

ASBURY CIRCUIT RIDER

Healing (On the other side of the crowd)

Have you ever found yourself unable to get through a crowd? People packed into the same space so tightly that you had to push your way through to get to where you need to be?

It's one thing if you know that the crowd will disperse before you need to move or if everyone is headed to the same place you're headed. It is a problem if you want to get to the counter to place your order, but the crowd is waiting for their order to arrive.

As word spread that Jesus healed people by touch, His popularity

increased. Wherever Jesus went, a crowd formed around Him. Jesus did



more than healing people physically. He restored people to some form of normalcy within the community. For the first time, people found wholeness when they met Jesus.

There's a story about a time when Jesus was walking with a crowd of people. Social distancing

was not a consideration at all. Getting within a person or so of Jesus was difficult, with so many people crowding around Him. Imagine if you had trouble walking and hoped that Jesus could heal your condition. You wouldn't stand a chance with such a large crowd.

There was this woman with a medical condition who heard about Jesus. 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.

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Volume 20 Issue 26

July 26, 2020



Please wear a

mask while in the area and to enter church office...If you don't have one, let us know we will provide one for you.

Thank you & Be Safe Everyone!

Restoring Justice (Do it for you and us)

With new cases of COVID rising across the country and enough people refusing to wear masks to draw media attention, it's hard to focus on other subjects. One coping mechanism that comes highly recommended by experts is to limit our consumption of news. And I do this to a point, but it's hard to ignore a world going through so much pain.

One news source, the *Business Insider*, refers to

the number of people protesting mandates to wear face masks as a small but vocal minority. While I find this encouraging, I continue to see people around me not wearing face masks. I seldom speak up on the pro-face mask side, frankly, because I don't like wearing a face mask. I wear a face mask because I care more about other people's well-being than my own discomfort. What about you?

I also don't like wearing



a seat belt at times. I remember when laws first went into effect mandating seat belts. I'm pretty sure I was pro-individual liberties. Whatever my sentiment was at the time, I don't take a stand on whether seat belts infringe on my civil liberties.

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Restoring Justice (Do it for you and us) ...cont from page 1

I buckle up. Admittedly, I occasionally express some minor annoyance when I'm backing my truck up to connect a trailer, and a warning bell starts blaring. Seat belts save lives, and they are mandated by law. So I comply because I believe that it is the right thing to do.

But unlike car accidents, the coronavirus is supposed to be temporary. I never believed Trump's predictions that the virus would suddenly go away. I look at the numbers almost every day. And not that long ago, our numbers were decreasing. The virus was going away. And I attribute our progress to the cooperation of the vast majority of us taking social distancing seriously. This includes wearing face masks.

But there is another disease that ravaged our country from its beginning. A disease that is also a global pandemic. This disease is racism. And like the COVID virus, which flourishes when cooperation diminishes, racism found a way to wreak havoc with all aspects of our life. Diseases are hard to treat when you don't know you have it. Sometimes the symptoms are subtle. But the pandemic, coupled with blatantly racist leaders,

brought racism to our collective consciousness.

An illustration

Indulge me for a short lesson on numbers. Suppose there are 1,000 rocks in a wagon. And 100 of us are asked to choose a rock of our preference. Out of the thousand rocks, one hundred are round, and the other 900 are flat. After we each take out the rock of our choice, we count the round and flat rocks. And we discover that 60 flat rocks and 40 round rocks were removed from the wagon.

Do you conclude that round rocks or flat rocks are the preferred choices? While it is true that there were ten more flat rocks taken than round rocks, round rocks make up only 10% of the original total. Yet our group chose round rocks 40% of the time. In other words, round rocks are chosen substantially more often than flat rocks.

If you have any confusion about this illusion, please reread the paragraphs. If you are still confused, find someone who can explain this conclusion. Someone also needs to explain this to our

political leaders and anyone else who argue that white people suffer more injustice than people of color. Like the number of new coronavirus cases, the numbers tell a disheartening reality that doesn't change by hiding the numbers from public view.

A tooth for a tooth

The evidence supports that wearing seat belts and face masks save lives. Evidence also supports that finding ways to reduce racial bias saves lives. But unlike wearing a face mask that reduces the amount of potentially

Healing (On the other side of the crowd)....cont. from page 1

She had heard that Jesus was in the neighborhood, and she decided to push her way through the crowd from behind him.

As she pushed her way through the crowd, she kept saying to herself, "If I just touch his clothes, I will get well." Her frustration and resentment from twelve years of lost hope must have bubbled up from within, giving her the courage and determination to push her way through the crowds.

Women were not expected to be aggressive. Imagine the verbal abuse she encountered from both men and women as she fought against societal norms to find wholeness.

As the story continues, the woman gets close enough to Jesus to touch the fringe of His coat. As soon as she made contact with the fabric, she could feel the difference. "It must be true, what they say," she

thought to herself. "I can feel it. I'm well at last."



In Our Prayers

Lisa Bohnsack Mirium Watson

FRIENDS AND LOVED ONES WHO ARE HOMEBOUND OR IN NURSING CARE

Nancy Elston Elaine Lamoreaux
Shirley Craig Norma Buzzard
Mary Nations

★ The COVID-19 pandemic ★
is serious and the numbers of new
cases in Genesee County is rising
again. If this continues we will
suspend our in-person meetings
again.

Masks are a requirement while not eating or drinking.

If your health conditions prevent
wearing a mask plan to stay away
for now for your protection and
the well-being of others.

We are meeting in person at
12Noon in the upstairs Library
conference room. If our numbers
increase enough to prevent
adequate social distancing we will
move downstairs. For now, you
must bring your own lunch. We
are not having a potluck lunch
due to health concerns.

Pastor Tommy

Coming up this week

July 27	Mon	
July 28	Tues	10am-2pm Water / Food Distribution
July 29	Wed	Pastor Book Club (in the Library Conference Room)
July 30	Thu	
July 31	Fri	
Aug 1	Sat	
Aug 2	Sun	10:30am New Beginnings Contemporary Worship

Join worship online
Sunday, July 26th -10:30 am

Facebook Live



or Webinar

Join by Phone

+1 929 436 2866

Meeting ID: 324 841 204

Join online

[HTTPS://ZOOM.US/J/324841204](https://zoom.us/j/324841204)

Asbury Worship Series Shameless Coming August 2

One day, a teacher, a person who studied the bible for a living, asked Jesus a question that is on the mind of anyone who wonders what happens when we die. Jesus answered with another question. And His question is critical to anyone hoping to answer the question posed by the teacher.

The Good News Translation reconstructs the question Jesus asked as, "What do the Scriptures say? How do you interpret them?" Jesus acknowledged that the teacher's answer was good. But the teacher wasn't satisfied and



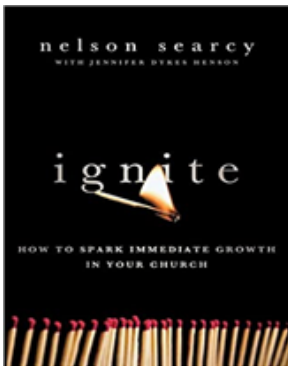
asked a follow-up question.

This is the nature of biblical interpretation. We try to answer Jesus' question. But try as we do, we have follow-up questions. And just as we think we reached a point of consensus, more questions arise. God invites each of us to look for answers. And to keep an open mind to the possibility that the answer is not what we expect.

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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 person or who do not want to wear a face mask. Unfortunately, the virus is still a threat and in-person gatherings quickly become super-

spreaders 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 several churches. Each month we discuss a topic related to designing worship, hospi-

tility, 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 online 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 (235-0016) by phone or simply type your question on our website's homepage — FlintAsbury.org.

Pastor Tommy

Leadership in Worship & Service

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

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

Asbury Staff

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

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.

Shameless (Coming August 2) ...Cont. from page 4

Throughout history, human-kind interpreted scripture and lived out their interpretation. The more convinced the teachers were that they finally figured it out, the more society became indifferent to the suffering of those victimized by their understanding. The gospel stories are rich with illustrations that illuminate the pitfalls of certainty when it comes to biblical interpretation. For any who believe they finally figured it all out, the gospel is less a story of revelation filled with new possibilities, and more like a recipe book.

The colossal failure of the current administration is renewing interest among psychologists to determine how we arrive at different conclusions given the same results. In a recent opinion article in the New York Times, Thomas Edsall offers a reflection on several theories. One of the questions raised by his article considers why we don't agree on whether scientific information should drive policy decisions.

His article reminded me of a concept from sociology known as cultural lag. Cultural lag is how long it takes society to acknowledge a brewing problem in sufficient numbers to address it. Climate change comes

to mind. For me, and thankfully the vast majority of people, this growing problem must be solved now. Yet, there remains a large enough group who prefer to let it go for now.



My own political ideology changed over the past fifty years. Which party's platform I supported flopped back and forth a few times. My approach to choosing the person that got my vote depended on my assessment of the candidate's character. I don't have to agree with a candidate on every issue, but I want to trust them when they think no one is watching. Integrity and transparency are essential attributes for me. But that's me.

One of the greatest benefits of democracy is that diverse opinions are voiced and debated. And as frustrating as it can be to hear the arguments from persons that see the world differently than I do,

I'm grateful that my ideas aren't always the ones that win out. I've been wrong enough times to realize that collective wisdom is far superior. And humans are terrible at mitigating their own power.

Edsall's article recounted a well-known quote found in an article by John Stuart Mill, titled "On Liberty." His quote captures the importance of accepting the possibility that our ideas about a particular subject are entirely wrong. Trusting a person's judgment should be based on a perception of whether the person can listen to opposing views. And whether they admit when they are wrong, and go a different direction than they initially planned. Democracy relies on this sort of leader.

Sadly, in politics, political candidates are apt to cite examples of flipping on particular issues to demean their opponents. While consistency and even a little stubbornness are helpful in public debate, a healthy democracy depends on finding common ground. And our collective ability to respond to new information, such as global warming, determines our future.

Jesus also felt the exchange of energy between them. He stopped in His tracks and asked the crowd of people around Him, "Who touched my clothes?" Those close to Him 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 she 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.

As I reflected on this story in preparation for writing this article and sharing this message, I spoke to Sylvia about her connection with this story. Sylvia finds kinship with the woman in this story. Like Sylvia, this woman's future was uncertain. Like Sylvia, she suffered from a condition that seemed impossible to rectify. And both recognize that there is a crowded space between wholeness and the means of wholeness. A space crossed by faith.

Sylvia shared that she is the little brown girl fighting her way through a crowd, hoping to touch the fringe of Jesus' coat and find healing. Suffering from a lifelong condition that restricts her mobility, Sylvia knows the frustration of prolonged healing.

What's interesting is that I also identify with the woman pushing through the crowds in the hope of finding wholeness. I'm neither brown nor a woman. But God revealed a sickness in me that doctors aren't able to cure. The illness I suffer from was passed down.

The disease spread throughout the land, preventing wholeness and preventing us all from finding the freedom we claim is already ours. But just as denial doesn't stop COVID-19, denying systemic racism doesn't vaccinate us from the virus of racism.

We must all push through the crowds, move around the obstacles, and traverse the space between us and wholeness. Too many ignore the symptoms and spread the disease to others. In our quest for wholeness, we must drown out anyone selling miracle cures or claiming immunity simply because they believe that their whiteness makes them asymptomatic.

As federal militia are dispatched to our cities to silence the voices of any who dare challenge the privilege of a few, we must stand in solidarity. Wholeness lies on the other side of this space, filled with policies, laws, and misconceptions.

Too many brown and black people cannot traverse the space between themselves and wholeness. The crowd that blocks their access to wholeness is found in the systems and prejudices leftover from an ugly history of enslavement. The freedom to access the means of wholeness continues to be inhibited by systems that prejudice light-colored skin over darker tones.

Black lives matter is a recognition of the distance between the freedom to be whole and the means for people of color. When a woman pushed through the crowds with enough determination to touch the fringe of Jesus' coat, she found wholeness. The space between the woman and wholeness was created by human failure. A failure that values the lives of some over the lives of others.

The crowd that blocks their access to wholeness is found in the systems and prejudices leftover from an ugly history of enslavement.

There is too much distance between the means of wholeness and wholeness for too many people. This distance is created by privileging some people over others based on skin tone. The inability of political leaders and their supporters to confess this failing maintains this distance, making wholeness elusive. Only confession and repentance can eliminate this gap, so that forgiveness can heal our wounded souls.

The pandemic pulled back the layers of cover-up that allowed denial to derail the progress started by courageous leaders decades ago. This denial has come to a day of reckoning. Racism is taking one final, desperate stand in the streets of our cities. May God have mercy as I confess that I reached out to touch the coattails of Jesus in desperate hope for wholeness.

Coming up

This month we focus on freedom. We are not done claiming a new normal for ourselves. We began 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. We aren't trying to preserve a history. Our focus is to create a future. For more information our series, *Freedom*, see the article, *Coming up in worship* on our [website](#).

This woman realized what had happened to her, so she came trembling with fear, knelt at his feet, and told him the whole truth. **Mark 5:33**

I invite you to join us next Sunday as we begin our new series, *Shameless*. 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 the tab, Connect - choose [Newsletters](#).

Pastor Tommy

A prayer for Cooperation ...

Free us, Lord, from our obsession with ourselves long enough to care for others; to be so concerned about the well-being of the human community that we don't have to worry about our place, our church, our class, our values, our vested interests. Help us to know the joy and freedom of putting all our trust in you.

Amen. ¹

¹ Walter Brueggemann. Five Talents' Response to the Coronavirus. © March 26, 2020. Retrieved from: <https://fivetalents.org/blog/2020/3/26/five-talents-response-to-the-coronavirus>

Life groups question & notes

She came in the crowd behind him, saying to herself, "If I just touch his clothes, I will get well." She touched His cloak...and she had the feeling inside herself that she was healed of her trouble...

Mark 5:24-34 (GNT)

NOTES FROM WORSHIP

QUESTIONS FOR LIFE GROUPS

1. Read Mark 5:24-34. What did the woman believe about Jesus that motivated her to push through the crowds? What comes to mind when you think of others who remind you for the woman in this story? In what ways can you identify with the woman pushing through the crowd to touch Jesus?
2. Read the article in this week's Circuit Rider, xxx. In what ways is racism a disease? What are the crowds, the obstacles, that keep us from curing racism? What concerns do you have about possible cures for racism? In what ways can you help us all to push through the crowds to find wholeness?
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.

infectious particles, we haven't discovered an easy solution to preventing racism. Nor is there a pill that takes the pain and suffering away. Instead, we are left with a long term recovery.

One process that dates back to practices communities used long before the creation of judicial systems is restorative justice. The concept is simple. Everyone affected, including victims, offenders, and the community, participate in resolving the grievances and restoring peace. Offenses aren't ignored, nor is the harm caused reversed. Nevertheless, brokenness is healed rather than swept under a rug.

Retributive justice, on the other hand, seeks to punish offenders. Determining what happens next is delegated to others who are expected to have no particular bias in the matter, instead of those who are harmed participating in decision making. For example, the recent execution of a prisoner convicted of a federal offense was done despite the objection of the victim's family.

We claim that our justice system is based, at least in part, on scripture. How much so is worth debating.

Jesus was once talking to a group of people, telling them how to get along. At one point, Jesus said to the crowd, "You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.'" The people listening knew what Jesus was talking about. One of the ancient laws that they followed used this same language.

The book of ancient laws, called Leviticus, describes how to deal with one person doing harm to another person. The law explains that whatever the offender does to the victim, the offender should have done to them.

One example says that "if you knock out a tooth, one of your teeth shall be knocked out" (Leviticus 24:20).

The law doesn't specify who does the dental work. Whether a couple of community members should grab the offender and hold her while the victim knocks out a tooth. What if more than one tooth goes flying? Does the prior offender now become the victim? Where does the process of revenge end?

Jesus realized that the cycle of revenge never ends. Human nature doesn't work that way. Too often, after revenge takes place, there is retaliation on the revenge, and so forth. Particularly, since human nature tends to do more harm in revenge than the injury suffered. We like to teach them a lesson. "They must be punished," we argue. And within our justice system is an underlying premise that punishment deters further offenses.

So Jesus said, "But now I tell you: do not take revenge on someone who wrongs you." How do we get justice if we just let a person off the hook who knocks out our tooth? What if justice has nothing to do with getting even, but everything to do with restoring peace?

TRHT

I recently shared a link to a website for *Hope in the Cities*, a non-profit providing assistance, tools, and techniques that help restore peace after an offense. The goal of the process is to move away from denial, guilt, shame, and blame. The goal of the process is to restore peace through honesty, reflection, and understanding of pain, trauma, loss, and crisis.

Last November, Asbury hosted a community meeting that included a facilitator experienced in Truth, Racial Healing & Transformation, or TRHT. We invited residents from our community to learn about TRHT, provide

feedback, and help craft a vision for eliminating racism in our community. The Community Foundation of Greater Flint partnered with the Kellogg Foundation to fund some initial work in bringing this process to the Flint community.

TRHT utilizes an approach known as restorative justice. The goal of restorative justice is to help the victim to be whole again. No system of justice that humans are capable of can bring back a life. The focus of restorative justice is restoring those who remain alive and preventing further injury.

In using restorative justice as an approach in dealing with racism, advocates of this approach recognize that there is an underlying myth that lies at the root of the problem. This myth is often described as believing that there is a "hierarchy of human value." The belief that one person's life is more valuable than the life of another person.

Any system based on this myth is inconsistent with the teachings of scripture. Yet, clergy throughout history argued in favor of this myth as justification for racist policies and laws. Recovering from centuries of systemic racism is possible and long overdue.

Coming up

This month we focus on freedom. We are not done claiming a new normal for ourselves. We began 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. We aren't trying to preserve a history. Our focus is to create a future. For more information our series, *Freedom*, see the article, *Coming up in worship* on our [website](#).

Pastor Tommy

Welcome to the Asbury Community

NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION

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Shameless ...cont from page 5

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The church is among the oldest institutions. Withstanding changes in national borders, new ways of thinking, monumental shifts in culture, such as the enlightenment, the church weathered numerous storms. Some argue that the church's stubbornness to give-in to new ideas is one of the church's greatest strengths.

The church is not a democracy in its purest sense. It is a monarchy with Jesus Christ as the ultimate authority over all matters. Yet, God appears to leave mere humans in charge of decision making, using an ancient book of laws, stories, poetry, letters, declarations, and history, as a guide. "What do I do if..." questions come up every day. And we who claim some authority in this ancient institution, are expected to use scripture as a reference to guide our answer.

This was true before the time of Jesus, and it was true when the teacher asked his question about eternal life. While our scriptures expanded after the time of Jesus, most of what we have available today existed before that day.

"What must I do to receive eternal life?" the teacher asked. And Jesus answered him, "What do the Scriptures say? How do you interpret them?"

We call our new series Shameless. This title comes from a book of the same name. The author raises our awareness of this issue of interpretation and its impact on the answer the teacher gave. "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind; and Love your neighbor as you love yourself," the teacher answered "You are right," Jesus replied; "do this, and you will live."

What do the Scriptures say? How do you interpret them?

Luke 10:25

.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.

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