

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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(Hyper growth) From seed to tree

This Sunday's message completes our current worship series, *Grow*. And



should provide a transition to our next worship series,

Tell your story. We move from hearing a parable about farming to becoming the storyteller. In our current series we focused on becoming good dirt. That is, we learned about being receptive to hearing God's voice. In our next series our focus is on telling others what we hear and listening to what others have heard. What does it mean to grow? Our metaphor of wheat or

vegetables going from a tiny seed to fruit is powerful. The seed itself contains an "emergency survival kit" for the new plant. Just enough food for the plant to send roots into the soil for the plant's continuing survival. And the plants also sends its stem upward into the light. The world is waiting for the new plant's arrival. Sunlight from above along with water and nutrients from the ground. The seed itself is a sacrifice that gives up its existence to create something new. A rhythm begins as the plant matures.

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Volume 19 Issue 28

July 28, 2019

Special points of interest:

>>> [Church Conference reports are due Monday July 29th to Connie.](#)

>>> [UMW \(United Methodist Women\) will be meeting Thursday, August 8th at 1:00pm. The meeting will take place at the Empire Wok on Court St across from the Courtland Center. All are welcome to join us.](#)

>>> [Book Club Reading Assignment – Jericho July 31 Chapters 1 - 4](#)

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Hyper growth (From seed to tree)...cont. from page 1

In an article I found on a website called *BiologyWise* I read that a seed must die in order for the life of the new plant to begin.* Setting aside the argument of whether a seed is a “living” thing this is a powerful idea. Whether it is death in the traditional sense of a sacrifice like a board made from a tree — the tree is clearly a living thing but the board is part of what remains after the tree is sacrificed. The board is an offering. The seed is an offering, a sacrifice, that came from a living thing. Nevertheless, there is an offering that is given and an offering that is necessary for new creation that is new life. A new plant that before was a seed, full of life, even if we argue it did not itself have life.

When we offer our testimony about what God has done for us we are giving a part of ourselves. We risk ridicule, embarrassment and rejection. Emotions that themselves seem to take away some of our life. When we make our offering it is itself a seed. And like the seeds in our parable about the farmer scattering seeds our offering may not find itself landing on fertile soil. Our seed may land on compressed soil and be immediately

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

dismissed like birds eating seed that falls on the path. Our testimony may land on rocky soil that keeps our offering from taking root. Our seed may land among thorns such as other friends of the person we share our testimony with whose words choke out the new growth that our seed was producing.

When we are soil that is ready to hear the voice of God we discover that central to our calling is to scatter the seed. That is, to share God’s Word through our testimony by sharing how the voice of God has made a difference in our own lives. The credibility of our testimony, the healthiness of our seed, depends a lot on the evidence of a change in our own life.

This is where authenticity is more important than denial. If we are barely a new growth ourselves then it is not very credible to speak as though we are a mature plant ready to seed new offspring. This shouldn’t lessen our willingness to share our testimony. Rather, this knowledge should reinforce the importance of honesty and authenticity.

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

And this, in itself, is what makes our testimony a true offering.

So we become a new creation when God’s seed, God’s Word, take root in us. Our roots continue to reach for more nutrients just as our reach extends beyond our present situation. The bigger our reach the more spiritual nourishment we require. The more spiritual nourishment we receive the bigger our reach. The more fruit that we bear. The more often our testimony is shared with others. We are not just a new creation. We are blossoming.

We are words spoken by God and we bear fruit.

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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?

The story is found in Matthew chapter 19. The man in the story asks Jesus for a list of

Some seeds fell in good soil, and the plants bore grain; some had one hundred grains, others sixty; and other thirty.
Matthew 13:8

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 WEEK OF AUGUST 5TH, AS MY DAUGHTER IS GETTING MARRIED AUGUST 10TH. ANY QUESTIONS, DON'T HESITATE TO CALL ME.

CONNIE



Coming up this week



July 29	Mon	5:00pm	Youth Choir
		6:00pm	Worship Design
		7:00pm	Flint Jubilee
July 30	Tues	10am-2pm	Water Distribution
		6:00pm	Community Gospel Choir
July 31	Wed	12Noon	Pastor Book Club
		6:00pm	Beginners Bible Study
		6:00pm	Youth Group
Aug 1	Thu	4:30-6pm	Gaming as Education
		6:00pm	Worship Band Practice
Aug 2	Fri	10am-2pm	Asbury Cafe Open
		6:00pm	Asbury Youth Group
Aug 3	Sat	10am-12N	Japanese Jiu Jitsi
Aug 4	Sun	8am-10am	Japanese Jiu Jitsi
		9:30am	Café Open
		10:30am	New Beginnings
			Contemporary Worship



SUNDAY July 21th



9:30am Café Opens

10:30am New Beginnings

Contemporary Worship

Last Week for Worship


Attendance 37 Offering \$ 597

Asbury Worship Series Tell your Story "Who do you say He is?"

Our book club participants are reading a book that tells a story about a man traveling to Mississippi in the hope of starting a business. The man leaves his family in Chicago and hopes that they will be reunited after he can afford to have them travel to where he will find a place for them to live as soon as he saves enough money. But the facts of his journey are only part of his story.

The man named Jaymes has a friend give him a ride to the bus station. On the way he learns

that his friend's story had taken a twist. His friend was not the same person that he had been



in the past. He had changed a lot. For the good, Jaymes concluded. And his friend's change began with learning that God knew his whole story and invited him to begin a new adventure. His friend's story caught Jayme's interest.

Jaymes wondered if he might be interested in a similar adventure.

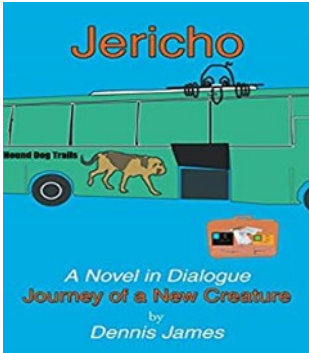
His friend had a going away gift for Jaymes. A bible. The very bible that his friend had used to learn about God. This Bible that his friend gave him became a central park of an unfolding story. There would be others on the same bus who would encourage Jaymes to read the stories about people who had wrestled with belief and faith. Each person that appeared in scripture had their own story. And parts of their stories have been told and retold not because they did anything particularly impressive. But because parts of their story help us to know a little more about God and other ourselves.

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Book Club News

Book Club Reading Assignment — *Jericho*
 ➔ July 31 Chapters 1 - 4 ←

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 is 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 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—Tell your Story (Who do you say He is?) ... *Cont. from page 4*

What's your story? Where were you born? Do you live in Flint or do you live elsewhere? Are you a Flintstone or did you move here recently? How old are you? What is your gender? Who raised you? Are your parents still living? Do you keep in touch?

You could answer a thousand questions for me and I still don't know your story. Our story is not about answering questions. Our story is not just about the facts of the case. During a jury trial after one side of the legal argument is finished asking the witness questions the other side has to opportunity to cross-examine. That is, the other attorney is given the opportunity to ask questions. The Judge might say to the other attorney something like "*Your witness.*"

Jury trials are a lot more than getting to the facts of the case. There are questions of motive, credibility

"What about you?" he asked them.
"Who do you say I am?"

Luke 24:18

and other subjective opinions. The jury is asked to come to agreement on whether the evidence is sufficient for a verdict. Does the evidence, which includes all allowable testimony, provide sufficient proof, without any doubt, that the defendant did what the prosecutor claimed?

Our stories all involve witnesses who frequently offer testimony about us. But this isn't our story either. This is only a part of our story. Very few of us have the same person around us at all times. I don't know anyone who has experienced such a thing. People come into our lives and eventually are no longer a part of our unfolding story as a first hand witness. But they are still a part of our story. Just a part of our story. Not our whole story.

For example, our stories include events, thoughts, and feelings that are not witnessed by anyone. This is one of the many remarkable things that I believe to be true about God. That God is the only One who knows every part of our story. Our real story. The rest of our story that isn't told by witnesses even if everyone who ever knew us was called to testify.

The Bible is full of stories and Jesus taught through stories. And Jesus became the subject of the stories told by others. Jesus once asked His disciples "Who do the crowds say I am?" Jesus seemed curious about the story that others were telling about Him. Jesus knew His story but do others? Did His disciples know His story?

We all have a story. Some stories are long novels while others are short stories or just a few lines. All of us want our lives to matter. We don't all try to achieve earth shattering feats or even try to stand out of the crowd. A lot of us are content just to blend in with the rest. But to matter is to be noticed. To be heard. To be visible. But a lot of us also have a fear that if we are too visible we won't



be loved. So we hide just enough of us and expose only those parts that we presume are acceptable to the people whose opinions matter.

I suspect that most of us have parts of our stories that we would rather disown. Perhaps even pretend that they never happened and sometimes deny they ever happened. But they did. And they are a part of our story. But no event, nothing that anyone ever did to us or we did to someone else is who we are. These are just chapters and sometimes a single scene within a fascinating story of what it is to live.

A key testimony at any trial is the actual person on trial. The defendant. I use the idea of a trial as a metaphor because one major reason that so many of our stories are not told is that having our story told feels a lot like being on trial. What will people think when they know the truth? Can I tell only those parts of my story that bring out the best version of me? When we are the witness in our own trial we hope to tell only the parts that we choose to tell.

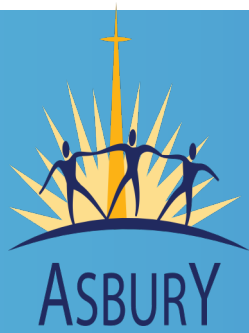
Our stories matter to God and our stories should matter to each other. Our stories intersect and intertwine as we interact and find ways of living and working together. But how do I tell my story? What parts of my story will even matter to someone else? This is the crux of our new worship series, *Tell your story.*

Our focus over the next few weeks will be on how and when to tell parts of our story. And which parts. Have you ever heard a part of someone's story that touched you? Perhaps what happened also happened to you. Perhaps you were inspired and see yourself having a similar experience. These are life-giving gifts when we receive them. And when we give them.

You can be a life-saver simply by telling your story when the parts you tell are about life-saving experiences. Don't think you have any? We all do but most of us miss the significance of our own experiences. God is active in each of our lives even when we don't give God credit or believe that this could be true.

I invite you to come and hear the stories of others who can inspire you and teach you to be aware of your own stories. Learn to share your own story so that others can be inspired. Learn to observe ways that God is active in your life and in the lives of those around you. Come and ***Tell your story.***

I pray that you will join us for our new worship series called *Tell your story.* 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



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.

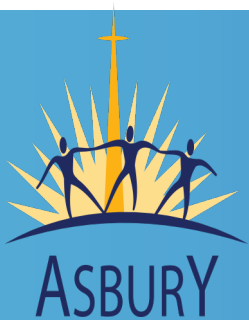
2 Ways to take our survey:

— Go to FlintAsbury.org 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 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 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

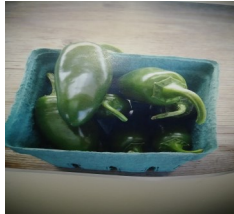


Si tiene preguntas, llame al 855-238-4440, Ext. 3 o escribe al Con-

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 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

He told them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field. Though it is the smallest of all seeds, yet when it grows, it is the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds come and perch in its branches."

Matthew 13:31-32

NOTES FROM WORSHIP

QUESTIONS FOR LIFE GROUPS

1. Read Matthew 13:31-32. What images come to mind? In our parable from this series Jesus concludes 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. Now Jesus uses a mustard seed to describe how a tiny seed becomes a tree to describe the kingdom of God. What does this mean for you?
2. Read this week's article titled *Hypergrowth*. Can you think of any examples of ideas, companies or products that have gone through hypergrowth? Ideas can start off as a casual statement and quickly spread. Both good and bad ideas. Products, like chip clips can start with a few friends finding the new product handy and in no time everyone has one. How is the kingdom of God like this? Or not?
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?

“But what if I am just a tiny seed in a forest? How can I matter?” These are fair questions that we all hear to one extent or another. Only the most severe egotist seems to not hear voices of doubt. But experience tells me that these are the persons where such voices are the loudest. They find themselves trying to shout over these voices of doubt. The truth is that in such a massive universe that is forever expanding we are all just tiny seeds. But we all can and do hear the voice of God and we each are stories spoken by God.

In the same part of Matthew as our parable of the farmer seeding a field of wheat Jesus offers another horticulture example involving seeds. This time Jesus chooses a mustard seed. A tiny seed that is easily misplaced. The seeds fall between your fingers. It seems impossible to pick up just one. But this tiny seed, Jesus says, becomes the largest of the plants in the garden.

The Kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed...though it is the smallest of all seeds, yet when it grows, it is the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree...

Matthew 13: 31-32

The mustard seed is small but as a seed the mustard seed is only the beginning. Energy from the sun, the ground and the air conspire together. According to *Biologywise* “Growth is a process of irreversible increase in mass that results from cell division and cell expansion.” New cells are created as existing cells divide. There is a multiplication that takes place. At first, the numbers are tiny. Like a few pennies left by the cash register for the next customer to add to their tab. The new creation begins so small that the whole plant can be scooped up when mistaken for an emerging weed. But the process continues picking up momentum.

At first, hundreds of cells divide and their offspring divide and soon thousands of cell are dividing which move

from tens of thousands to hundreds of thousands. And these divide. Millions of cells divide becoming two million, then four million, then eight million and so on. The tiny seed is a distant memory as the new creation takes shape. But the tiny seed lives on as God continues to speak new creation through a rhythm that God created. An expanding root system reaches further into the soil in search of nutrients, teaming up with an expanding micro-world within the soil in order to create an ever expanding system of synergistic nourishment.

The branches of the new creation spawn new branches with more leaves that contribute to the rhythm of life. The leaves of this new, but maturing creation, absorb the sunlight which in turn initiates the process of photosynthesis. The plant growth rate accelerates. Soon the plant develops reproductive organs and new co-conspirators known as pollinators join in the harmony. The song of creation. As the process of pollination finishes the plant begins to produce fruits. And these fruits contain seeds. And the song continues.

Jesus compared the kingdom of God to this hyper growth of seed to tree. God’s Word often begins as a tiny seed lost in the confusion and noise of the world God created. But when God’s voice finds sufficient reception, soil that allows for growth, the seed takes root. And the kingdom of God expands as the new creation scatters more seed. Which we do through our stories. We are words spoken by God and we bear fruit.

This is hyper growth. This is the kingdom of God. This is who we are created to be. We are God’s new creatures when God’s voice takes root inside of us and more fruit matures for the harvest. Be the word of God. Bear the fruit that results in an ever expanding kingdom.

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. Pastor Tommy

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.

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
CircuitRider@FlintAsbury.org

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