

# ASBURY CIRCUIT RIDER

## Good Dirt (Adding compost and other matters)

Good dirt. Of course, this is the point. We all want to be good dirt. We want to put seeds into good dirt. If we want to get to heaven we just have to be good dirt. Right?

But what if we aren't good dirt? What if we are just dirt that is full of rocks and thorns? What if we are trying to grow vegetables where a driveway, or a yard or the foundation of a house was only a few years ago?



Jesus was asked more than once what it takes to get to heaven. In one case a lawyer seemed to particularly interested in

stumping Jesus. In another case, a man of privilege asked. I think he was sincere. Perhaps all of them had a degree of sincerity in their question. It's an important question. Even if this isn't really the main point of our faith and belief. Even if getting to heaven is just one of many benefits or faith and belief.

One of the first things that we hear around Flint when we talk about putting in a new garden is testing the soil. For the past few years Edible Flint, a local organization that promotes gardening, offers discounted soil tests. Asbury Farms sends in soil samples every two years from each of our sites. A soil test tells us a lot about the conditions of the dirt that we hope will grow tasty vegetables and fruit. We need good dirt.

But it doesn't usually work out that the dirt where we hope to put seeds in the ground is the sort of "good" that we prefer. First, there

are already rocks, thorns and compacted dirt where we want seeds to grow. We live the full parable of the farmer planting seeds as told by Jesus in Matthew. Some of our dirt is closer to good dirt than other places but all of the dirt needs preparation before we scatter our seeds.

Another theme that we hear around our community of hopeful gardeners and farmers is to add compost to the soil. Compost is rich in nutrients. Both the basic nutrients needed by plants including nitrogen, phosphorous, and potassium. But compost also includes what is called micronutrients, such as manganese, copper, iron, and zinc. In our orchards we also add forms of "liquid compost" sometimes called compost tea that contains species of bacteria, fungi, protozoa and nematodes.

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## Thorns (Facing thorny problems)

Some plants protect themselves with thorns. Anyone who has grabbed a rose stem or a thistle or rubbed up against nettle has learned that our bare skin is no match for the protection systems of some plants. A couple of the youth visiting from Omaha found this out when they attempted to pull a thistle out of the strawberries while helping out at the Asbury Farm. They learned that cloth work gloves don't provide enough protection.



Thorns are challenging. Ask anyone who has picked wild blackberries, collected roses or tried to remove a thistle. Caution is the watchword if

we want to avoid being pricked. Trying to make our way through nested briars in a field is challenging and can be painful. The rabbits that live next to the parsonage know that when our dog Duke spots them their best escape is to head for the black raspberry bushes where Duke's size and awkwardness would result in too much pain to make it worth entering this area of the yard. In the case of the rabbits, thorns are a good thing.

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Volume 19 Issue 21

July 21, 2019

### Special points of interest:

**>>> Leadership Team will meet in the Asbury Library on Monday, July 22nd at 6:00pm. All involved please plan to attend.**

**>>> Deadlines for Church Conference reports due to Connie. (see page 3)**

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## Thorn (Facing thorny problems)...cont. from page 1

But thorns are more of a metaphor than a plant characteristic in this article. When we think of how our body responds to the prick of a thorn we can compare this response to other things that make us say “ouch.” For example, we try to do something good anticipating both a good feeling and even a little gratitude from the person we are helping. Instead, we get hurt. We may wish we hadn’t tried to help just as the youth wished they hadn’t grabbed the thistle.

And there are plenty of things that can make us say “ouch” emotionally. Unkind words are spoken to us or about us. Condemnation by others. Bad news about our health or livelihood or about someone close to us. The pain caused by some of life’s “thorns” can be immediate and the pain can last for years or even for a lifetime. Life is full of thorns. We sometimes refer to difficult situations filled with the potential for things to get worse as a “thorny” problem.

Some of us are “worriers” who just can’t seem to find rest in the midst of so much to worry about. Anxiety can become a normal part of every day. Anxiety may be invisible but it is felt by more than just the anxious persons. Anxiety can infect a household, an entire neighborhood, a city or even a nation. Anxiety can infect a community of faith. Anx-

## Good Dirt... cont. from page 1

Good soil is very much alive. There is a world of activity taking place both on and just below the surface. For example, some grasses reproduce or spread using rhizomes. These can be thought of as underground stems that go in search of suitable dirt for sending up blades of grass that can reach the sunlight needed for healthy growth. But rhizomes are hoping to become healthy grass. Just like our hoping for healthy carrots or beets or greens without the grass.

Getting back to the dirt that is the subject of this Sunday’s message, we all want to be good dirt. We want to hear the voice of God. We want to have insight into God’s Word that gives us abundant life. This is a desire that is built in. We are like rhizomes. We search for the light that will allow us to flourish. In our case, it is the Word of

ity usually provokes a reaction. This is what makes anxiety so popular with politicians and other drama enthusiasts. Want to convince someone to vote for you then create anxiety by pointing a finger at a cause that you claim you can stop. Need some attention then create some drama.

When anxiety about every day tasks is persistent it may be diagnosed as “chronic” anxiety by mental health professionals. Persons suffering from chronic anxiety may discover that when reasons for anxiety are missing they become unsettled and often-times create reasons for anxiety thus returning themselves back to what has become their “normal” way of being. Chronic anxiety is associated more with ordinary events that are generally not stressful for most of us. These are not thorns in our use of this metaphor. Help for chronic anxiety is best left to those whom God has gifted with mental health expertise.

Anxiety about anything that takes our focus away from God is not a good situation for us. Jesus taught about the dangers of anxiety in other circumstances. Not so that we would worry about being worried, however. Jesus wanted us to know that God is with us

God that sustains us. The nutrients provided by the food we eat is critical but insufficient.

Jesus tells this parable. A farmer scatters seed hoping to harvest wheat when the seeds become fruit-bearing plants. Fortunately, a lot of the seeds falls on good soil and the farmer reaps a good harvest. Later, Jesus explains the parable to us. The seed is God’s Word and we are the good dirt that brings forth abundant life. So how do we become good dirt?

Later in Matthew we read about a conversation that Jesus had with a man of privilege. Apparently, this man was rather good soil using our metaphor from the parable about the farmer. The man wanted to know what it would take for him to get into heaven. Setting aside for a moment that the man seems to be focused on himself. His

when there are situations that make us anxious.

In our current worship series, titled *Grow*, we are spending time on a parable that Jesus told about a farmer planting wheat. In His parable, Jesus explains that

Some of the seed fell among thorn bushes, which grew up and choked the plants.

Matthew 13:7

not all of the seeds fell onto soil that was offered the best conditions for the seeds to mature into healthy plants. The seeds that fell among the thorns in Jesus’ parable struggled and apparently succumbed to the more aggressive thorn-bearing plants. The yield from these seeds was lost.

In His explanation of this parable, Jesus uses thorns as a metaphor for worries. Anything that makes us anxious. So

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Question is one that we all want answered. Is there an entrance exam? What if I don’t read so well? What if I don’t test well?

Some seeds fell in good soil, and the plants bore grain; some had one hundred grains, others sixty; and other thirty.

Matthew 13:8

The story is found in Matthew chapter 19. The man in the story asks Jesus for a list of things that he needs to do. I think that Jesus gives the man back the list that the man already knows to begin a connection with the man. Jesus is brilliant when it comes to speaking our language. Jesus knows what we are thinking so He doesn’t need to translate from local phrases and made up words.

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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

Mary Nations	Mary Russell
Elaine Lamoreaux	

#### CHURCH CONFERENCE REPORTS 2019



Tuesday, August 13, 2019 at Court Street UMC, 6:00pm

All reports that are marked due 2 weeks before church conference should be in the church office by NO LATER than Monday, July 29th. All others need to be in office by Monday, August 5th.

IT IS VERY IMPORTANT THAT YOU KEEP WITH THESE DATES. I WILL BE TAKING SOME DAYS OFF LEADING UP TO THESE DATE,S AS MY DAUGHTER IS GETTING MARRIED AUGUST 10TH. ANY QUESTIONS, DON'T HESITATE TO CALL ME.

CONNIE

### ↓ Coming up this week ↓

July 22	Mon	5:00pm	Youth Choir
		6:00pm	Leadership Design
		7:00pm	Flint Jubilee
July 23	Tues	10am-2pm	Water Distribution
		6:00pm	Community Gospel Choir
July 24	Wed	12Noon	Pastor Book Club
		6:00pm	Beginners Bible Study
		6:00pm	Youth Group
July 25	Thu	4:30-6pm	Gaming as Education
		6:00pm	Worship Band Practice
July 26	Fri	10am-2pm	Asbury Cafe Open
		6:00pm	Asbury Youth Group
July 27	Sat	10am-12N	Japanese Jiu Jitsi
July 28	Sun	8am-10am	Japanese Jiu Jitsi
		9:30am	Café Open
		10:30am	New Beginnings
			Contemporary Worship

### SUNDAY July 14th

9:30am Café Opens

10:30am New Beginnings

Contemporary Worship

Last Week for Worship

Attendance 27 Offering \$ 442

### Asbury Worship Series Grow "Seed the Future"

In the three synoptic Gospels Jesus tells a story about a farmer who goes out to seed his field. Farmers at that time scattered their seed by hand. A lot of us still seed this way for grass seed or cover crops. In Jesus' story the farmer was planting seeds for grain.

This farmer's field was not all fine loam. It was more like an urban farm with a variety

of soil conditions. A lot of clay and rocks. A lot of old driveway pieces and other items that don't belong in a farmer's field.

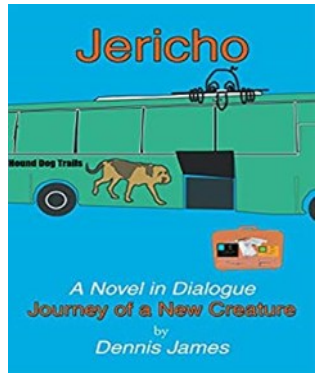


As the farmer scattered the seed in the field, Jesus noted, some of the seed fell

along the path. Soil that had been compressed by walking on it. While this was good for the birds that came and had a snack it wasn't good for the farmer's production. Like a couple of our fields some of the seed fell on rocky ground. In this case, the seeds sprouted but couldn't find room for their roots to provide moisture. And without deep roots the young plants soon dried up in the hot sun.

### Book Club News

After reading and discussing the book *Shame-less* written by Nadia Bolz-Weber our group is taking a short break. On July 10



we hosted our youth who are working with us for the summer and a youth choir from Omaha, Nebraska. A week after that we watched a video from the Nooma

series by Rob Bell titled *Sunday*. A great discussion followed the video on why we go to church. We concluded that we don't get together out of a sense of duty, although these feelings are often felt. Ultimately, we go because we encounter God in our worship and in our time together.

Our next book was written by Dennis Sykes. Most of you have seen Dennis around Asbury at one point or another. Perhaps you would better recognize Dennis as the Roman Governor, Pilate, whom Dennis played in our Easter musical. Perhaps you remember Dennis in one of our concerts. He sings with our community gospel choirs. Dennis is a member of Ebenezer Ministries located a short distance from Asbury.

Our next book is titled *Jericho*. The book follows a man by the name of Jaymes Devans. As the novel begins, James is leaving Chicago, Illinois. He is going South to make a better life for the family he loves. However, Jaymes finds out that his plans and God's plans are not the same. He becomes caught up in a world of murder, drug smuggling, crooked businessmen, politicians, secret agents, and a God with a plan.

*Jericho* will challenge our own knowledge of scripture as the people Jaymes meets challenges him to continue reading and studying God's Word. Jaymes is amazed by how much people around him had changed for the better after coming to know Jesus Christ for themselves. And a long bus ride was just what Jaymes needed to spend some solid reading time.

Since this novel is hot off the shelves and since we want to support Dennis in his first book publishing we ordered ten copies at just under \$20 each. A few of us have purchased our books directly from Dennis but it helps him even more when we buy his books from retailers. Dennis hopes to participate in one of our sessions to answer questions and autograph books.

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.

\* Dennis James (Dennis Sykes). *Jericho: a Novel in Dialogue: Journey of a New Creature*. Xlibris, 2018.

Pastor Tommy

### Leadership in Worship & Service

- Welcome Team: Tony, Mirium
- Ushers: Anthony, Jim
- Production Team: 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

**Asbury Worship Series— Grow... Cont. from page 4**

The Asbury Farmers deal with a wide variety of undesirable plants that we often refer to as weeds. And some of these weeds are quite aggressive. Some have very deep roots. Some are thorny like thistles and others send out vines that like to wrap around plants like tomatoes or strawberries. In our story some of the farmer's seed fell among undesirable plants which choked the farmer's newly seeded plants.

Fortunately, most of the time when our farmers put out seed it falls on nutrient-rich, fertile soil. And the seeds germinate into beautiful plants. And this happened in the story that Jesus told. Some of the farmer's seeds fell in good soil. And the farmer had a bountiful harvest as many of the plants produced large amounts of grain.

This story that Jesus told is not just a cute story about farming. Jesus told the story as a parable. This means that there are lessons to be learned. This story applies to other situations in life. There is a lot of symbolism. And Jesus taught that our insight into the meaning of His parables is a divine gift. The Holy Spirit helps us to apply the lessons that the parable teaches.

In this case, Jesus also offers an interpretation for His parable after first explaining why He uses parable at all. As a result of His explanation, there is little debate regarding the meaning of this particular parable. This can lead to the erroneous conclusion that there is nothing else to learn. Jesus says that parables confuse some persons and seem quite clear to others. Jesus said "they look, but do not see, and they listen, but do not hear or understand" (Matthew 13:13 GNT).

Insight is a divine gift that we receive out of our belief. We open our minds to the possibilities that God has in mind for us and surrender our bias to divine insight. A light bulb comes on. We come to realize something about God and our relationship with God that we hadn't understood before. We gain clarity. We experience insight. And we *grow* in our oneness with God.

On the other hand, Jesus explains that not everyone who hears one of His parables gains insight. Jesus says that this is "because their minds are dull, and they have stopped up their ears and have closed their eyes" (Matthew 13:15 GNT). Jesus is not calling those who miss the point stupid. They could be an absolute genius. A person who struggles to understand even the most basic subjects may get the point and the genius miss it. Insight is a divine gift that comes out of belief and not intellect.

This is puzzling for non-believers and for believers. This idea is not cut and dry. Just like the farmer seeding the field. While every seed has potential not every seed reaches its potential. Growth is a process that requires total commitment. A lot of crap happens along the way. Rocks, thorns, birds, well-worn paths, sun and rain. Things that we cannot control but may seek to control us.

How we respond to the world matters. Many responses are hurtful. Some responses are helpful. Left to our own we don't get it right often enough. Ask for divine help and some way, some how, things work themselves out. Like the musician playing jazz we come to feel the rhythm of the universe. The song that God has given creation. And beautiful music happens.

The further irony is that even after we taste the sweetness of divine insight our taste buds can become dull. We come to believe that we know what the scripture says. We make all of our decisions based on a static view of creation like we already know everything that we need to know. Our minds become dull and divine insight either ceases or is minimal. This happens to clergy in particular. We think "God hasn't changed. God is consistent." But life is jazz. The rhythm is constantly changing. We need to keep us. We need to listen and feel the beat.

While it may be true that God hasn't changed it is also true that none of us know everything that can be known about God. Our minds can't grasp God's greatness. But when we read a parable that perhaps we have read hundreds of times before. Even after we have written reflections, papers and articles about the insight that we gained. There is still more. God has more to say to each of us. If we will only listen. This is how we *grow*.

We start our new worship series on June 23. The Asbury Farms are already bustling with growth. Blair and Matt are harvesting every week. And new seeds are going in the ground every week. This is how our farm does what it was intended to do. To grow. Likewise, we need to harvest that which is ready and plant new seeds every week. This is how we *grow*.

I pray that you will join us for our new worship series, *Grow*. Also, our Summer Bible Camp (VBS) is coming up the week of July 15. Our summer youth program starts on Monday. Be sure to pass the word and find out how you can help. I hope to see you each Sunday for worship at 10:30 am. Remember Bible study in the Asbury Café is before worship at 9:30 am.

Pastor Tommy

**Good Dirt... cont. from page 2**

The man wants a bit more certainty. He knows the list. He follows them. We all try to do this. Right? You know the list. The ten commandments. The man has been sticking to the plan. He is a good man. He is good dirt. So Jesus scatters some seeds his way. Will the seeds take root and flourish or come up against compacted soil or rocks or thorns.

"There's just one more thing." This isn't really what Jesus said but this is a phrase that comes to mind when I read their conversation. This is sometimes called "meta" language. Phrases that has a meaning that is much more powerful than the words indicate. In this case, "There's just one more thing" also means something like "Brace yourself for a something that is going to rock your world."

And it does. The "one more thing" that Jesus tells the man rocks his world. This is what the Word of God does to us. Everything that Jesus says is dope. The question is do we allow the Word of Jesus to take root or do we treat His Word like it was bird seed.

The man had made the same mistake that most of us have made. He confused getting to heaven with discipleship. He confused later with now. Jesus replies to the man's question with something like "Go and sell all you have and give the money to the poor, and you will have riches in heaven; then come and follow me." We need to break this down a bit. The Good News Translation uses a semi-colon to separate the two time-differences.

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# Eastside Connection

Have a meal on us at the Asbury Café

Its easy — complete a short survey — receive a MyFlintStone worth \$5 — trade it in for lunch or fresh produce any Friday.

2 Ways to take our survey:

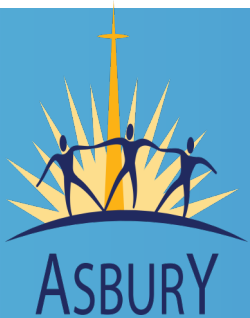
— Go to [FlintAsbury.org](http://FlintAsbury.org) and click on the Connecting Neighbors link to take the survey online — OR — Stop by the Asbury Café Monday through Friday between Noon and 2 PM to take the survey in person.



[Connect@FlintAsbury.org](mailto:Connect@FlintAsbury.org) or call 855-238-4440 Ext. 3 if you



Asbury Café



# Eastside Connection

Disfrute una comida en el Café de Asbury

Es fácil – completa una encuesta breve – reciba un MyFlintStone valorado en \$5 –cámbialo por un almuerzo o por frutas y vegetales frescos cualquier

Dos maneras para completar nuestra encuesta:

— Entra al [FlintAsbury.org](http://FlintAsbury.org) y hace click en el enlace de Connecting Neighbors para completar la encuesta en inglés por Internet – O – vaya al Asbury Café entre el 12 mediodía al las 2 de la tarde para completar la

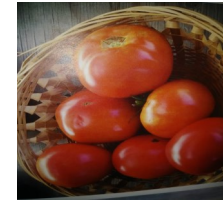


Si tiene preguntas, llame al 855-238-4440, Ext. 3 o escribe al Con-



Asbury Café

# 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



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*

*Once there was a man who went out to sow grain. some seeds fell in good soil, and the plants bore grain: some had one hundred grains, others sixty, and others thirty.*

Matthew 13:3b,8

**NOTES FROM WORSHIP**

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**QUESTIONS FOR LIFE GROUPS**

1. Read Matthew 13:3b, 8, 23 this week’s article titled *Good dirt*. What images come to mind? In Matthew 13:23 Jesus explains that the seed that fell upon the good soil represents situations when we gain spiritual insight from the Word of God that shapes us into fruitful disciples. What does this look like for you?
2. Are you good dirt? Are you able to “hear” the Word of God and gain insight? Read Matthew 19:16-26. Can you identify with the man in this story? What is Jesus asking you to give up so that you can follow Him?
3. How can the members of your group help you this week and on-going to help you to be more receptive to hearing and understanding the Word of God?



anxious that when we hear God’s voice we are so preoccupied with worry that instead of responding to God we focus our energy on our problems. Like the young plants that are overcome by aggressive plants that will not produce fruit God’s Word to us that will produce fruit is lost among our worries.

Jesus said to a gathered crowd “Do not be worried about the food and drink you need in order to stay alive, or about clothes for your body” (Matthew 6:25). But Jesus was not naive about thorny issues. In this same teaching Jesus noted that each day will have its own problems that may distract us from hearing God. Perhaps Jesus was saying “Don’t sweat the small stuff” but I’m inclined to believe that while Jesus realizes that we are all worriers to some degree if we really believed what Jesus knew to be true about God’s nature, we would realize that we do not need to worry at all.

We are in the capable hands of a loving God. Just as important, when we worry about things our worry not only distracts us but can be the beginning of or at least an indication of a bigger problem. We cannot serve two masters. We cannot serve two Gods. If that which we are worried about is that important to us perhaps we are guilty of putting something else or someone else ahead of God.

Life has its thorns. And thorns often demand to be noticed. But if we are paying attention we can still enjoy the abundance that God provides us. We can have black raspberries with our French toast without requiring a band aid for the scrape of a thorn.

We can smell the roses or even clip one for our table without the need to heal from a thorny scratch. We can dig up a thistle and remove it by the roots even with cloth work gloves.

Most of all, we can hear God’s voice even in the midst of our worries.

**I alone know the plans I have for you, plans to bring you prosperity and not disaster, plans to bring about the future you hope for.**

**Jeremiah 29:11**

And God’s voice may offer a solution to the thorny issues that are facing us. God reminds us through the Prophet Jeremiah that “I alone know the plans I have for you, plans to bring you prosperity and not disaster, plans to bring about the future you hope for” (Jeremiah 29:11). This is the harvest that God has in mind for us. The future that we hope for but may not be able to see. A future of abundance, peace, and love.

I hope that you will join us. We worship each Sunday at 10:30 am. I lead a short Bible study in the Asbury Café at 9:30 am. You can find more information about us on our website at [FlintAsbury.org](http://FlintAsbury.org).

Pastor Tommy

# Welcome to the Asbury Community

1653 Davison Rd  
Flint, MI 48506



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

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

## 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.

## Good Dirt...Adding compost and other matters...cont. from page 5

The first part of the statement is an immediate decision that begins the process. There is an emphasis placed on the complete misunderstanding of what brings us joy. The man presumed that it is the things that we own. I enjoy my truck. I enjoy my house or my bank account. The Word of God, the seed that can help us to live in abundance, tells us otherwise. I think we sort of know this in our gut. But most of us have to take the road ourselves.

The fallacy in this thinking is that we can never accumulate enough stuff to find joy because it isn't stuff that brings joy. This is a mirage like getting high or anything else that we do that ultimately harms ourselves or others as a substitute for that which does satisfy us and brings us joy.

But the man in this story had a lot of stuff. Scripture tells us that he went away sad. I get it. Wouldn't you go away sad? You have everything you need. Or so you think you do but perhaps the man had come to realize that this wasn't the case since he was asking Jesus for something else. He had no idea that what he really wanted would cost him everything that he owns.

There are a lot of people unwilling to pay

this cost. Jesus acknowledges the difficulty of the request after the man leaves. Jesus compares the man's decision to a camel going through a needle. I'm not sure what kind of needle Jesus was referring to but I'm certain Jesus was making the point that this is a hard decision for people who feel as though they have a lot to give up.

But this is what it takes to be good dirt. What makes compost so rich in nutrients is dead stuff. Large amounts of living things, such as leaves, grass, leftover food (not meat, fish or dairy), vegetables, fruit and more decompose and the remains becomes rich dirt that can help not so good dirt become better.

Wait! Something died and as a result the world, in this case, dirt, is better? There are living things, in this case plant life, that become a sacrifice so that new things can grow? How far do we need to travel in our imagination before we can see some link between the death and resurrection of Jesus and what it takes to be good dirt? Let this sink in for a moment.

Jesus says to the man who asks about being good dirt that you cannot buy what it takes to be good dirt. The spiritual compost

that you need is not for sale. It is a gift. But it may feel like there is a price to pay because

**Go and sell all you have and give the money to the poor; and you will have riches in heaven; then come and follow me.**

Matthew 19:21

Jesus asked the man to sell everything that he owned. But Jesus didn't ask that the man transfer all that he owned into a bank account that Jesus could use to buy what Jesus wanted.

Jesus asked the man to surrender everything that stood in the man's way of discipleship. It's that simple. Life gets in the way of us becoming good dirt. And becoming good dirt has nothing to do with anything that we own, anything that we have ever done or anything that we didn't do. Becoming good dirt is about surrender.

What about you? Do you want to be a person who when you hear the Word of God it makes a difference in your life? Do you want the seed that Jesus scatters to grow within you? Do you want to be good dirt? Then simply surrender all that you are to Jesus. This is where you begin your journey.

Pastor Tommy