# ASBURY CIRCUIT RIDER

#### Diverse Taste (Pecans, maple, apple and peanut butter)

Writing an article about Father's Day is much easier than writing an article about Mother's Day. I have personal experience with fathering. And I was blessed to have a father in my life that I remember fondly.

Theologically, the word "Father" is loaded with meaning. Which means the word is loaded with preconceptions. We don't all agree on what this word means. Although, biologically, we all have a father, for a lot of us, when we think of father, we are not thinking about the person who contributed to our DNA.

Throughout history, children have been raised by a single parent or guardian. This person filled both ambiguous roles of father and mother. Yet

Yet they are only one person. And remarkably, the children they rear are often remarkable themselves. How do they do it? How does one person, male or female, manage to combine the necessary ingredients to accomplish two, often opposing roles?



#### Created by a Master Chef

We are like a soup made up of available ingredients. The starter is our DNA, which is made up of tiny pieces of organic building blocks. The ingredients are then combined in our mother's womb by a Master Chef, the God who created us. Referring to God as Father confuses the subject all the more.

But God, the Master Chef, also invites amateurs into the kitchen. These amateurs chefs, you and I, are the caregivers who not only stir the pot but season this concoction that may someday be a starter for their own soup. The result is a creative explosion of culinary experiences. The result is a child who becomes an adult, and often an amateur chef.

We are also cocktails of hormones with various degrees and levels of each ingredient. The hormones that we usually associate with

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## Stuck (Thriving in the midst of uncertainty)

As June comes to a close and businesses reopen, I have noticed that my anxiety is less at times. Yet there remains a cloud of uncertainty as the number of infections escalates in states where leadership chose defiance over caution. And the catastrophic failure of leadership at the federal level adds unprecedented levels of uncertainty about the future.

It is no wonder that so many are racing towards some resemblance of normalcy. Even the most resilient among us are pushing the limits of our coping mechanisms. We are learning a lot about ourselves, and a lot of what we learn is unsettling.

I am anxious to do a few of the things I missed over the past three months. But most of all, I am eager to stop being concerned about infecting others or becoming infected myself. And denial doesn't work well for me. I have tried it.



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#### Special points of interest:

\*\*\* All meetings have been cancelled until further notice

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#### Stuck (Thriving in the midst of uncertainty) ...cont from page 1

I'm hopeful that we see the end coming soon, yet I know that the end is elusive. Too fast, too soon, and unmitigated stupidity is likely to result in tens of thousands more unnecessary deaths. And in my more difficult days, I admit that one of the victims could be me or someone close to me. Understandably, a lot of your anxiety and mine comes out of a shared feeling of hopelessness.

#### **Building resiliency**

The most basic definition of resiliency is simply the degree to which a person can recover from adversity. We all have varying levels of residency. One of the basic building blocks that help us be more resilient is the ways we cope. Like most things where there are choices involved, some ways of coping offer better results than others.

While the degree of resiliency is, in part, based on a person's relationship with the people who raised them, resiliency is also learned. Research has determined that genetics plays a minor role. However, feeling loved as a child plays a significant

role. Nevertheless, we can discover new coping skills that leave us stronger on the other side of adversity.

New York Times writer, Eilene Zimmerman, knows a lot about recovering from adversity. This year she published her first book, *Smacked*. Her book comes out of her experiences and research after learning about her former husband's addiction to drugs that went undetected for years. Today Eilene is a journalist living in New York and like her neighbors, dealing with life at the epicenter of a pandemic.

Five years ago, Eilene Zimmerman discovered that the man that she thought she knew, and who seemed to have it all together, used drugs to cope with his anxiety and stress. His addiction eventually included opioids, cocaine, and methamphetamine.

Ms. Zimmerman's recent article about resilience focused on the common characteristics of resilient people. Her experience with death

of her former husband gave her a place to begin. After all, his death taught her a lot about coping with adversity. Her article is timely since our resiliency is under strain.

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to believe. And the recipe that turned us into who we are is the lens that we use to observe and interpret.

Father's Day, traditionally, honored men. This is an issue for persons whose only parent or guardian is a woman. Yet, as a father myself, I refuse to minimize my role to the point that the part of a father is optional.



Again, I turn back to the common attributes that we associate with maleness while realizing that living examples of these attributes are found in all genders. This is one of the most significant drawbacks of equating God with the characteristics of a father. And this helps to explain why, in scripture, God has the attributes of all genders.

For example, we traditionally think of defending the family as a male attribute. Yet, throughout nature, a mother who gives birth to young, often protect their offspring, sacrificing their own life if necessary. Defending the family is not wholly the domain of the male gender. A desire to protect the people we love is shared by all genders.

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#### Diverse Taste ....cont. from page 1

male attributes is called testosterone. The hormone that offers more feminine traits is called estrogen. Although these hormones are more closely linked to the two primary roles of the reproductive process, each of us has a combination of both ingredients.

This information suggests an interesting interpretation of the first chapter of Genesis. The appearance of "and" means that what comes before and after the conjunction is a part of the recipe. If the recipe tells us to add salt and pepper, we combine both ingredients.

Verse 27 reads, "So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God, he created them; male and female he created them."

So did God create each human using both "male and female" ingredients. Or did God create male humans and female humans? The more common interpretation, theologically, is the second idea. But our experience, backed up by science, points to the first interpretation. Since none of us really know the mind of God, we choose to believe what we want

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## In our Prayers

| Austin & Mary Suffle |
|----------------------|
| Mirium Watson        |
| Shirley Craig        |
| Christopher Lewis    |
| Sarah Tanner         |
|                      |

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

Elaine Lamoreaux Mary Nations

# ASBURY

#### THANK YOU!!

Charles Stewart Mott Foundation to provide 2 million masks for Flint ...

The foundation intends to grant 2 million masks to the Food Bank, the City of Flint and the Help Centers. They will work together to get the masks into the community.

"When we mask up, we save lifes," Mayor Sheldon Neeley said. "We appreciate C.S Mott Foundation's support and commitment being shown once again to the residents of Flint. These face masks will be vital tool for our community to be able to reactivate fully and safety."

"We want to help all members of the community stay healthy," said Ridgway White, president and CEO of the C. S. Mott Foundation.

"Keep Flint moving forward safely"

# Coming up this week

| June 29 | Mon  |                                    |
|---------|------|------------------------------------|
| June 30 | Tues | 10am-2pm Water / Food Distribution |
| July 1  | Wed  | No Pastor Book Club                |
| July 2  | Thu  |                                    |
| July 3  | Fri  |                                    |
| July 4  | Sat  |                                    |
| July 5  | Sun  |                                    |



JOIN WORSHIP ONLINE SUNDAY, JUNE 28TH. 10:30 AM

FACEBOOK LIVE (<u>FLINT ASBURY</u>)
OR

WEBINAR

zoom

JOIN BY PHONE +1 929 436 2866

MEETING ID: 324 841 204

JOIN ONLINE

HTTPS://ZOOM.US/J/324841204

Page 4 ASBURY CIRCUIT RIDER

## Asbury Worship Series Freedom (Coming July 5th)

July 4 is traditionally a big day in this country. But not for everybody. For a lot of people, the promise of freedom described in our country's declaration is elusive. For persons who must argue for, demonstrate for, and put their

life on the line for every policy that offers them a piece of the freedom claimed by our declaration, celebration waits for justice.

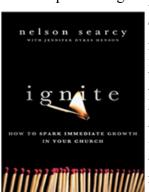


For many, Juneteenth is closer to a declaration of

freedom than July 4. June 19 is an important date because on that date in 1865, sufficient military strength arrived in Texas to enforce freedom for slaves. Two and a half years after President Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation. But while that was an important step, it wasn't the giant step promised by our country's declaration. Page 5

#### **Book Club News**

Our plan is for a few of us to meet in person beginning this



Wednesday. This also means moving our time back to 12 Noon. We will continue to be online for those who are not ready to meet in per-

son or who do not want to wear a face mask. Unfortunately, the virus is still a threat and in-person gatherings quickly become superspreaders if precautions are dropped.

We finished our study of discussions of other religions for now. This proved to be a fascinating subject for us that is sure to come up again in the future. Learning about what other people believe to be true about God did not diminish our own beliefs. Instead, this new knowledge strengthened our faith.

This week we begin our discussions of a book recommended by the staff of Sycamore Creek Church in Lansing. Several of us are participating in a monthly network group with people from sev-

Kevin Croom Dir. Operations
Blair Neifert Farm Manager
Matt Dee Farm Operations
Israel Unger Function to Funding
Kim Sims Connections
Karl Collyer Production
Katelin Maylum Production

#### Leadership in Worship & Service

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

#### Asbury Staff

Rev. Dr. Tommy McDoniel Pastor
Connie Portillo Office Secretary
Sylvia Pittman Empowerment Arts
Jim Craig Leadership Chair

#### Asburu 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.

eral churches. Each month we discuss a topic related to designing worship, hospitality, and church leadership. Our group realized that this book may be of interest to a larger number of people.

The book offers helpful suggestions for reaching persons who aren't a part of a faith community. The writer offers his own success and failures at communicating with people who usually don't understand why we believe with we believe. Our hope is that we can all benefit as more of us learn new ideas that we are willing to put into practice.

I encourage you to join us either in person or <u>online</u> for our Wednesday gatherings. You can call in by phone, be heard, and hear what others are saying by calling (929) 436-2866, and entering the meeting ID, 482458815#.

We are a diverse group and we are delighted when new persons join us. I hope that you will join in on our discussion.

You can contact our office with questions, by phone or simply type your question on our website's homepage — <u>FlintAsbury.org</u>.

#### Freedom (Coming July 5th) ... Cont. from page 4

What does it mean to be free? Freedom is a goal for every teenager I know, but what freedom looks like is different for each one. Does it mean I get to do whatever I want? Of course not. Freedom requires restraint. Freedom also means access to due process. That is, fair treatment in our judicial systems. Freedom is a big deal. And freedom requires the presence of justice.

There is this story about a time when an important community leader pleaded with Jesus to heal his daughter. So Jesus headed towards the man's home with a large crowd on all sides of him. There was a woman in the crowd who suffered terribly from severe bleeding. Jesus didn't know anything about her, but she believed that Jesus could help her.

The woman's condition had persisted for twelve years. She spent all her money on doctors and treatments that didn't work. Instead of getting better she got worse. She had heard about Jesus, so she came in the crowd behind him, saying to herself, "If I just touch his clothes, I will get well."

As the s tory continues, the woman touched the cloak of Jesus, and her bleeding stopped. The woman felt the difference at once. And so did Jesus, who stopped in His tracks and asked the crowd of people around Him, "Who

touched my clothes?"

Some of His followers who were close to Him all answered at once, "You see how the people are crowding you; why do you ask who touched you?" Jesus kept looking around to see who had done it.

The woman realized what had happened to her and she came forward, trembling with fear, to tell Jesus that it was her who touched His coat. The woman knelt at His feet, and told Him the whole truth. It must have been hard for her to do that.

She didn't know what Jesus might do. She didn't have a way to repay Him, and it is doubtful that she even realized the magnitude of what happened. What she did know without any doubt, was that she was healed. Touching the coat of Jesus accomplished what money and doctors were unable to do. And she was grateful.

But instead of blasting her, Jesus said, "My daughter, your faith has made you well. Go in peace, and be healed of your trouble."

Wow! What a story. This woman whose future was uncertain, with a condition that seemed impossible to rectify,

finds healing. But there is more than physical healing going on. After her confession, Jesus sent her on her way with a blessing of peace. The woman was both free of the condition that created so much distress, and free to live in peace.

This is the promise that God makes to all of us who suffer from a condition that no doctor can fix. It is a promise of freedom from conditions that hold us hostage. Freedom from the circumstances that keep us from enjoying the peace that only God can offer.

Of course, not long after this incident with the woman, and after Jesus healed the daughter of the important community leader, the story turns ugly. Regardless of the numbers that Jesus healed, He would later be arrested, denied justice, and hung on a tree until He died.

Afterwards, the lynching tree became a cross. And the cross a symbol for freedom for anyone who turns to Jesus to be set free. The freedom offered by Jesus is unconditional and eternal. The freedom that human-kind offers to each other is conditional and temporary. Nevertheless, God offers us a way if we are wiling to accept it.

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#### Diverse Taste (Pecans, maple, apple and peanut butter) ...cont. from page 2

For example, we traditionally think of defending the family as a male attribute. Yet, throughout nature, a mother who gives birth to young, often protect their offspring, sacrificing their own life if necessary. Defending the family is not wholly the domain of the male gender. A desire to protect the people we love is shared by all genders.

Another example is the traditional role of the male to provide for their family. This tradition belongs more to the genre of fairytales than reality. The same can be said about hunter versus gatherer. The various roles of rearing children are functional and not gender-specific.

There are two distinct genders when it comes to reproduction. But these are functional roles that should not be confused with the participants' gender.

Every Mother's Day, I make sure that I recognize persons of all genders who participate in raising children and perform the roles traditionally associated with motherhood. But I don't try to name those roles. Although I often point to examples of men whose families recognize and celebrate them for taking on roles that they consider mothering.

Likewise, for Father's Day, I celebrate all persons who take on whatever roles we associate with fathering children. Whether they are best in class or just doing what they can. Whether their function was biological or more of an amateur in the kitchen.

I celebrate my own father's memory, who I often compare to the aggregate of the fictional characters played by the late John Wayne. Yet some of my fondest memories of my father have little to do with traditional roles of fathering. For example, I recall my father shelling pecans and cutting up fruit for a family dinner. I still enjoy pecans with fruit and remember my father's fruit salad.

So much as been written, said, and demonstrated about the strengths of diversity that diversity should be a given. Sadly, pushback and biases that restrict diversity in the workplace and even in houses of worship continue.

Speaking of soup, one of my favorite metaphors from scripture is the table. A table is a place where people come together to share in a practice that we all share in common. And we each come with our own preferences and different experiences.

When Cyndi and I married, we hosted a potluck after the wedding. Instead of traditional wedding gifts, we encouraged our guests to bring a dish to pass. Not enough for everyone coming. Just enough for a few people. The result was a culinary delight, not because there was enough of any particular dish. Instead, the diversity of dishes meant that the serving table reflected how much our tastes vary.

As in life, we didn't all experience every dish. We each chose as we filled our plates, based on the selections in front of us, and our aptitude for adventure in selecting dishes that we wanted to know better. The feedback from our guests was consistent. The food was better than catered meals. The diversity of selection won the day.

The table is a metaphor for the coming together of diverse people. God sets the table, but we are each a unique dish created in different kitchens. The table is a potluck of variety. The selections depend upon who is invited and who shows up.

Like potluck, few of us enjoy every dish. Different ingredients mix well with other ingredients differently. But we are invited to experience new combinations of ingredients and be delighted.

My recent discovery for an evening snack was only possible because I was blessed to experience diversity in new combinations.

I am a father, and in my role as a father, I add to the recipe that is my children. And to a lesser extent, their children. It is my hope that my children remember my softer side

after I am gone. I'm not known for my fruit salad. But I love color, and texture, and movies with good endings that make me cry. And I love words.

The sweetness of the maple counters the lack of sugar in the peanut butter that we choose for our pantry. The crunchiness of the pecans and my memories of my dad's fruit salad, embellish my snack. The flavor of apple combines well with the taste of peanuts. The salt is optional.

Happy Father's Day to all amateur chefs who have a role in rearing children. Whether you are a model dad or missed out on an opportunity to be one, I celebrate fathers everywhere.

Different ingredients mix well with other ingredients differently, but we are invited to experience new combinations of ingredients and be delighted.

We often refer to God as Father. For a few of us, we may lean upon God's power to protect us from harm. But I suspect in times when we are most vulnerable, we consider the softer, perhaps more feminine attributes of God the Father. For me, I love God's creativity with colors, flavors, and textures.

This month, our focus is on claiming a new normal for ourselves. We aren't interested in going back to the way things were with systems of injustice and segregation. For more information our series, *Live*, see the article, Coming up in worship on our website.

I invite you to join us each Sunday. We plan to be live via webinar, through Facebook live, or you can call (929) 436-2866 and enter the meeting number — 324 841 204. We go live at 10:30 am. You can find these links along with more information about us on our website at FlintAsbury.org.

**Pastor Tommy** 

# Risen

# Join in on the conversation

Indebtedness is as much an economic issue in scripture as it is about forgiveness. Jesus lived among and advocated for the poor and marginalized. In this series, we explore current examples of indebtedness, and our role as followers of Jesus' teachings. What issues matter most to you.

For example, one member of our community noted that a person with a gender identity that differs from their biological identity are often marginalized. And it is not enough to avoid persons unwilling to consider that God created them with their identity. Some have been denied essential services during the Covid pandemic.

The pandemic is also shining a bright light on systemic racism. African Americans are disproportionately affected, exposing systemic racism. We serve a diverse community and a God that delights in diversity. What experiences or insights do you have that the rest of us need to hear about?

The people in jobs that help keep the rest of us safe are among the lowest paid. The pandemic is also shining a light on the inequalities of our economic and political systems. The economic separation between the small number of people with most of the wealth and those keeping us safe is large in the U.S. than it is in the rest of the world.

The pandemic is exposing the inadequacies in our healthcare system. Often touted as "world class" healthcare access and quality in the United States is based on economics. Yet fighting a pandemic effectively requires access to healthcare for everyone. Is this an issue that stirs your passion?

| Minimum wage and compensation equity | Human dignity           |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Climate change                       | Voting                  |
| Incarceration                        | Clean and healthy water |
| Access to healthcare                 | LGBTQ                   |
| Quality and access to education      | Other                   |

Be sure to take a couple minutes to complete our <u>survey</u>. You can find a link on our website's <u>home page</u>. The first question asked which topics are of interest that you are willing to research. This is the list of potential topics:

Several have already responded. If you haven't completed our survey go to <u>Risen Survey</u> now and take our survey. This will really help us figure out which topics are important to our participants and who is willing to do and share their research.

For more information this series, Risen, see the article, Coming up in worship.

I invite you to join us this Sunday. We plan to be live via <u>webinar</u>, through <u>Facebook</u> live, or you can call (929) 436-2866 and enter the meeting number — 324 841 204. We go live at 10:30 am. You can find these links along with more information about us on our website at <u>FlintAsbury.org</u>.

# Life groups question & notes

Can any of you live a bit longer by worrying about it?

Luke 12:25 (GNT)

| NOTES FROM WORSHIP |  |
|--------------------|--|
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|                    |  |
|                    |  |
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|                    |  |
|                    |  |

## **QUESTIONS FOR LIFE GROUPS**

- 1. Read Luke 12:25 and a few of the verses that come before and after. How are you holding up during the pandemic? How worried are you? Does it help to read these words from Jesus?
- 2. Read the article in this week's Circuit Rider, *Stuck*. Do you feel "stuck" whether stuck at home or stuck in a rut? What are some things that concern you that you cannot change? Can you imagine yourself letting go of those things that you cannot change? What are a couple of things that you can change? Talk about these with God and start woking on them. Pray for the things you can't change and let God deal with them.
- 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? Pray for each other to have the Holy Spirit bless you with more courage.

#### Stuck (Thriving in the midst of uncertainty) .. .cont from page 2

As a journalist, her first step was to interview a large number of highly resilient individuals. In other words, people who successfully recovered after experiencing a lot of adversity. Her first observation was that resilient people have a positive, realistic outlook. Resilient people don't deny their circumstances. But they do look for opportunities to find the positive within the negative.

A pandemic is a traumatic event. It is unpredictable, more so in the U.S. than elsewhere due mostly to a lack of testing and an incompetent president. The pandemic is also uncontrollable, at least by you and me on our own. We can only do what we have the power to do. While this adds to our anxiety, recognizing what we can and cannot control is another attribute that makes us more resilient.

My role model for resiliency is Jesus Christ. Honestly, each time I make such a statement, a voice in my head shouts something like, "Of course, He was the Son of God." The reality is that the advice found in His teachings are insightful for this reason. It is not surprising that Jesus had all of the attributes of a resilient person.

The great news is that even if you choose not to believe that Jesus is also God, your doubt need not diminish the value of His teaching. And learning from a highly resilient person who spent his time helping other is a good starting point.

Highly resilient people also believe in something greater than themselves.

For example, Jesus taught the importance of living a moral life. It turns out that highly resilient people have a moral compass. They have a solid sense of what they consider right and wrong, and it tends to guide their decisions.

Highly resilient people also believe in something greater than themselves. As a result, they participate in religious or spiritual practices. And there is a bonus. The support that comes from being part of a faith community further enhances our resilience.

It is also true that Jesus was quite critical of religious leaders and practices. And I'm confident that He would have even more to criticize today. But Christ doesn't tell us not to get involved. Instead, He cautions us to be sure that our own practices are based on our love for both God and other people.

Which leads me to the next characteristic of highly resilient people. They have a concern for others. Resilient people have a degree of selflessness. And they find a sense of purpose in their beliefs and act on them.

But even highly resilient people are unable to change many of the things they want to change. Instead of fretting over what they cannot change, they focus their energy on what they can change. Dr. Steven Southwick, a psychiatry professor at the Yale University School of Medicine, says resilient people reappraise a problematic situation and look for meaningful opportunities.

One day Jesus was teaching about anxiety. At one point, He asked the question, "Can any of you live a bit longer by worrying about it?" Some of us see the answer to this question as obviously no. Others may think about the answer a bit longer, thinking of exceptions like worrying about things that might affect our well-being.

But the truth is that it is not the worrying that makes a difference. Resilience comes from focusing on the other things that can help. Those things that we can do something about, like wearing a mask and social distancing.

Can any of you live a bit longer by worrying about it?

Luke 12:25

#### Coming up

Next month, we focus on freedom. We are not done claiming a new normal for ourselves. We begin July with a celebration of our declaration of freedom. But it is time to live as free people by first demanding freedom for all. We aren't interested in going back to the way things were with systems of injustice and segregation. For more information our series, *Live*, see the article, Coming up in worship on our website.

I invite you to join us each Sunday. We plan to be live via webinar, through Facebook live, or you can call (929) 436 -2866 and enter the meeting number — 324 841 204. We go live at 10:30 am. You can find these links along with more information about us on our website at FlintAsbury.org.

A reminder that we publish this newsletter that we call the Circuit Rider each week. You can request this publication by email. Send a request to info@FlintAsbury.org or let us know when you send a message through our website. We post an archive of past editions on our website under I invite you to join us each Sunday. We plan to be live via webinar, through Facebook live, or you can call (929) 436-2866 and enter the meeting number — 324 841 204. We go live at 10:30 am. You can find these links along with more information about us on our website at FlintAsbury.org.

**Pastor Tommy** 

#### Sources

Eilene Zimmerman. "What Makes Some People More Resilient Than Others." New York Times. June 18, 2020.

# Welcome to the Asbury Community

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#### Freedom (Coming July 5th) ...cont from page 5

It is a way to freedom that insists on freedom for all persons, unconditionally.

One of the many influences in my life is Dr. James Cone. Dr. Cone died a couple years ago, but his books, insights, and dreams live on. As I read a couple of chapters out of the last book he published before his death, *The Cross and the Lynching Tree*, I realized something we both had in common. Dr. Cone was also born in Arkansas.

But that is where our similarities end. As a white man, I am a representative of the group who oppressed Dr. Cone along with his ancestors, and all people of color whose bodies resided in this country. Any series on the subject of freedom is hollow if we fail to acknowledge the lack of freedom provided to our black and brown sisters and brothers.

And any acknowledgement of the centuries of injustice is hollow if there is no way forward to a time when we can celebrate our freedom together. But the call for action is not a whisper small, incremental steps. Rather, the call is a deafening and unsettling cry for justice and retribution.

Like the woman who bled for twelve years, our brothers and sisters are bleeding in the streets of our cities, from the hands and knees of violence. It wasn't long ago that our ancestors lynched black bodies from trees and celebrated their power over life and death. Not unlike those who tied Jesus to a tree. Claiming righteousness in the midst of violent injustice.

We are also bleeding from a condition that requires healing. We are suffering from the sickness that afflicts every oppressor. We crave forgiveness even more than we crave freedom.

The people of our capital city killed Him by hanging Him on a tree...

Acts 10:39

We all need to touch the coat of Jesus, and to confess that it is us who drained His energy in the hope of finding a solution to our suffering. And peach is ours when we at least surrender our privilege at the feet of the lynching tree.

Our next series, begins the day after our nation traditionally celebrates our freedom. This year is different than past years. The pandemic brought to life our utter helplessness without a cooperative and collaborative effort. And we are not yet on the other side. Wouldn't it be just like God to hold our feet to the fire until at last, we confess our sin, not just with our intentions, but with decisive and lasting action.

The journey ahead promises to be difficult. The lynching tree on which Christ was executed in an effort to silence Him and return to normal, is both a symbol of salvation and despair. But God is never silent when it comes to injustice and oppression. And God speaks with decisive and lasting action. The Word of God never returns empty.

I pray that you will join us each Sunday morning at 10:30 am. We plan to be live via webinar, through Facebook live, or you can call (929) 436-2866 and enter the meeting number — 324 841 204. We go live at 10:30 am. You can find these links along with more information about us on our website at FlintAsbury.org.

**Pastor Tommy**