence indicates that the Philistines traded with the Jews.

The surprising thing is that 10% of the seeds found are weeds. In the grain, about 25% of the seeds are weeds. Although all ancient grain samples contain some weed seeds, this ratio is extraordinarily high.¹ Historians and archaeologists have concluded that the reason for this is that the Ashkelonians were in a great rush to gather in the harvest, and did not have the time to separate the weeds from the good grain as they were reaping it. The only logical reason for this is that they knew the Babylonians were approaching, and were storing up as much food as possible as quickly as possible in preparation for a long siege. Remember that this grain was in Ashkelon at the time of its destruction. Modern analytical technology shows that much of it was not grown in the fields around the city, but was imported from as far away as Phoenicia to the north and Judah to the east. Because they needed to garner as much as possible and were in great haste, not only was the harvesting sloppy, but also, since their resources were limited, they bought the cheapest grain available.

It is amazing to realize the bond we can have with the ancient past when we reflect that after 2,600 years not only can we determine how the people of Ashkelon lived, but we can even sense their fear as the threat of disaster loomed.

Richard R. Losch+

Say It Right

In the news reports of the Pope's visit we heard a plethora of incorrect terms. One celebrates, says, sings or prays Mass. One does not do, perform, deliver, hold, give, lead or offer it.

Richard R. Losch+

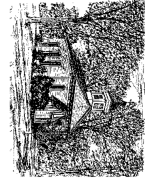
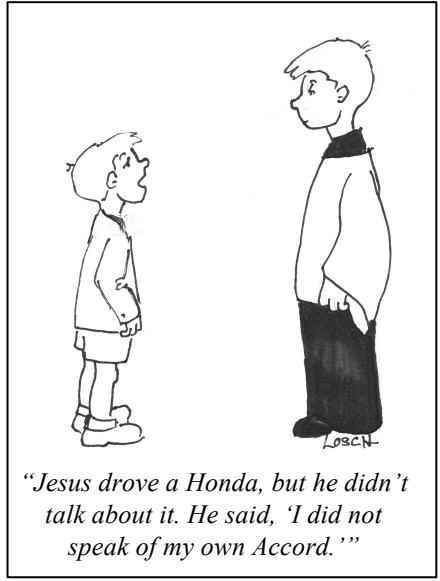
¹ Even today grain contains some weed seeds, as it is almost impossible to eliminate them altogether. The FDA has set standards of the maximum allowed, but it is a very tiny percentage of the total seeds. To eliminate them completely would make the cost of grain prohibitively high.

Don't Forget
+ Mark your Calendar +
INTERFAITH
MEN'S
BREAKFAST
OCTOBER 4
7:45 A.M.

LIVINGSTON FIRST
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

JAMIE

by Richard R. Losch



Saint James' Episcopal Church
P.O. Box 446
Livingston, AL 35470

Non Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Livingston, AL
Permit No. 18