

ASBURY CIRCUIT RIDER

Catty (Who do they say I am?)

One of the many treasures that I receive whenever I read scripture, particularly the stories told by and about Jesus, is I frequently learn something new. The subject of what I learn varies from new insights about God to insights about others, to insights about myself. What is really interesting for me is that I often can't see the connection between the insight and what I'm reading at first. I love it. No wonder the bible continues to be a best seller.

A few weeks ago I was thinking about our new series that starts this Sunday, *Tell your story*. The first scripture that came to mind when this subject



surfaced was a story told about Jesus. In the Gospel of Luke, towards the end of the book, Jesus is talking to His disciples. He asks them "Who do the crowds say I am?" It wasn't the answers that the disciples gave that caught my attention. It was Jesus' question.

We don't seem to outgrow our need to be visible. And we definitely don't outgrow our desire to be liked. "People-pleasing" is a great idea for restaurants and

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

politicians running for election. But the benefits can become liabilities when we stretch too far to fit someone else's mold. I don't think that this was the issue that Jesus was wrestling with but I do believe that Jesus knows that this sort of thing mattered to His followers. And, as often is the case with Jesus, His question becomes a teaching point.

How about you? Have you ever wondered what others are saying about you? I've noticed that cattiness is a common practice in our neighborhood. In conversations I have had

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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 4

August 4, 2019

Special points of interest:

>>> 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.

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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

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.

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

We are words spoken by God and we bear fruit.

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.

Catty... cont. from page 1

with people participating in this practice, I have wondered if taking trash about others is an accessible way to exert power. Having power is a natural action to feelings of powerlessness.

I overheard a conversation the other day. I won’t say who was involved to protect the innocent. In this case, me. The subject was another

person who apparently was a friend but the person’s behavior was hurtful to one of the people airing their complaints to someone else. I interrupted the conversation with a question. “Is this what they call being catty?” The response to my question was somewhat timid, “yes.” Just checking. This article was already developing legs.

“What are they, the crowds, other people, so-called friends, saying about me?” It might surprise you to know that pastors are particularly susceptible to asking this question. We think about this question even if we know better than to ask. And it’s only

partially about getting feedback on our sermons. The question is mostly about wanting to be liked. Most of us put ourselves out there every time speak. A feeling of being judged comes to mind. Do you get what I’m saying?

One day when Jesus was praying alone, the disciples came to him, “Who do the crowds say I am?”

Luke 24:18b



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	



Coming up this week



Aug 5	Mon	5:00pm	Youth Choir
		7:00pm	Flint Jubilee
Aug 6	Tues	10am-2pm	Water Distribution
		6:00pm	Community Gospel Choir
Aug 7	Wed	12Noon	Pastor Book Club
		6:00pm	Beginners Bible Study
		6:00pm	Youth Group
Aug 8	Thu	1:00pm	UMW
			(meeting at Empire Wok-Court Street)
		4:30-6pm	Gaming as Education
		6:00pm	Worship Band Practice
Aug 9	Fri	10am-2pm	Asbury Cafe Open
		6:00pm	Asbury Youth Group
Aug 10	Sat	10am-12N	Japanese Jiu Jitsi
Aug 11	Sun	8am-10am	Japanese Jiu Jitsi
		9:30am	Café Open
		10:30am	New Beginnings
			Contemporary Worship



SUNDAY, July 28th

9:30am Café Opens

10:30am New Beginnings

Contemporary Worship

Last Week for Worship

Attendance 23 Offering \$ 8,394

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.

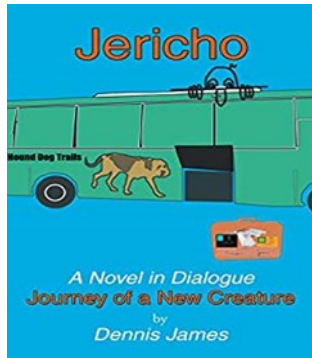
Jaymes wondered if he might be interested in a similar adventure.

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 part 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

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 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

INFIELDER 2018 ROOKIE OF THE YEAR
DETROIT TIGER
NIKO GOODRUM



NIKO WILL BE IN FLINT ON TUESDAY, AUGUST 13TH IN THE
PARKING LOT OF ASBURY UMC TO PASS OUT WATER TO OUR FLINT
COMMUNITY. DISTRIBUTION WILL BE FROM 10:00AM TO 2:00PM!!

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

One day when Jesus was praying alone, the disciples came to

him. "Who do the crowds say I am?"

Luke 24:18-20

NOTES FROM WORSHIP

QUESTIONS FOR LIFE GROUPS

1. Read Luke 24:18-20. What images come to mind? The core of this week’s message focuses on Jesus initial question “Who do the crowds say I am?” Have you ever asked someone who others think you are? Perhaps your question is more about what people are saying about you but your concern may be more about the way that others may be judging you. Well?
2. Read this week’s article titled *Catty*. Have you every talked trash about another person who wasn’t in on the conversation? Why? Did the person say something bad about you? Did they do something that bothered you or made you angry? What if you didn’t feel the need to worry about what others think of if they are judging you? How might knowing Jesus help this come about?
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?

Hyper growth (From seed to tree) ...cont. from page 2

“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 pickup 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. 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

Welcome to the Asbury Community

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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.

Catty...Who do they say I am? ...cont. from page 2

Before we can get around to telling stories that reveal something about who we are we have to deal with our fear of judgment. Some of us can just start talking. My dad used to tell us children that sometimes we are talking out loud to ourselves because we want to hear our story. We talk towards someone else to make it seem less weird. More often, we feel a hesitancy if the story we are sharing reveals something about us that no one else knows. "What will they say about me?" questions can both precede our telling and immediately follow our telling.

What if you could reach a point where what others say about you no longer concern you? I'm not talking about a lack of caring about what others think altogether. I'm talking about being free from worrying what others might be saying behind your back. Wouldn't this free you to tell your story? Wouldn't this allow you to be heard? To be visible?

While the answers that the disciples gave Jesus were insightful Jesus followed up with the more important question. "Who do You say I am?" This is more than just a play on words. Knowing Jesus changes everything. And when others know us it also is a game-changer. And this is true when we know others. Jesus was inviting His followers to reflect on where they stand on His identity. By chapter 24 of Luke, His followers had spent a lot of time with Jesus. Have they come to know who He is?

When we tell our story people come to know who we are. And yes, sometimes what they come to know about us can taint their view of us. We may either rise or fall in how they evaluate our character. But our question should be just as deep as when Jesus asks His question. "Who do you say I am?" Peter responded to the question with an insight that only comes from God. "You are God's Messiah."

Each of us is created in God's image. This means that who we are is rooted in Jesus Christ. And this means that the more that others come to know

What if you could reach a point where what others say about you no longer concern you?

who we are at our core the clearer this image of God becomes. But wrapped around this inner image are stories of try and fail. Stories of try and do. These stories can become the bonds that hold us together. While our stories are uniquely ours, the experiences we have are likely similar to the experiences that others have had also.

I hope that you will join us. We worship each Sunday at 10:30 am. Come learn why it is important to tell your story and how to do so. 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