

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 2

August 2, 2020



To anyone that is working on reports for the 2020 Charge Conference, please get them to me ASAP as they need to be emailed or mailed to the District Office by Wed, August 5th... any questions, please call me in the office 235-0016. Also remember sign original copies with blue ink...

Purpling (The World Needs More Purple People)

The hot and dry days of July are behind us for another year. Our farm team is getting help from the rain a little more often. Plants, like people, require moisture to sustain life. We all know this. So the prophet Isaiah used this common understanding as a way to explain the impact of God's Word. Like the rain, whatever God speaks makes a difference in sustaining life.

For those of us who follow the Christian bible, God's Word includes all of the text found there. While our language and emphasis vary from church to church, the basic concept is the same. Whatever scripture says matters. We even say that God spoke or sang the world into existence. Whether you believe in a big bang or another theory about how the universe came into existence, God's Word is the power behind creation.



The bible tells the story of God's revelations to humanity. God chose to let us in on some of the greatest mysteries in life, inspiring and guiding hundreds of ordinary people to share God's revelations with others.

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Purpling (The World Needs More Purple People) ...cont from page 1

This process began centuries before humans learned to record words in pictures and eventually developing an alphabet for writing. And this process continued as more revelations were recorded, and more persons cobbled ancient stories together, all inspired by the author of the universe.

Life continued during long periods when God seemed silent. Leaders know that an information void doesn't end conversations. Humanity never stops talking, building, and living. And I believe God never stops revealing. The process remains a mystery. None of us know the mind of God, although many lay claims to insights.

Scripture offers us insights into God's thinking. Most of us have experienced breakthroughs while reading scripture. The same story revealing something about God that we missed the first dozen times we read it. Perhaps it was a different translation using different words and arrangements. Or maybe something about us changed since the last time we read it.

The writer of Hebrews describes God's Word as a double-edged sword, cutting whichever direction the sword swings. This sounds dangerous. A double

-edged sword arriving on our front porch today would come with a long list of safety precautions and warnings and a legal disclosure that its use could result in serious injury and death.

The bible contains similar warnings. Scripture offers comfort to the afflicted and alerts for afflicters. The Word of God is powerful. And its power gets invoked in churches, courthouses, conversations, and more. It has the power to heal and the potential to conceal.

What scripture conceals includes the mysteries that remain—the mind of God. But scripture can also reveal our intentions. The writer of 2 Timothy, sharpened the sword we called scripture with the edge of a razor by reminding us that all of scripture is suitable for correction. And when we use scripture to correct others, we run a substantial risk. But we were warned.

The first proverb in chapter 12 of Proverbs tells us that "It is stupid to hate being corrected." I think that this observation applies to all parties. The church included. And thousands have died and are dying as a result of stupidity.

Perhaps this is one of the many reasons that humility rises to the top as an essential characteristic of God. An aspect that we are encouraged to strive for. God caring enough about creation to talk to us at all, rather than wiping us out and starting over, is a colossal act of humility. Jesus showed humility in all aspects of His life, and He emphasized the importance of humility in His teaching.

In one story, Jesus compared the humility of a man despised for his occupation, with another man revered for his job. Tax collectors were despised by the community during Jesus' time. Resented because they used the power given to them by a corrupt government to mistreat the residents of Palestine. In the story, the tax collector went to church to pray, admit his faults, and confess that he abused his neighbors.

The other man belonged to a political party known as the Pharisees. Members of this political party included the wealthier residents. They demanded attention wherever they went.

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

- Aug 3 Mon
- Aug 4 Tues 10am-2pm
Water / Food Distribution
- Aug 5 Wed Pastor Book Club
(in the Library Conference Room)
- Aug 6 Thu
- Aug 7 Fri
- Aug 8 Sat
- Aug 9 Sun 10:30am New Beginnings
Contemporary Worship

Join worship online
 Sunday, August 2nd -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



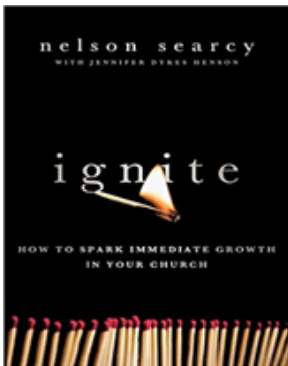
asked a follow-up question.

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-

tality, 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 |

Asbury Staff

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

| | |
|----------------|---------------------|
| 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 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



**ASBURY FARMS
PRODUCE MARKET
TO OPEN MONDAY,
AUGUST 3th !!**

You will soon be able to purchase produces from our Asbury Farm. Hours that we will be open are Monday through Friday from 10am-2pm in the parking lot of Asbury Church.



Life groups question & notes

I thank you that I am not like that tax collector over there.. But the tax collector stood at a distance and would not even raise his face to heaven, but beat on his breast and said, 'God, have pity on me, a sinner!'

Matthew 18:9-14 (GNT)

NOTES FROM WORSHIP

QUESTIONS FOR LIFE GROUPS

1. Read Matthew 18:9-14. It's human nature to compare ourselves to others. We often draw conclusions about relative goodness based on comparisons. Has this happened to you? Do you occasionally comment to yourself something like, "I'm thankful that I'm not like that person?" It happens to most of us. Why do you suppose God favors the tax collector's approach?
2. Read the article in this week's Circuit Rider, *Purpling*. With a presidential election less than 100 days away we identify each other's political connections based on the color of our hats and buttons. This also happens within and between our churches. We take sides regarding whether a certain behavior or attribute of another person is consistent or contrary to scripture. Do you sometimes change your mind about what a particular verse of scriptures says?
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.

People were expected to treat them with respect and to follow their instructions. They had a reputation for following the laws to the letter and expecting others to be like them.

I thank you I am not like that tax collector over there.

Matthew 18:11

The Pharisee, in the story, prayed out loud so others could hear what he said. "Thank God I'm not like that tax collector," he said at one point. He said it loud enough for the tax collector to hear it. Can you imagine how the tax collector felt? He was already feeling bad about himself. He didn't need to be reminded that people didn't want to be like him.

Of course, Pharisees and tax collectors likely hung out at the same clubs and helped each other out with secret deals. But scripture doesn't say much about this possibility. I just know how Pharisees and powerful politicians cooperate today.

The story ends with a twist. Jesus says that God favors the behavior of the tax collector and not the Pharisee. It didn't matter to God as much that the Pharisee followed the rules and was well-liked. It didn't seem to bother God that the tax collector had done things he shouldn't have done. The humility of the tax collector put him in favor with God. The arrogance of the Pharisee negated any good he was doing.

The Pharisees had a reputation for knowing and closely following scripture. Somewhat the "religious right" of their time, they read the scriptures word for word. And they lived out their interpretation and demanded that others do the same.

Not much has changed. Pharisees influence policies and laws today. And declare how thankful that they are not like the rest of us.

We continue to have Pharisees among us. And before I open my mouth to say, "Thank God I'm not like them," I must remember this warning. It's doubtful that my interpretation is entirely correct. I do the best I can and continue to learn just how stupid I was in the past. And remember just how stupid I can be in the present as well.

The tax collector was told more than once, "You should be ashamed of yourself." And apparently, he was. But God doesn't hold our failings over us when we humbly admit that we failed to do what we should. Or we did things we shouldn't do.

My point for this article takes us back to the beginning. God's Word never returns empty. It accomplishes whatever God has in mind. God's Word doesn't answer to you and me. Our role is to interpret God's Word the best we can so that we can live as God intended us to live. And realize that we could be wrong in our interpretation.

God's Word is a dangerous tool in the hands of a Pharisee. Read scripture, interpret scripture, and live out scripture as best you can. And know that some of your interpretations could be wrong.

Throughout scripture, we learn characteristics to which God lays claim. God is love, and God is humble are two of the most prominent. I prefer to resort back to these two characteristics whenever I find myself or others questioning interpretations. Does my reading show God's love to others, or does my understanding reek of "Thank you that I'm not like them?"

Manipulated by self-interest and leaders with debilitating emotional sickness, our country is deeply divided between red and blue. I recently read a new book. It was written for children by adults struggling to respond to their children's questions about why the news was so full of hateful speech. The book is titled *The World Needs More Purple People*. And I agree.¹

Coming up

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](#).

The World Needs More Purple People

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Pastor Tommy

¹ Kristen Bell & Benjamin Hart. *The World Needs More Purple People*. New York: Random House, 2020.

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

Shameless (Coming August 2) ...cont from page 5

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

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Pastor Tommy