

# ASBURY CIRCUIT RIDER

## Extravagance

There is a story found in the Gospels that warrants a double-take just as it surely did when it first happened. This story, as told by the writer of the Gospel of John, sets the scene at the house of Mary, Martha and Lazarus in Bethany. Jesus and His followers are visiting and once again Mary is sitting at the feet of Jesus. But this time Mary is not so much



listening as showing her love for Jesus.

This is a provocative story of intimacy and extravagant love. Mary breaks open a \$30K container of perfumed oil to rub on the feet of Jesus. And she lets her hair down to use it to wipe His feet. Judas is the only one willing to speak out and the writer notes that his intentions were for his own benefit. Perhaps Judas said what the others were thinking. I can imagine Peter blushing and heading into the kitchen. I can imagine a room full of men and women wondering just what was going on.

This story is rich with intrigue. There are several trajectories, or stories within stories that we can explore. First, we can safely speculate that this perfume may have been all that Mary owned. This is more likely than the scenario that there was enough household wealth that this jar was simply “disposable” income.

Mary took a whole pint of a very expensive perfume made of pure nard, poured it on Jesus' feet, and wiped them with her hair.

John 12:3 GNT

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## Insight

This week we transition from our current series, *Insight*, to our new series, *Love does*. *Insight* has been a time of reflection. Our subtitle, *Believing is seeing*, points to the power of *insight*. When we believe that God is with us, our spiritual eyes

are opened even if our physical eyes fail us.



God's love for us manifests in both acts of love for us and through us. And we receive *insight* that these are blessings from God.

Life in our neighborhood comes with a focus on survival. Going without is a way of life.

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Volume 19 Issue 3  
February 3, 2019

## Special points of interest:

### Asbury Café is Open!

Asbury Café is opened for lunch on Fridays from 10:00am-2:00pm outside the Worship Center on the main floor.



These selections will also be available on Sunday mornings before and after worship.



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## Insight ...cont. from Page 1

To such an extent that spiritual *insight* can seem like a luxury for the well-off. An extra that we pursue after we take care of our water bill. But know this. Spiritual *insight* is a gift. There is no cost. Believe in the One who created you and your eyes will be opened to new possibilities that you otherwise will miss. Spiritual *insight* may not pay your water bill but it will give you more joy than you can ever imagine. And God is not ignorant of water bills.

There is a story found in the Gospel of John that contains one of the most straight-forward and powerful testimonies to the heal-

The man replied, "One thing I do know; I was blind, and now I see."

John 9:25 GNT

ing power of Christ found in Scripture. A man, blind since birth,

## Extravagance... cont. from page 1

More likely, this perfume was Mary's pension plan that was to be sold if she found herself without others to take care of her. Perhaps it was her dowry given to her by her father in the hope of a future marriage. Mary was giving all that she had to offer Jesus with reckless abandonment rather than calculated sacrifice.

Judas is the disciple who fails Jesus. Even in this story we can read between the lines and conclude that Judas is the one most likely to betray Jesus. Our Book Club this past Wednesday spent time debating the character of Ju-

when questioned by the authorities regarding the source of Jesus' healing power, tells this: "One thing I do know: I was blind, and now I see." The man did not make any claims that he could not back up with evidence. Simple. Direct. To the point.

This story about a miracle healing from physical blindness offers us a metaphor. And this metaphor is at the core of one of the most popular Christian songs of all, *Amazing Grace*. This song is sang by believers throughout the world as a testimony to the *insight* that each of us receive as a gift from God. The *insight* that God lived among people and that we are saved by our belief that Jesus Christ is God incarnate.

I have noticed that spiritual blindness is prevalent — even among Christians. For each of us

das. The writer of the book we are studying portrayed Judas as a sort of "rotten to the core" thief who stole from the common purse because that is the sort of person Judas was. And Judas had something negative to say about Mary's act because he was showing us who he is. I take exception to this conclusion.

Judas, like the rest of us, was created in the image of God. Judas, like many of us, claimed to follow Jesus. And Jesus chose Judas to be one of His disciples.

is at best near-sighted, and worse case, nearly blind and in denial about our spiritual *insight*. When we are spiritually blind our mind fabricates an image of Christ that best suits that which we want to believe and we go on with our lives doing that which suits us at the time.

After he said this, Jesus spat on the ground and made some mud with the spittle; he rubbed the mud on the man's eyes and told him, "Go and wash your face in the Pool of Siloam." So the man went, washed his face, and came back seeing.

John 9:6-7

Spiritual *insight* changes us. But once we reach a point where we believe we can see 20/20 spiritually, something happens to our brain and to our willingness to hear and see Christ at work.

Spiritual maturity is the opposite of spiritual blindness. We reach a point where we recognize that we cannot see 20/20 at all and that we are dependent on Christ and each other to make our way through the world without bumping into the furniture. Our vision continues to come and go. Some days we see clearly although still quite near-sighted. Other days, we can sense the darkness and recognize that what we see is sufficiently blurry that today is a good day for more prayer. More time with our Lord.

**Extravagance...cont. from page 2**

Did Jesus choose Judas because He knew that this was the man who would turn Him over to authorities and fulfill scripture? There was a lot of agreement within our discussion that scripture insists that Judas had to betray Jesus. That this was the purpose and destiny of Judas.

But did Judas still have a choice? Did Judas have freewill? After all, Judas likely chose to justify to himself that taking money from the common purse was an acceptable reward for his oversight of the funds. It's likely that Judas felt that he was entitled to a fair share of the purse.

One of Jesus' disciples, Judas Iscariot—the one who was going to betray him—said, —why wasn't this perfume sold for three hundred silver coins, and the money given to the poor?"

*John 12:4-5 GNT*

Perhaps it started with a few pennies so he could get his sandals repaired. But a new pair is only a little bit more and after all, they walk everywhere.

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**In Our Prayers**

- |                      |                   |
|----------------------|-------------------|
| Curtis Young         | Christopher Lewis |
| Rachel Bastine       | Sarah Tanner      |
| Norma Buzzard        | Elizabeth Wright  |
| Virginia Bigger      | Judy Tanner       |
| Barbara McIvor       | Mary Lyons        |
| Jonathon Misner      | Richard Oram      |
| Nancy Auger          | Merle Supernaw    |
| Austin & Mary Suffle |                   |
| Shirley Craig        |                   |

**FRIENDS AND LOVED ONES WHO ARE HOMEBOUND OR IN NURSING CARE**

- |                  |              |
|------------------|--------------|
| Sharon George    | Mary Russell |
| Elaine Lamoreaux | Mary Nations |

**Insight...cont. from page 2**

*Insight* is about spiritual sight. A divine gift that allows us from time to time to see the Holy Spirit at work. *Insight* will animate all of our senses to such an extent that our only reasonable response is

**Insight will animate all of our senses to such an extent that our only reasonable response is worship.**

worship. Without *insight* worship is an expression of spiritual malnutrition. Through *insight* we receive that which we cannot live without through the power of God's Spirit feeding our souls. Nevertheless, even without *insight*, worship will satisfy our hunger and our spiritual eyes will be opened as we allow God's image to glow within us and the Holy Spirit to take up residence within our being.

If you have been following our current series, *Insight*, you will not want to miss this message that will take us from our past few weeks of teachings on believing is seeing to what we can expect from insight. That Love does. Our new series begins next Sunday. I pray that you will join us.

Pastor Tommy



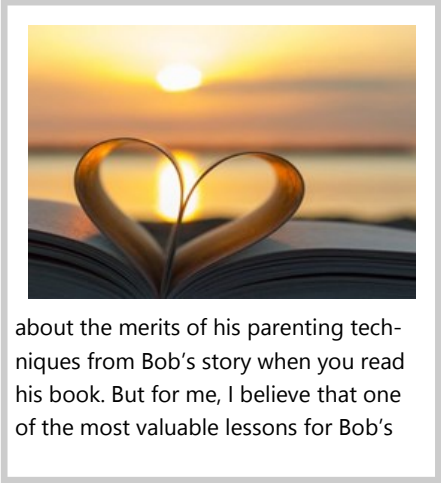
**Prayer is at the heart of our beliefs**



**Asbury Worship Series**  
**Love does**  
**Living a Breakthrough Life**

Bob Goff established a tradition with his children that merits examination. On their 10<sup>th</sup> birthday the child chooses an adventure go to on. And they just go. No advanced planning. No preparation. As the Nike slogan mandates. Just do it! \*

You can draw your own conclusions



about the merits of his parenting techniques from Bob's story when you read his book. But for me, I believe that one of the most valuable lessons for Bob's

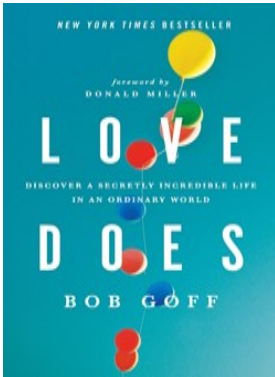
children was to have a taste of what it is like to follow Jesus. It is the adventure of a lifetime. And while I'm convinced that God knows the plan, we who follow Jesus seldom know much more than what is happening right now and perhaps a next step. Our adventure unfolds without us knowing anymore than that God has promised a life lived with Him that lasts forever.

Let's face it. People too often say

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**Book Club News**

Our next book for discussion at our weekly Book Club is *Love Does* by Bob Goff. This book is an easy read and a great joy that is hard to put down. Bob's view of life comes through the pages and his literary skills allow his readers to feel a part of the action. And a part of the life lessons.



See Pastor Tommy, contact the office, or just show up for Book Club to receive a copy. A donation of \$10 is encouraged for each book and we appreciate any help with purchasing books for those unable to pay for

one. Please refrain from taking a copy if you don't intend to read and discuss the book with us. Copies are readily available through Amazon and other sellers.

Bob writes that he keeps his office on Tom Sawyer Island at Disney World. Sporting a season pass he spends time in a place where many people who visit Disney World don't bother. One travel guide listed Tom Sawyer Island as an oasis within the madness of long lines, crowds and the hot sun. But our writer uses this getaway as a metaphor for missing out.

Tom Sawyer Island is no amusement ride. You bring your imagination to the attraction. And apparently it is one of those attractions that most visitors to Disney World leave on their "if I get around to it" list and they are fresh out of "round tuits" and pass — and miss out on an adventure. "Tom Sawyer Island is like most people's lives, I think: they never get around to crossing over to it" writes Bob Goff.

In his assessment of "people" the writer brings the words and stories of Jesus into his analysis as well as his own journey that began with a couple of believers who seemed to live out their faith to a relatively unimpressive high school student. While Jesus told parables and stories to illustrate truth Jesus also spoke plainly about a lot of very important topics. For one, Jesus made

it clear to the people around Him that it isn't enough to just look like you love God. Instead, Jesus pointed out that the way to tell how much we love God is by how well we love people.

Let's face it. People can be hard to love at times. But if we truly believe that God created us and wants what is best for us, this makes God rather easy to love. And I suspect a lot of people — most people stop there. They love God but not so much God's people. And let's face it, church people can be hard to love. But this isn't the point.

Perhaps this is one of the challenges for those who don't believe that God lived among people as Jesus Christ. They may even like Jesus but they don't care much for what Jesus told them they needed to do. In one of the stories Jesus tells a young man with a lot of belongings that he needed to get rid of his stuff. It must have been getting in the way of the young man loving others. He went away sad we read. Most of us go away sad at the thought of giving something up.

Bob takes the Gospel seriously by living whimsically. A contradiction? Not really. We can never quite know what God is up to so even our best laid plans may get interrupted by a God request. Are we willing to drop everything, or sell everything, or just change our mind about what we plan to do tomorrow? This is how love does.

Since God is insistent that we love one another, this state of feelings toward another person we call "love" must move from a noun to a verb. We do because we love. We go because we love. We respond because we love. This all looks quite whimsical to the world outside the Kingdom of God. But this is how love does.

**Leadership in Worship & Service**

**Welcome Team** Tony, Mirium,  
**Ushers** Anthony, Jim  
**Production Team** Mark  
**Children** Mirium & Emily  
**Worship Leaders** Cyndi  
**Café** Christine & Norma

**Jim Craig** Leadership Chair  
**Connie Portillo** Office Secretary  
**Kevin Croom** Farm to Table  
**Israel Unger** Business Operations

**Asbury Staff**

**Rev. Dr. Tommy McDoniel** Pastor  
**Mark Vorenkamp** Children & Youth  
**Sylvia Pittman** Worship Arts

**Asbury Café**

Plan to meet outside the sanctuary each Sunday before worship for coffee, tea, snacks, conversation and so on. The music will start when it is time to wrap up and head in for worship.



**Asbury Worship Series- Living a breakthrough life.. Cont. from page 4**

and do another. People say one thing and mean another. We have all put our faith in another person only to be disappointed. It's easy to grow callous and indifferent. It is admirable that Bob kept his promise to his children. It is even more important that his children learn that he may sometimes fail them but God never will. Bob loves his children. God loves Bob's children, and Bob, even more.

But love without an accompanying action is first of all a noun. It gives a label to something without sufficient detail to know much about the thing it names. It leaves a rather empty feeling as though something important is missing. Love requires action to be full. Love as a verb is life-giving and life-saving when animated with God's Holy Spirit. Love does rather than sit back or hold back. While love honor's the Sabbath love does not hide behind rest to avoid hard work. Love is a light shining in the darkness that finds a way forward even where brokenness casts shadows. *Love does.*

We can read in the Gospel how Jesus chose His first followers and the

invitation that they received. "Come and see" is the prevailing message. Rather than offer His followers a detailed itinerary of their adventure Jesus knew that words without action are just words. Followers need to do and not just hear. If this sounds a bit whimsical then you get the point. Come and see.

**My children, our love should not be just words and talk; it must be true love, which shows itself in action.**

*1 John 3:18*

God established early on that Words spoken by our Creator never return empty. We read that God spoke through the Prophet Isaiah the following: *So also will be the word that I speak — it will not fail to do what I plan for it; it will do everything I send it to do* (Isaiah 55:11 GNT). And Jesus Christ is God's Word that was sent that we might know the nature of God more completely. But this requires trusting that our plans are only as good as our willingness to trust God with the outcomes.

The leadership of Asbury believes that 2019 will be a breakthrough year for Asbury. We believe that God has taken us on a wild adventure that has seen God's love in action. While there has been heartbreak and disappointment, aren't these a part of what makes an adventure an adventure?

The outcomes are still not certain. God alone carries the weight of foresight. But this we have learned. *Living a breakthrough life* requires the courage to take the next step, trusting that Jesus is who He says He is and will do everything He said he will do. Jesus Christ is, because God loves the world and wants to save us. God is love. And *love does.*

Join us each Sunday for our new series, *Love does*, and learn about *living a breakthrough life*. Invite your friends, family and everyone that you meet. They will thank you.

Pastor Tommy

\* Goff, Bob. *Love Does: Discover a Secretly Incredible Life in an Ordinary World*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2012.

**Book Club News.. Cont. from pg 4**

Author Donald Miller, writes this about his friend and colleague, "Bob Goff loves people with a force that is natural, and by natural I mean like nature, like a waterfall or wind or waves on the ocean. He loves effortlessly, as though love packs annually in snow on a mountain, melting and rushing through him in an infinite loop. There's no explanation for a man who can love this well save God. I think Bob Goff knows God, and I think God's love flows through him."

The review on Amazon writes that "When Love Does life gets interesting. Each day turns into a hilarious, whimsical, meaningful chance that makes faith simple and real. Each chapter is a story that forms a book, a life. And this is one life you don't want to miss. Light and fun, unique and profound, the lessons drawn from Bob's life and attitude just might inspire you to be secretly incredible, too."

Jason Russell, Co-founder of Invisible Children writes "If all people loved the way Bob Goff loves all people, the world would change overnight. In this book, he reminds us of the truest virtue the kingdom calls us to practice: Love Does. It's active. The Jesus we serve is surprising and subversive. Bob knows this because he himself is both paradoxically wise as a wizard and as joy-filled as a toddler."

We encourage you to come to our Wednesday gatherings. Our small group hopes to widen our circle and so we hope that you will join in on our discussion. We meet each Wednesday at Noon. Come join us for a light lunch, fellowship and discussion. Our food selections have been fantastic and we always have plenty to share. And we are always on the lookout for our next book, video lesson or topic. Your participation and suggestions are greatly appreciated.

Pastor Tommy

\* Goff, Bob. *Love Does: Discover a Secretly Incredible Life in an Ordinary World*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2012.

**- Coming up this week -**

- Feb 4 Mon**
- Feb 5 Tues** 10am-2pm Water Distribution
- Feb 6 Wed** 12Noon Pastor Book Club  
6pm Beginners Bible Study
- Feb 7 Thu** 1pm UMW  
4:30pm-6pm Magic  
6pm Worship Band Practice
- Feb 8 Fri** 10am-2pm Asbury Cafe Open  
6pm Asbury Youth Group
- Feb 10 SUNDAY**  
9:30am Café Opens  
10:30am New Beginnings  
Contemporary Worship

**Last Week for Worship:  
Attendance 25 Offering \$ 458**

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**SAVE THESE DATES ...**



 **MAGIC**  
THE GATHERING

**AS EDUCATION**

A three-part class teaching Math. Strategic Planning, and Teamwork Strategies through learning Magic: The Gathering.

All participants will receive two "welcome decks" that will be used for the class and can be kept after.

Thurs Jan 24, 31, Feb 7 - 4:30-6:00PM  
FREE  
Participants 8 to 18 are welcome

**ASBURY CHURCH  
1653 DAVISON RD  
FLINT, MI 48506**

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Breakthrough Concert & Celebration has been rescheduled



Pastor Nick Hill, a beloved friend of Asbury, is releasing his 2nd CD - Breakthrough.

Asbury Empowerment Arts Center will host a concert celebration on Friday, February 22nd at 7:00 PM.

Call the Asbury Office (235-0016) to reserve your tickets!!

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## Asbury Farm to Table



While turning blight into beautiful and productive landscape is good on its own, transforming a food desert into abundance is life giving. But Asbury wants to make sure that produce is available on the tables of our residents. Our culinary arts and nutritional education programs offer residents the know how just as our farms offers nature's bounty. In addition, the Asbury Café is a culinary experience accessible to our neighbors and anyone with an appetite. Our "pay what you can" approach means that no one is turned away. Those who can help either on the farm or in the café are offered special MyFlintStones tokens that can be used either in the Asbury Café or in exchange for produce to prepare at home.

We proudly accept MyFlintStones

The Asbury Café is open Fridays 10am to 2pm & Sundays 10 am to 12 Noon

### ASBURY CAFÉ MENU

Open Fridays 10am to 2pm

*Pay what you can*

#### DELI SUBS

Lettuce, onions, tomato plus choice of ham, turkey or beef

#### STIR FRY

Local grown garden vegetables sautéed with love and herbs

#### GARDEN SALAD

Local grown greens & vegetables. Ham, turkey or beef upon request

#### WRAPS

Lettuce, onions, tomato plus choice of ham, turkey or beef

#### MUFFINS

Chef Kevin's special recipe with fruit, love and other delights baked in.

#### SMOOTHIE

Assorted flavors of the day

#### COFFEE

Regular or decaf





# Welcome to the Asbury Community

1653 Davison Rd  
Flint, MI 48506



NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION  
U.S. POSTAGE PAID  
FLINT, MICHIGAN  
PERMIT #151

Phone: 810-235-0016  
Fax: 810-235-0016 (call first when faxing)  
E-mail: FlintAsburyUMC@gmail.com

## Neighborhood Connection



We envision a community in love with God, each other, and our neighbors evidenced by the transformation of ourselves and our neighborhood. We are a center for worship & spiritual growth, a center for connections and a center for health & wellness.

Our goal is a revitalized community where every resident can use their talents and passions for the common good, where children grow into citizens who contribute to building and maintaining a vibrant neighborhood, and all residents are able to enjoy safety, good health, a culture that fosters life long learning and satisfying lives.

We believe that such an ambitious goal can never be attained without God's grace and abundance and Christ calls each of us to be disciples willing to share our witness through words and acts.

## Extravagance... cont. from page 3

A new coat last winter. And Judas was a big tipper and wasn't this good for Jesus' reputation that His followers take care of those who wait on them. There was also an overture of empathy for Judas during our discussions. Judas had to do what he did to fulfill God's plan. Judas was simply following his purpose.

I suspect that we are giving too much credit to Judas and to ourselves. Are we important? Yes. If we fail to do that which God created us for, does this thwart God's plan forcing God to go to Plan B? Perhaps. And it could be that we are not giving God enough credit.

The interrelationships of the universe are infinitely complex. Beyond anything that our most capable geniuses can fathom. Yet God knows Creation intimately and completely. And God seems to be patient beyond any patience that we could experience or even imagine. We are by nature not so patient. I believe that if Judas had chosen to assist Mary, rather than criticize her, this scene could have become a turnaround point for his life. And if so, someone else or somehow else, God's plan would still prevail even if a day, a year or more later. Most important, we may be missing the point.

In this story we are witnessing a comparison of extravagant, unqualified love compared to qualified, selfish love. And where on this continuum do we find our own story? What love are we capable of offering Christ? What decision do we make when tempted to hold onto our security and stick to our old ways, to do that which is expected, rather than give with reckless abandonment?

**Where on this continuum do we find our own story?**

Most of us are taught from childhood to conserve in proportion to our reward. We are taught how to trade whether it be marbles, toys, favors or insults. I offer you a used smoothie maker in exchange for a coffee pot. I help jump your car and you bring over fresh muffins. I call you lazy after you tell me that I'm not caring.

This is called reciprocity and we can easily conclude that God works the same way. If you love me, I will love you, as long as our relationship is beneficial to me. Our love and our sacrifices are qualified. And extravagance is intended for the wealthy who can offer expensive perfume out of their walking around money.

Even the word "extravagance" suggests recklessness. A lack of proper control. To be extravagant is to be reckless. Extravagance like the word radical is to do something unexpected and to risk ridicule and shame. Who needs that?

Yet, just as Jesus prophesied, for centuries this story about Mary's act of extravagant love is told and retold. Making wine out of water, the miracle of the wedding at Cana, is only a sample of what it means to love extravagantly. And this is the love that God has shown Creation from the beginning and has promised to love us always.

How much more love can a person show than to lay down their life for another? How much more extravagant than to give much more than expected. Early in John's Gospel we read how God love the world so much that Jesus was given as a gift in order to save us from self-destruction. This is extravagant love. And Mary was blessed that God had revealed to her the identity of Jesus and she responded with the gratitude of a person whose life had been saved.

May God grant us with the humility to do likewise. This is the 3<sup>rd</sup> week of our worship series, Insight. As we continue to work through the Gospel of John my hope for you is that God will expand your insight, revealing the path that lies before you that will lead you to extravagant love.

Pastor Tommy