

# ASBURY CIRCUIT RIDER

Empty (Dark night of the soul )



In her book, *Learning to Walk in the Dark*, Barbara Brown Taylor shares the highlights of the story of a man known as John of the Cross. A Friar and founding member of a renegade

order called the Carmelite, John is best known for his classic work, *The Dark Night of the Soul*.

Given the title, it is easy to jump to the conclusion that

Nada (Embracing dark emotions )



It's been 13 years since my dad passed away. Four years since my mom died. I lost one of my brothers to cancer only a year ago, and my first grandson died before his first birthday seven years ago.

Grief is an emotion that all humans have in common. The differences come in our responses to grief. Just writing the first two sentences of this article created a groundswell of memories within me. I

John writes about a time when he was feeling down — perhaps depressed. A time when this man of God felt abandoned by God. Based on the title alone, I might order this book if I was struggling with a feeling of hopelessness or dismay. I might expect to find it in the self-help section of my local library.

What if told you that John of the Cross wrote his classic story while in solitary confinement? During the time in prison, John was frequently beaten, lived on

Page 6

had to wipe away tears so my eyes could focus on the screen in front of me. Grief often visits us at inconvenient times.

Tears are one of the ways we cope with the feelings that grief offers us. But it took me almost sixty years to unlearn enough of what I was taught for me to allow myself to feel grief. My heroes early in life seemed able to hold it all together in the face of adversity. They did not have time for emotions that could hinder their response to life's biggest challenges.

Page 2

Volume 2 Issue 29

August 29, 2021



Please continue to wear your masks when in the building. If you don't have one, let us know we will provide one for you.



## Inside this issue:

Empty (Dark night of the soul)	1
Nada	1
In Our Prayers/Coming up this Week	3
Asbury Worship Series/Night Vision	4
Pastor's Book Club-Holy Envy	4
Leadership in Worship & Service	4
Asbury Worship Series/Holy Envy	5
Empty (Dark night of the soul)	6
Flint Food Not Bombs	7
Small Group Questions & Notes	8
Feed Flint	9
Feed Flint	10
SFSK September Dates	11
Asbury Veggie Boxes	12
Empty (Dark night of the soul)	13

## Nada (Embracing dark emotions) ..cont from page 1

But oftentimes our dark emotions do stand in the way. <sup>1</sup>

In her book, *Learning to Walk in the Dark*, Barbara Brown Taylor shares how she sometimes wakes up in a panic, unable to get back to sleep. I can relate.

There are times when I wake up in a panic. My mind races to identify situations that create stress in my life. A lack of sufficient money to handle incoming expenses is the usual subject matter. Asbury requires a substantial amount of funding to run, and there's never enough.

We are a captive audience for the angel of doom to have his way with our thoughts and fears in our efforts to rest. The banks are closed, and our colleagues are asleep — as we should be. But sleep is elusive when our mind is focused on the shadows in front of us.

What if we were to trust our feelings rather than pleading to be saved from them? What if it were possible to stay with the present rather than allowing our thoughts to look two steps ahead?

Barbara notes that beds are where we face our closest and furthest moments with God. We are conceived, born, and die in beds. We also pray, dream, and cry in beds. And beds are where we come face to face with our dark emotions.

Professional therapist Miriam Greenspan writes about the experiences of alchemical transformation. "Alchemical" suggests a mysterious process by the standards of modern science. In an alchemical

transformation, we mysteriously move from grief, despair, and fear to a state of gratitude, faith, and joy. Greenspan argues that most of our problems dealing with darker emotions come from our unwillingness to experience them authentically. <sup>2</sup>

There is a story in the Book of Genesis about one of Abraham's descendants named Jacob. Jacob wrestled with an angel after running away from the trouble he created with his brother Esau. I'm guessing it was an angel of dark emotions. Nevertheless, Jacob received a blessing after staying with the darkness, although the night left him with a limp.

The alchemical transformation for Jacob came as his restless night neared its end. Perhaps Jacob finally fell back to sleep after staying with his grief long enough to find that God was with him all along.

Blessings come from embracing our emotions rather than running away from them.

Jesus also spoke about hanging in there rather than avoiding adversity. On one occasion, Jesus told His followers that we lose out on the blessing of grace when we try to save our lives by running away. Instead, we should push forward, knowing that God is with us in the darkness.

But we prefer not to tolerate the darkness. Instead, we turn on lights as a way to cope. We light up the darkness — often literally with cigarettes or cannabis. Others choose harder drugs, while some turn to alcohol, food, or Netflix to cope with

the dark. What we're most certain of is that we want out of the darkness as soon as possible.

And the dark feeling that haunts us the most is that sense of nothingness that comes with despair. What if life is nothing more than our immediate sense of doom? I'm not talking about those times when we feel like, "It doesn't get any better than this!" No, I'm talking about those times when the poop hits the fan, and you are feeling more like, "How could things get any worse?"

When life feels more like nothing.

The word "nada" comes to us from Spanish. This word was used by Ernest Hemingway in his classic short story, "A Clean, Well-Lighted Place." His story focuses on two waiters and a lonely customer confronting the concept of nothingness as the café closes for the night. Hemingway writes:

*What did he fear? It was not fear or dread. It was nothing that he knew too well. It was all a nothing and a man was nothing too. It was only that and light was all it needed and a certain cleanness and order. Some lived it and never felt it but he knew it all was nada y pues nada y nada y pues nada.* <sup>3</sup>

**In Our Prayers**

Kevin Croom  
 Sylvia Pittman  
 Shirley Craig  
 Mirium Watson



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

Nancy Elston      Elaine Lamoreaux  
 Norma Buzzard      Mary Nations

**Coming up this week**

**PASTOR BOOK CLUB NEWS:**

Pastor Book Club is still meeting via Zoom. Please call the Church Office for more info 810-235-0016 as it changes.

Meanwhile, as a lot of you are already aware, sharp increases in new infections of COVID are pushing us back into isolation. While our regular attenders are vaccinated, we realize that a large number of persons are not vaccinated. Therefore, we reinstated our policy to require masks in our building for all persons when not eating or drinking.

Thank you and everyone stay safe!

\*\*\*\*\*

Meet Up & Eat Up

Serving Breakfast from  
 8:30am-9:30am

AND

Serving Lunch from  
 12Noon-1pm

Monday through Friday

**STOP BY—BRING YOUR FAMILIES!!!!**  
 (Asbury UMC 1653 Davison Rd)

**WELCOME PASTOR DAVID LEINEKE!**

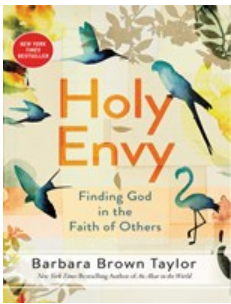
- Aug 30 Mon
- Aug 31 Tues 10:00am-12:30pm  
 Food/Water Distribution
- Sept 1 Wed 12Noon Pastor Book Club
- Sept 2 Thu
- Sept 3 Fri
- Sept 4 Sat 12Noon Food Not Bombs
- Sept 5 Sun 10:30am  
 New Beginnings  
 Contemporary Worship

(We are live on [Facebook](#) and our newly launched [YouTube channel](#). You can find these links along with more information about us on our website at [FlintAsbury.org](#).)

## Asbury Worship Series Holy Envy Coming in September



### Book Club News



We finished reading and discussing Barbara Brown Taylor's book, *Learning to walk in the dark*, and we're ready to jump into Barbara's recent book. Barbara shares that she wrote *Holy Envy* for a host of reasons.

In an article found in Publishers Weekly, she said that "What I have noticed is how quickly I use traditions to affirm my choices and my way of life." How true her insight maybe for the rest of us!

The way we view the world is a hand-me-down. And like a pair of pants our older brother outgrew, we wear our religious beliefs proudly without noticing that the inseams are a little short.

There are factions of my worldview, Christianity, that still argue that biological

### Leadership in Worship & Service

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

#### Asbury Staff

Rev. Dr. Tommy McDoniel	Pastor & Exec Dir
Connie Portillo	Office Manager
Sylvia Pittman	Empowerment Arts
Jim Craig	Board & Leadership Chair
Kevin Croom	Exec Chef & Dir Opers

September is the traditional month for back-to-school. The school supplies and clothes sales began a couple of months ago in anticipation of a rush to dress and equip children for the occasion. So it's an excellent time to stock up on office supplies even if school never ended while the days were longer and hotter.

I remember an often used ice-breaker from the decades when I attended school was to answer the question, "What I did during my summer vacation?" Of course, I'm sure our an-

evolution is not real. The myth that this view accepts as the basis for their assertions is based on a theory of creation handed down through generations when a lot less was known about the natural world.

Differing worldviews should present us with exciting learning opportunities and often do. However, the historical aggression of at least two of the more pervasive religions causes us to view our differences with suspicion. Killing innocent people because of a religious belief is an act of cowardice and misinformed aggression.

At least, this is how I interpret what my own worldview tells me about relating to persons who view the world differently than I do. Yet, Christianity is one of the religions that are most guilty of acts of aggression and violence. During the January 6 terrorist attack on our nation's capital, Christian symbols stood out clearly, along with red caps and the name of their chosen demigod. Terrorism is incompatible with loving others.

Barbara Brown Taylor left parish ministry to teach others about some of the different ways that our neighbors experience God. And in her book, she shares some of her most agonizing and sometimes embarrassing moments.

Racism, climate change, and attacks on our democracy from within demand our attention as we craft a new normal together. Making sure that we vote in every election is

Matt DePalma	Farms Manager
Chris Freeman	South Campus Bldg Mgr
Israel Unger	Finance Director
Kim Sims	Connections Suprv
Terrance Williams	Arts Center Mgr
Katelin Maylum	Sr Mgr Local Food

swer varies greatly depending on the community where you live and the socioeconomics of your family. Nevertheless, reflection is a skill that children deserve to learn.

So it seems appropriate for me to ask a similar question to anyone who chooses to tune in to our September series at Asbury. My version goes like this — "Where have your beliefs taken you during your time away?" Admittedly, this question is

Page 5

more critical than ever. So is diligent oversight of proposed legislation that may impact our ability to vote and changes in voting districts.

Meanwhile, sharp increases in new infections of COVID are pushing us back into isolation. While our regular attenders are vaccinated, we realize that a large number of persons are not vaccinated. Therefore, we reinstated our policy to require masks in our building for all persons when not eating or drinking.

We strongly urge all persons to get vaccinated as soon as practical unless advised by your doctor. Avoid news sources that promote baseless claims and pay closer attention to the experts we depend on to keep us safe.

We each make our own arrangements for lunch at this point. However, we look forward to returning to pot-luck lunches when infection rates fall. We anticipate this happening as the number of vaccinations reaches herd immunity levels, and the CDC relaxes precautionary measures.

If you prefer to avoid groups or live too far away I encourage you to [join us online](#) for our Wednesday gatherings. Alternatively, you can call in by phone, be heard, and hear what others say by calling (929) 436-2866 -- enter the meeting ID, 282 039 5568#.

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 — [FlintAsbury.org](#).

<sup>1</sup> [Barbara Brown Taylor](#), *Holy Envy: Finding God in the Faith of Others*. Harper One, 2019.



*Holy Envy**Coming in September ... Asbury Worship Series*

loaded with ambiguity and begs for more clarity. Nevertheless, this is what makes holy envy an excellent topic for a series.

I borrowed our series title from author, teacher, preacher, and spokesperson for the religiously curious, Barbara Brown Taylor. Her book, *Holy Envy*, provides the background for much of our content. Barbara writes from her personal struggles with answering our essay question.

Barbara credits the phrase "holy envy" to a former Dean of Harvard Divinity School named Krister Stendahl. In writing about the topics of other religions, Dr. Stendahl suggests that we need to allow room for holy envy when we try to understand other religions. Another way to think about holy envy is to consider how our own beliefs might be richly informed by the beliefs and practices of others.

Holy envy may seem more like an affront than a practice to admire when we are heavily invested in a particular set of beliefs. Worse, if someone else points it out to us, we worry that our friend may be tempted to turn away from shared beliefs searching for greener pastures. Never mind that Christianity is rare in our insistence that everyone should believe what we believe.

The greater temptation is participating in a favorite pastime that I call "creating God in our own image." In this exercise, we gravitate towards beliefs and rituals that reinforce and agree with our lifestyle. Christians pick and choose particular translations and specific verses to support our choices and condemn the choices of others.

We punctuate our argument with a claim of biblical inerrancy. Our claims quickly become more than a claim that our holy scriptures are God's Word and thus universally true. In reality, we claim that the translation from the original manuscript (which we no longer have access to) accurately reflects the mind of God. Moreover, we argue that our interpretation of what God means by the text is the correct one.

How arrogant!

Furthermore, we often pick and choose specific laws listed from scripture that we lifted from the beliefs that Christianity grew out of that fit our attitudes and opinions. All the while ignoring other laws so we can order bacon or ham with our eggs. And we charge interest on loans to our friends and justify laws that allow for excessive interest rates on loans to persons who need them the worse. We call this smart business. There are too many examples to list them all.

It is no wonder that younger generations equate Christianity with hypocrisy. The same charge that Jesus levied against the religious experts of His generation for similar reasons.

In *Holy Envy*, we take a look at just a few of the beliefs and practices of other worldviews that may be worthy of envy. But, more importantly, we start with the strong likelihood that we don't have all the answers. Then we hope to open space to view others with a bit more admiration and a lot less fear and worry.

Our Book Club plans to follow along in Barbara's book during our series if you want deeper discussions on our weekly themes. We have a few books available, or you can check with the library or order your own copy from several sources.

The latest variants of COVID are more contagious. As a result, there is a resurgence of new infections among the unvaccinated. It's time to come out of whatever fears or biases keep you from being a part of the solution. Get vaccinated!

I pray that you will join us each Sunday morning at 10:30 am. We share our weekly explores live on our [YouTube channel](#). We go live at 10:30 am. You can find these links along with more information about us, or join our live broadcast on our [website](#) at [FlintAsbury.org](http://FlintAsbury.org).

Pastor Tommy

<sup>1</sup> Barbara Brown Taylor. *Holy Envy: Finding God in the Faith of Others*. Harper One, 2019.

## Empty (Dark night of the soul ) ... cont. from pg 1

on bread and water, and was kept in a dark cell where the only light he saw came from a small crack in the prison wall.

It was the 16th century, and John's offense was helping a Nun known as Teresa of Avila start a new order. On a cold December night in 1577, John was abducted from his room at the Convent of the Incarnation. An order co-founded by himself and Teresa. He was put in a cell where he could not bathe or leave, except for an occasional beating. This is the setting for *The Dark Night of the Soul*.

This is a setting where anyone of us would likely experience spiritual darkness. Had John misread God's intention for his life? Was Teresa of Avila a temptation and their idea of going out on their own nothing more than a fantasy they dreamed up? Who hasn't experienced a time when doubt prevailed over hope?

When we're experiencing a time in our lives where we feel spiritually drained, and God seems as distant as the stars, it is common to blame ourselves. Perhaps it was something we did or didn't do? Maybe God is teaching me a lesson. You see, if we can convince ourselves that we caused it, then we're really still in control. If we caused it, we could get out of it by enduring the punishment and learning our lesson.

It would take John nine months before he escaped from the prison and restarted a new monastery based on the original ideals of the Carmelite order. After his escape,

John completed writing down what he learned in prison, and countless persons have read and relived his journey centuries later.

*The Dark Night of the Soul* is best described as a love story. John had very little to say about religion. Instead, he used the language of the senses and great passion. John shared his quest to pursue the most elusive lover of all. Only to learn that God is forever just outside our grasp.

The lesson John shares with any who read his story are that a dark night is a gift of grace. It is the gift of helping us give up our notions about God and surrender all of the perceived benefits that we count on as a reward for our beliefs. Similar to an addict in recovery, God's gift is liberation from our addictions to expectations that our go-to answers will help us grasp the infiniteness of God.

A couple weeks ago, I referenced Hemmingway's short story, *A Clean, Well-Lighted Place*. Hemmingway's story was likely inspired by the writing of John of the Cross. In particular, a prayer was written by John of the Cross where he uses the Spanish word "nada" for God. The prayer is titled, *The Ascent to Mount Carmel*. Named after the place where Elijah did battle with the priests of Baal — a local god created as a substitute for the real thing.

Taylor summarizes the importance of accepting God's divine gift of unknowing when she writes, "It would be a mistake to attach the promise of more spiritual benefits to a night that is designed to obliterate them."

We find a story in the Gospel of Matthew that reminds me of how we often search for answers to questions that simply are beyond our ability to grasp. In this particular story, a prosperous young man asked Jesus what good things he needed to do to please God enough to have eternal life.

This story is most often interpreted as the importance of putting our relationship with God ahead of our ambitions. But like all of scripture, the more we drill down beneath the obvious, we discover a treasure chest of wisdom.

The justification for a literal interpretation comes out of the instructions Jesus gave. He instructed the young man to sell his possessions and give the proceeds to the poor. This lesson can lead us to the conclusion that following the teachings of Jesus is best done when we are poor with no distractions. This can lead to a debate over how much is too much. And is it really about our bank account or our devotion to God?

Providing a HOT MEAL and/or local, organic  
PRODUCE weekly.

SATURDAYS starting around 12NOON

Asbury United Methodist Church

1653 Davison Rd, Flint (810) 235-0016



**Food Not Bombs** is a loose-knit group of independent collectives, sharing free vegan and vegetarian food with others. **Flint Food Not Bombs** believes that access of food among other necessities of life-should be viewed as a right, not a privilege. Yet in a nation with a military buget many times that of other nations, people continue to go

hungry. This is immoral and unjust.



JOIN THE CONVERSATION!

Facebook.com/flintfoodnotbombs

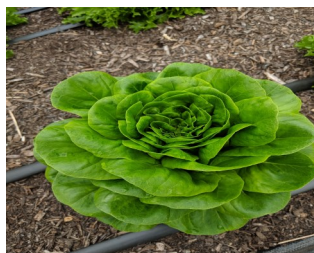
Twitter.com/flintfnb

Email: flintfnb@protonmail.com

Website: foodnotbombsflint.wordpress.com

We're currently looking for volunteers so we can expand. If interested,  
send us a message! Solidarity!

A nation that continues year after year to spend more money on military defense than on programs of social death.—MLK



uplift is approaching spiritual

## Life groups questions & notes:

*Go and sell all you have and give the money to the poor... then come and follow me.*

Matthew 19:16-30 (GNT)

### NOTES FROM WORSHIP

---



---



---



---



---



---



---



---

### QUESTIONS FOR LIFE GROUPS

1. Read Matthew 19:16-30. What thoughts come to mind when you first read this text? In what ways do you identify with the young man? In what ways do you see differences? Do you have the same question that the young man asks Jesus? What is the answer you hold onto?
2. Read the article in this week's Circuit Rider, *Empty*. Have you experienced a "dark night of the soul?" What was it like? What did you learn? How does your interpretation of our text from Matthew differ after reading this week's article? What addictions to go-to answers and solutions do you need to give up so that you can experience God in new ways?
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.



“Feed Flint”



# “Feed Flint”



A meal goes a long way for a senior living alone, a family struggling to make ends meet, or a child fearful of empty shelves at home. But for the residents of Flint who carry the effects of lead-tainted water, nutrition is critical. Feed Flint provides locally grown, chemical-free, fresh produce to residents living in and around Flint. And we're hoping that you can help us provide 10,000 meals this summer.

Feed Flint includes takeout meals, produce boxes with recipes, and home deliveries as part of our work to guide and support families in moving to sustainable abundance. The reality is that Michigan's food insecurity levels got worse during the COVID-19 pandemic, and this summer's recovery is leaving behind those at the most risk of having to miss meals.

### **Flint families continue to struggle with the ongoing effects of the water crisis.**

We're bringing together the resources of the Asbury Community Development Corporation. This includes Asbury Farms, the South Flint Soup Kitchen, the Asbury Community Help Center, multiple food pantries, and our Sizzling Culture Mobile Food Trailer. Our plan is to care for our neighbors when they need it most. We accept all people as they are, and our doors are always open to anyone.

Asbury Farms provides locally grown produce used to create fabulous and nutritious meals. Our seed-to-table approach is community-based. This not only helps families make it through emergencies and crises. We help move families towards sustainable abundance.

Our Sizzling Culture program provides jobs and new skills to our city's youth. This includes year-round employment. Our staff and most of our volunteers come from the neighborhoods we support. We call this sustainable abundance because families move from need-based on scarcity to enough based on community-generated abundance.

Our work is also about food and justice. Our vision is a revitalized community where every resident can use their talents and passions for the common good, where children grow into active citizens. And all residents can enjoy safety, good health, and a culture that fosters life-long learning and satisfying lives. This summer, help us address food insecurity and strengthen Flint's budding local food system by supporting the Feed Flint campaign. Thank you for taking the time to see what we're doing and considering how you can help.

**Donate to our Feed Flint Campaign by visiting:  
[flintasbury.org/feed-flint-donate](https://flintasbury.org/feed-flint-donate)**



LET'S HELP THOSE IN NEED!

# September South Flint Soup Kitchen Food Giveaways

SEPTEMBER 8TH & 29TH  
11AM-NOON BOTH DAYS

South Flint Soup Kitchen  
3410 Fenton Road (Located three blocks north of  
Atherton Road) Flint, MI 48507

Questions??? Call 810-239-3427

No appointment necessary!



**ASBURY FARM FRESH**

**- TRY OUR WEEKLY VEGGIE BOX FOR \$10.00 -**

**SIGN UP FOR A FREE ASBURY FARMS ACCOUNT TODAY**

**AND**

Receive a \$15 credit on your account for your first purchase

**CREATE YOUR OWN VEGGIE BOX**

Select what goes in your box from each week's harvest. Get \$5 off your next order when you fill your box with \$15 of produce.

**WANT US TO DECIDE FOR YOU?**

Choose Veggie Box Subscription and we will fill your order with a variety of each week's harvest. Pay when you pick up your box. **A \$15 VALUE FOR \$10.**

**\* CONVENIENT PICKUP AT ASBURY OR AT THE SOUTH FLINT SOUP KITCHEN \***

But what if the hidden pearl of wisdom is less about tangible assets and more about our addictions to each fix that leads us to the false conclusion that we finally know the mind of God? What if Jesus is warning the young man and all of us that we each must experience a transformation whereby we recognize and accept the gift that John of the Cross discovered while in prison?

**Go and sell all you have  
and give the money to the  
poor ... then come and  
follow me.**

**Matthew 19:21**

This month our series, *Night vision*, examines the contrasts of light and darkness in our culture, in scripture, and in how we understand the roles of light and dark. Our aim is to learn better how to flourish both in darker times and in the light of day. Plan to join us.

We have a new button on the homepage of our [website](#) - [Click here to watch](#). This button takes you to a viewer to allow you to join live or watch later in the week. We're also live on our newly launched [YouTube channel](#). 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 [connect@FlintAsbury.org](mailto:connect@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

- <sup>1</sup> Much of the content of this series is based on Barbara BrownTaylor's book: *Learning to Walk in the Dark: Because Sometimes God Shows Up at Night*. New York: Harper One, 2014..
- <sup>2</sup> St. John of the Cross. *Dark Night of the Soul (Dover Thrift Editions) Kindle Edition*. Dover Publications, 2003.
- <sup>3</sup> Ernest Hemingway. "A Clean, Well-Lighted Place." *The Complete Short Stories of Ernest Hemingway: The Finca Vigia Edition*. New York: Scribner, 1987.

Many equate feelings of *nada* with a lapse in faith. I know that I try to push ahead when these feelings of *nada* chase after me. I want to trust that God will deliver on whatever idea I have in my head that would restore lost feelings of “It does not get any better than this!” “Surely God will deliver if I only believe,” I think to myself.

But what lies waiting in the shadows? What might God reveal if I believe? Will lighting the shadow reveal *nada* — nothing?

Honestly, most of the anticipated and imagined disasters that come to me in my sleep turn out to be *nada*. While other, less anticipated shadows turn out to be significant.

In last week’s message, I talked about going out into the darkness of night to count the stars. But what about those nights when the stars are obscured? What if we live in one of those places where the night sky isn’t visible? Would Abraham’s life turned out differently had he looked up and saw *nada*?

Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them -what do you do?

Luke 15:4

Some of my favorite stories told by Jesus are about finding lost things. “Won’t a shepherd in charge of 100 sheep leave the 99 to search for the one that was lost?” Jesus asks. “Of course,” responds the shepherd. “You bet,” replies the parent. “I’m not so sure,” the voice in our head says.

Perhaps our answer depends on how the sheep became lost. Jesus does not say. I figure that the sheep wandered off the trail, losing sight of the others. But when I’m the lost sheep needing to be found, I’m hoping that Jesus is not qualifying His search based on how I came to be lost.

Sometimes we get lost simply by stopping — unable to take another step. We feel left out and left behind. And we panic.

But what if, instead of panicking, we simply embraced the moment with all of our senses? What if we paid attention to the beating of our hearts and the tightening of our back? What if we took in the sounds and smells surrounding us? What might we learn about the place we call lost? What if we simply walked in the darkness for a spell? What if we also wrestled with God?

God is both *nada* and everything because God cannot be bounded by what we know or experience.

Before there was something, there was God, and there was darkness. But as God sang light into existence, God divided our time into night and day. This is the rhythm that God’s song follows and we are invited to sing along.

This month our series, **Night vision**, examines the contrasts of light and darkness in our culture, in scripture, and in how we understand the roles of light and dark. Our aim is to learn better how to flourish both in darker times and in the light of day. Plan to join us.

We have a new button on the homepage of our **website** - **Click here to watch**. This button takes you to a viewer to allow you to join live or watch later in the week. We’re also live on our newly launched **YouTube channel**. 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 **connect@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

<sup>1</sup> Much of the content of this series is based on Barbara Brown Taylor’s book: *Learning to Walk in the Dark: Because Sometimes God Shows Up at Night*. New York: Harper One, 2014..

<sup>2</sup> Miriam Greenspan, *Healing through the dark emotions*. Boston, MA: Shambhala Publications, 2003.

<sup>3</sup> Ernest Hemingway. "A Clean, Well-Lighted Place." *The Complete Short Stories of Ernest Hemingway: The Finca Vigia Edition*. New York: Scribner, 1987.