



Preacher's Pen *by Gene McCoy*

The Last Laugh



As the morning worship was about to begin on Sunday, March 18, I noticed that the lapel microphone had a battery in it. But how much it had been used was unknown. So I asked Jason Schmeski if he thought I should insert a fresh battery. With a mischievous grin, he said, "That depends upon how long your sermon is." I countered, "Well, I plan to preach as long as God wants me to." Not to be outwitted, Jason handed me a fresh battery and said, "I guess we are going to find out if God really loves us." I laughed. But that was not the last laugh!

When I stepped into the pulpit, I rehearsed the conversation so the entire congregation could enjoy the pre-service bantering. Everyone laughed. But that was not the last laugh!

Throughout the introduction of my message, I barely noticed that the movement of people in and out of the auditorium exceeded the usual parade. Preachers grow accustomed to the flow of little children and extremely old people (I) who must make frequent trips to the bathroom. But this activity was among those who usually endure to the bitter end.

I had not completed the introduction to my sermon when one of the elders walked down the side aisle signaling "time out" with his hands. He made his way to the pulpit, where he quietly informed me that there was a gas leak and instructed me to dismiss the people and evacuate the building.

I calmly explained to the people, many of whom had smelled the odor

of gas, that everyone needed to calmly make their way out of the building. I then mused, "I guess you all know now that God really does love you!" Everyone laughed. But that was not the last laugh.

This event prompted a variety of observations among my "friends." The most obvious lesson some learned is that God wants me to preach only ten minutes.

There were other lessons learned that day. For example, several of us commented on the fact that many people lingered in the foyer and just outside the building to visit and comment on the situation, seemingly unconcerned about the prospects of an explosion. One individual, whose identity I will not divulge (but his initials are Norman Lueck), whispered in my ear, "So you are wanting a new church building? Who do you think we could get to go into the furnace room and light a match?" I pointed across the room and said, "Well, Bill is the Chairman!" People continued to linger in and around the building even as the fire trucks screamed into the parking lot. Not to implicate any of us, of course, but reflection upon this event provides an illustration of the disbelief of many regarding the warnings of Scripture pertaining to their impending ruin. But maybe all those who lingered are prepared to leave this earth and were displaying a confident faith in their security.

Whatever the lessons of that day, we need to so prepare that the last laugh will be ours!