

ASBURY CIRCUIT RIDER

Radical Generosity (Responding to God's Generosity)

This Sunday is called the "Second Sunday in Easter" according to the common lectionary. For the Western church Easter was last Sunday. In the Eastern Orthodox Church, Easter is this Sunday. But on this side of the Christian world, the Easter candy and decorations were put on clearance even as Sylvia and Cyndi were singing the Easter Song. It's time for Spring to be here for real. Mother's Day and Memorial Day are right around the corner. Easter is over. Or is it?

I decided to separate my Easter message from the Easter play by a week, extending our Multiply series by one week. Why? The subject of generosity is much too important to squeeze it in

between scenes of a play. Generosity is synonymous with faith. The writer of



James reminds us that faith is dead unless there is some action associated with our faith. The same can be said about generosity. Otherwise, we are only generous with our excess. This is calculated generosity. The kind of generosity that we hope that God doesn't use in answering our prayers.

Last week we read that Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and discovered that Jesus' body was no longer there. Mary

was distraught. Who could have done such a horrible thing? Mary had seen Jesus in the first person. Watching Jesus heal others. Seeing the miracles first hand. But Mary still wasn't quite ready for what had happened. The good news was so good that it simply didn't seem plausible.

Do you remember how Mary responded to Jesus while He was alive? She poured expensive oil on Jesus and wiped His feet with her hair. Mary responded to Jesus with *radical generosity*. The disciples were not happy. Judas reminded Mary that she should not have given all that she had. But she did. Mary's response to Jesus was true generosity. Mary gave out of her scarcity to the One who promised abundance. Mary believe Jesus was who He claimed to be.

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Generous—Dusty III

Easter is the ultimate conclusion to what it means to be generous. God gave His only Son that we can live but God didn't stop there. God then resurrected Jesus Christ and gave Him power over death to share with all of His followers. We are the adopted sisters and brothers of Jesus. And we should naturally be generous ourselves particularly

given that we realize as Christ followers that all we have is a gift from God. It is not ours to bury and save for the afterlife. It is ours to



share with other and God promises that if we do so we will never be lacking.

The story of Dusty continues with Dusty III premiering on Easter Sunday. In the original musical titled *Dusty seeking his destiny*, we told the story of Mary's donkey that she rode on to Bethlehem while pregnant with the Christ child.

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Volume 19 Issue 28

April 28, 2019

Special points of interest:

>>> PLEASE PLAN TO STOP BY THE FELLOWSHIP HALL AFTER SERVICE SUNDAY FOR A FAREWELL GET TOGETHER FOR MARK & EMILY. WE WILL HAVE CAKE AND PUNCH!

>>> UMW will be meeting on Thursday, May 2nd at 1pm in the Weslyn Room.

>>> Worship Design will be meeting on Monday, May 6th and May 20th at 6pm in the Asbury Library.

>>> Leadership team will meet on Monday, May 13th at 6pm in the Asbury Library.

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Generous-Dusty III (Believing God's Abundance)...cont. from page 1

Dusty II premiered on Palm Sunday to bring the story of Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem from the vantage point of the donkey Jesus rode into the city. Now Jesus is gone. At least this is what the authorities are hoping for and His followers fear. But Dusty isn't convinced. Without the human weakness of believing only what he sees Dusty is there, at least in our telling of this story, but isn't able to tell his new friends the good news. They have to see it for themselves.

Three days after Jesus was executed and His body placed in a tomb, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb to see for herself that Jesus' body was no longer there. Mary understandably cried and wondered who could have done such a horrible thing as to steal a dead body. Perhaps it was ordered by the Chief Priest who turned

over Jesus to the Roman authorities insisting that He be executed. Perhaps it was Roman soldiers ordered to do away with this troublemaker once and for all. Mary's tears are our tears when we believe that we could be wrong that God is truly with us.

The presence of angels must have startled Mary, at least to a point, although her belief that Jesus was who He said He was surely prepared her for being in the presence of the divine.

Who is it that you are looking for?

John 20:15a

But Mary's expectations fell short of God's intentions for the world. So Mary cried in her feelings of scarcity. For Mary on that first Easter morning, God was

apparently unwilling to save the One whom Mary had trusted to be the Messiah. And Mary wept for herself and for all of us when we feel as though even our restrained expectations were simply too much for God to deliver.

When Jesus appears to Mary, at first she does not recognize Him. Mary mistakes Jesus for a gardener. Someone with limited power and authority. Mary makes the same mistake that we all make when we come to accept that scarcity is God's intended outcome for our lives. We hold onto a worldview that is limited by what can be accomplished by people like us or even by people we perceive to hold power over us.

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Radical Generosity ... cont. from page 1

But Mary also knew that Jesus died on a cross like so many others had done before Him. Anyone daring to give voice, any one daring to take action, in opposition to those who claimed to be in control, are met with violence. And the daring hung on a cross, no longer able to confront injustice. No longer able to keep promises. No longer able to help others. And Mary knew that this happened to Jesus.

So Mary stood by the empty tomb and wept. Had all of her hopes and dreams also been crucified? Mary cannot go back and recover the expensive oil that she broke open that day. Perhaps she

should have listened to the voices of reason and held onto the oil rather than use it on a man who was destined to be confronted by persons who did not hear His message as good news for them. After all, they had taken their position as first in line through force, and they had no interest in becoming the last. And whoever heard of the last being first?

Jesus stood in front of Mary and she mistook Him for someone with limited power. But a gardener might know what happened to Jesus' body? Mary needed closure. And then Mary was treated to yet another miracle. At the mention of her name she recognizes Jesus. Jesus had

risen from the grave just as He said He would. Jesus is who He claimed to be. Jesus is the Messiah. But now what?

How do we respond to such good news? What do we do when Jesus has stood right in front of us as alive as ever? How can life ever be the same once we know that Jesus is alive and His promises are kept?

We don't know what became of Mary Magdalene. After the Gospel stories conclude she isn't mentioned again.

Page 3

Radical Generosity..cont. from page 2

I'm guessing that she was there at Pentecost. I'm guessing that her needs were met. In fact, I don't have to guess. Jesus is alive and Mary believed. And I believe that my salvation, our salvation, begins immediately on the day that we first believe. But then what?

But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.
James 1:22 GNT

The Book of James is short, blunt and to the point. The writer is not one to hold back. "You say that you believe," I can hear the writer saying, "then I should be able to tell by what you do with what you know." Likely words that the writer of James heard Jesus say. The writer wants us to consider whether we truly believe that Jesus is a live. Are you holding back your "special oil" for later? Is it for your own burial? Are you, as the writer warns, like the person who looks at themselves in a mirror, catches a glimpse, but forgets who they saw?

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In Our Prayers

- | | |
|----------------------|-------------------|
| Curtis Young | Shirley Craig |
| Rachel Bastine | Christopher Lewis |
| Norma Buzzard | Sarah Tanner |
| Virginia Bigger | Elizabeth Wright |
| Barbara McIvor | Judy Tanner |
| Austin & Mary Suffle | Mary Lyons |

FRIENDS AND LOVED ONES WHO ARE HOMEBOUND OR IN NURSING CARE

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

Generous–Dusty III...cont. from page 2

But our expectations are limited to the likes of an empire based on violence and the machinery of war. Power that can kill our bodies and take away all that we have. But power that falls short when it comes to abundance for all.

And Mary comes face to face with a power that is beyond any power that she can imagine. She has seen what people in power can do when she saw Jesus hanging on a cross. Perhaps this image of Jesus' painful death all but erased her memories of Jesus' power to heal. Even His power to restore life. Perhaps the image of death cast such a dark

The Kingdom of God is a Kingdom of abundance and the Light that eradicates the shadows and illuminates injustice.

shadow over Mary's images of life that she could not recognize the face of the One whom she had come to love and to follow. Mary is you and I. We allow the image of death to mute the images of life that God has shown us since we first believed.

Jesus begins their post Resurrection conversation with a powerful question. A question that Jesus asks us over and over again when we look at the world and see the machinery of violence everywhere. Whether it be as visible as the tables of money-changers who exploit our lacking or as obscure as the economic systems that keep us impoverished and add to the wealth of the few, a dark shadow is cast over our field of vision. And this dark shadow can keep us from

recognizing the One whom we confessed to be our Lord and Savior even when He is standing right in front of us.

Easter is a great time to celebrate that God always delivers and God's generosity endures even in the shadows of people and systems that take life away rather than give life. The Kingdom of God is a Kingdom of abundance and the Light that eradicates the shadows and illuminates injustice. During this season of preparation that brought us to the celebration of the Resurrection we turned our attention to multiplication. Double-digit multiplication which happens when an entire community faithfully follows Jesus.

When Jesus says her name Mary recognizes Him. "Who is it that you are looking for?" Can you hear Jesus calling your name? Will you give with a spirit of abundance, your presence, gifts, service, prayers and testimony? Will you risk going without trusting that God will provide for your needs? Will you respond to God's generosity with a generous and giving spirit?

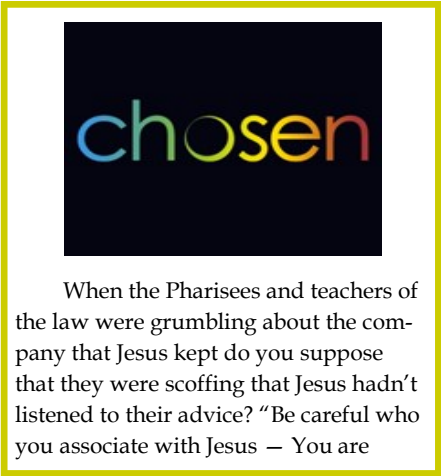
Pastor Tommy

Dusty Seeking His Destiny, Dusty II - the Crossroads of Destiny and Legacy, and Dusty III - Journey to the Cross, were written by Terrance Williams, Sylvia Pittman and Rev Dr Tommy McDaniel. Used with permission.



Asbury Worship Series Chosen All are Welcome

We have all heard it from parents, from aunts, from anyone who is concerned about us. "You are judged by the company you keep." There are numerous other pearls of wisdom that come at us like a declaration of truth. And some of them are true. But a lot of them aren't. But even the less true ones have a seed of truth.

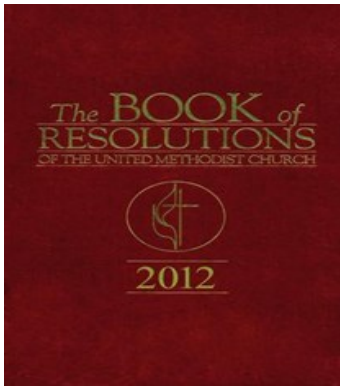


When the Pharisees and teachers of the law were grumbling about the company that Jesus kept do you suppose that they were scoffing that Jesus hadn't listened to their advice? "Be careful who you associate with Jesus – You are

judged by the company You keep?" After all, the tax collectors and "other outcasts" were coming out to hear Jesus speak. And Jesus was having meals with them. Scandal!
After beginning Chapter 15 with this observation the writer of Luke goes on to share that Jesus told a parable to "them." I'm guessing that Jesus told the parable to the gathered crowd knowing that His critics would be listening.
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Book Club News

We completed our study of the book *Love Does* by Bob Goff. This book was an easy read and a lot of fun. 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.



Our group is spending some time on the written beliefs and principals of

our denomination. At our April 24 gathering we took a brief look at the Book of Resolutions of the United Methodist Church using a short video presentation. And we will take a deeper look into this publication that comes out of each General Conference.

We also took a slightly deeper dive into the history of our doctrine. Our denomination became the United Methodist Church when the Methodist Episcopal Church merged with the Evangelical United Brethren Church. Therefore, our history is also a merged history.

Not all persons who claim membership in the United Methodist Church agree on how we should interpret scripture. In fact, our heritage encourages each generation to interpret scripture with fresh eyes and

open minds. We make a non-exclusive claim to a way of interpreting scripture that undergirds this idea encouraging us to read scripture through the lenses of tradition, experience and reason. And since we don't all have the same experiences or even the same traditional interpretations our reasoning ends in different places.

I believe that this richly diverse tradition is a strength. We are encouraged to engage each other in holy conversations around our beliefs. When our conversations take place in love and are surrounded and supported by prayer we are able to be more in love with God and each other. At least this is the intention.

Sadly, all of the United Methodists that I have ever met are human. And as humans we continue to carry the brokenness that can separate rather than unite us. Our conversations are too often far from holy because they do not always take place in love. Our last general conference resulted in a divided body with far too much hurt. And many of us have yet to recover. And none of us know where this will lead us in the future.

Leadership in Worship & Service

- Welcome Team Tony, Mirium
- Ushers Anthony, Jim
- Production Team Mark & Jonathon
- Children Patrice & Mirium
- Worship Leaders Cyndi
- Café Christine & Norma

- Sylvia Pittman Worship Arts
- Jim Craig Leadership Chair
- Kevin Croom Farm to Table
- Israel Unger Business Operations

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 Staff

- Rev. Dr. Tommy McDoniel Pastor
- Connie Portillo Office Secretary
- Mark Vorenkamp Children & Youth

Asbury Worship Series– Chosen ... Cont. from page 4

The parable was about searching for the lost. But “lost” applies to the outcasts whom God searches for and gathers into God’s kingdom.

The Pharisees on the other hand believe that they are righteous. They believe this to be true about themselves in contrast to the outcasts. Rather than celebrate with God that the outcasts had gathered to hear the good news that the kingdom of God is near, they scoffed at the idea that God would want to be in their presence at all.

Think about the attitude that too often comes across from us church goers. We declare ourselves righteous, or at least more righteous than those who we don’t see at worship. Imagine if we could see what God sees from a vantage point of seeing the whole picture. Might we see Jesus sitting with outcasts while we celebrate our righteousness without Him?

I’m not saying that Jesus isn’t present in worship with us. I believe

that He is every week and during the week. But in our worship we are to celebrate the lost being found. Not because

One day when many tax collectors and other outcasts came to listen to Jesus, the Pharisees and the teachers of the Law started gambling, "This man welcomes outcasts and even eats with them?"

Luke 15:1 (GNT)

they are less righteous and now can become like us. But because we welcomed them into our community and celebrated with them that each of us is searched for until found by the Good Shepherd.

One additional point to this parable. By the time that Jesus told this parable, shepherds were also considered outcasts. And Jesus had the audacity to compare God to a shepherd. God is an outcast in this context. No wonder we are more apt to find Jesus with the outcasts!

I pray that you will join us for our new series, Chosen, that begins on Sunday, May 5, 2019. As we prepare to celebrate the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, we will explore what it means to be chosen – to be an outcast whom God is especially fond of – and prepare for the celebrations to come as more of us outcasts gather together to worship the Shepherd who found us. Join us each Sunday at 10:30 am in the Asbury Empowerment Arts Center for a Spirit-filled worship experience. At 9:30 am a few of us meet in the Asbury Café to discuss the scripture for the week. Join us.

Pastor Tommy

Book Club News.. Cont from page 4

Nevertheless, our conversations were and will continue to take place in love as we continue this tradition of interpreting scripture with fresh eyes and open hearts supported by prayer. We do not have to agree on the details but we must agree on love and respect for all persons. Even when we take issue with what they believe.

Our conversations about our shared and differing beliefs will take us into our next topic and book. I am grateful for all of the suggestions that have been shared. I continue to be in prayer about our subject matter. There are a lot of good books to choose from and we may be able to take on most of them in time. I try to bring us current books on subjects that are relevant to our daily lives. And I often try to connect our worship series so that book club allows us to dive deeper into our topics.

I encourage you to come to our Wednesday gatherings. Our small group is a diverse group and we are delighted when new persons join us. I 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

** The Book of Resolutions of the United Methodist Church. The United Methodist Publishing Company, Nashville: 2012.*

Coming up this week

- Apr 29 Mon** 5pm Youth Choir
6pm Worship Design
7pm Flint Jubilee
- Apr 30 Tues** 10am-2pm Water Distribution
7pm Community Gospel Choir
- May 1 Wed** 12Noon Pastor Book Club
6pm Beginners Bible Study
6pm Youth Group
- May 2 Thu** 4:30-6pm Gaming as Education
6pm Worship Band Practice
- May 3 Fri** 10am-2pm Asbury Cafe Open
6:00pm Asbury Youth Group
- May 4 Sat** 10am-12N Japanese Jiu Jitsi
- May 5 Sun** 8am-10am Japanese Jiu Jitsi

- May 5 SUNDAY**
9:30am Café Opens
10:30am New Beginnings
Contemporary Worship

**Last Week for Worship
Attendance 50 Offering \$ 561**

CELEBRATE SPRING WITH US!

The United Methodist Women of Asbury United Methodist Church invite you to join the Asbury Congregation in kicking off Spring and getting the Asbury Farm planted for this season.

Saturday, May 11, 2019 from 11:30AM ~ 1:00P

Special menu prepared by our own Chef Kevin!

Vegetarian Lasagna - Garlic Bread
Asbury Fresh Garden Salad - Light Homemade Desserts
Hot and Cold Drinks

Program includes a special Testimony Speaker - Door Prizes and Fun!
Price is only \$7.00 (\$4.00 for children 4-8 and 3 and under are free)

Reservations must be made in advance by calling Norma Natrass at 810-235-1116 before Tuesday, May 7, 2019, dinner will be in the Asbury Fellowship Hall.

PLEASE STOP BY THE FELLOWSHIP HALL AFTER
SERVICE SUNDAY FOR CAKE AND PUNCH FOR A FARE-
WELL GET TOGETHER FOR MARK & EMILY VORENKAMP!



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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

Life Group Questions & Notes

But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does.

James 1:22-25 GNT

NOTES FROM WORSHIP

QUESTIONS FOR LIFE GROUPS

1. Read James 1:13-17, 22-25. What images come to mind? In what ways does this text appeal to you
Where do you see yourself in this text?
2. Our Lord is risen. Our hope is based on a God who promises that we will do the same. Meanwhile, we are still among the living. What do we do in the meantime? James reminds us that there are blessings in doing. Hearing is only the beginning. So what is your next step?
3. How can the members of your group help you this week and on-going to help you remove obstacles that stand in the way of your witness?

Welcome to the Asbury Community

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

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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.

Radical Generosity.. Responding to God's Generosity cont. from page 3

I see this a lot with Christians. They fill the massive worship spaces with their numbers wearing the latest fashion and arriving in style. Grab a premium coffee on the way into the worship center. Enjoy the music. Raise hands and sing along. Worship is Sunday entertainment. A warmup to the day's events. A couple clicks on the iPhone to make a contribution for a great show.

Don't get me wrong. Churches cannot survive without the contributions. But there is more to responding to God's generosity than a token donation. Worship is not entertainment, even when the music is great and the message is moving. Worship demands participation. Worship demands surrender. Worship demands radical generosity even in the midst of scarcity. Worship demands that we break open the expensive oil that we were saving for a rainy day.

Our response to God's generosity speaks volumes about whether we truly believe that which we claim to believe. Put yourself in Mary's sandals. Imagine that you are sitting with Jesus and His divine radiance fills the room. You are so taken by the love that you feel from Him that you want to show your gratitude. You find the most valuable thing you own and you offer it to Jesus. And yet you realize what Jesus already knows. You

are still holding back.

Surrender is a journey for even the most radical Christians. Surrender begins with a desire to know Jesus Christ. But then surrender continues to find release that moves from putting our toe in the water to full immersion. We start putting aside our change for the offering plate. Loose change turns into folding money. We set up an automatic donation to make sure that we don't miss even if we can't make it to worship.

And then we break open the expensive oil. We are all in. There is no Plan B in case God doesn't deliver on promises. There is no back door in case God for some reason doesn't see us as worthy of abundance. We are in for life. We are God's for eternity. We no longer adjust our schedule to make time for God. The Holy Spirit sets our schedule and we awaken each day to a new adventure with Christ.

This is radical generosity. This is surrender. We are all in because we know that the tomb is empty. We know that Jesus Christ is who He says He is. We know that persons who are first in this world may be in denial about what is happening in the

kingdom of God. So we tell them and we

Worship demands participation. Worship demands surrender. Worship demands radical generosity even in the midst of scarcity. Worship demands that we break open the expensive oil that we

invite them to come to the back of the line with us. And sometimes they do just that.

Several weeks ago, on Ash Wednesday, we began our worship series, *Multiply*. My hope was that each of us would find our next step in our journey towards surrender. *Multiply* is a living truth. As we find our place in God's kingdom we can't help but express our generosity towards others. A big part of generosity is invitation. Come and join us.

We begin the month of May, the month of new growth and the breaking out of flowers, the new birth that comes out of God's love for creation, with a message of *inclusion*. God's kingdom belongs to all of creation for God created all. Creation was wonderfully and beautifully made by a loving God. The universe is expanding at an increasing rate of growth. And we must also grow. Come prepared to learn and to be surprised.

Pastor Tommy