

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

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

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Thirsty¹ (Confusing wells with water)



South Vietnamese civilians try to scale the 14-foot wall of the US Embassy in Saigon, hoping to reach evacuation helicopters as the last Americans departed from Vietnam on April 29, 1975 -- AP

Despite the resurgence of infections of COVID, the pandemic is not the lead news story on most days. So in some ways, the pandemic is a fill-in for a slow news

day, which comes a lot less than I prefer.

The chaotic departure of over 100 Thousand people as the last U.S. soldiers

departed Afghanistan dominated the headlines for most of the last week of August. That is until Hurricane Ida hit the southern coast. Followed by flooding in the subways and streets of New York City.

In his closing comments Thursday night, David Muir noted that the Labor Day weekend would be void of the usual backyard barbecue for thousands of people displaced from their homes. The suffering of others is difficult to set aside, even during times of celebration.

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Volume 2 Issue 5

September 5, 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.



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Thirsty¹ (Confusing wells with water) ..cont from page 1

In all of these cases, recovery takes decades, and the impact lasts for generations. And most of us observe, empathize, and pray from a safe distance. So for most of us, this Labor Day weekend is not that different from other Monday Holidays. If we're fortunate enough to have the day off, we may work on home projects, attend a parade, and a lot of us will light a barbecue.

As we begin episode one of our new series, *Holy envy*, it is essential to point out how current events connect with our subject matter and scripture. First, a little background on how Labor Day became a holiday unique to the United States.

As the name implies, Labor Day celebrates work. More specifically, this holiday focuses on the often uncelebrated, sometimes back-breaking work of those who build and keep our economy going. Historically, labor and immigration go hand-in-hand when finding workers willing and able to do jobs that require long hours and low wages. Whatever the reasons that bring strangers to this country, survival usually involves working, whether on or off the grid.

In a *New York Times* article, Karen Zraick reminds us that by the latter part of the 19th century, many laborers commonly worked 12-hour days with no Sabbath Day off. In addition, work conditions were often harsh, with little concern for the safety of workers. And child labor was common.²

Bringing workers together to stand up against oppressive work practices took courage, and success required capturing public sentiment. The first Labor Day parade took place in 1882 when approximately 10,000 workers marched from New York's City Hall to an uptown park where they held a picnic. Seen more as a "strike" than a celebration by employers, the workers took a significant risk that they might lose their job. Particularly since many of the participants carried signs demanding changes that included 8-hour workdays and higher wages.



Labor Day parade on Main Street in Buffalo in 1900...Library of Congress

President Grover Cleveland officially named the first Monday in September as an official U.S. Holiday in 1894. Since the new law was signed during a period of work disruption initiated by employees of Pullman Corporation in Chicago, this was seen as a political maneuver to appease the public. Nevertheless, the September date was

chosen over May 1st, commonly called International Workers Day, when other countries celebrate working and workers.

Work in the United States is often the great equalizer in bringing diverse groups of people together to get something done. And the history of religious diversity in our country is a part of the history of work.

In her book, *Holy Envy*, Barbara Brown Taylor writes that the first Muslim to come to the new land was Estevancio of Azamor. A guide initially from Morocco, he landed in Florida with an expedition from Spain in 1528. Thousands more soon followed. By some estimates, one-third of Africans brought to this country as slaves were Muslim. They were later joined by Muslims from Europe, the Middle East, and India.

According to Wikipedia, the first mosque appeared in Michigan in 1926 in Highland Park, Michigan. The Dearborn Mosque, which appeared in 1937, claims to be the 2nd mosque built in the United States. However, according to the Harvard University Pluralism Project, Muslims started to build mosques in Maine, North Dakota, Michigan, and Indiana as early as 1915. Before building Mosques, prayer took place in private homes or rented public spaces, which eventually grew into Islamic associations.

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)



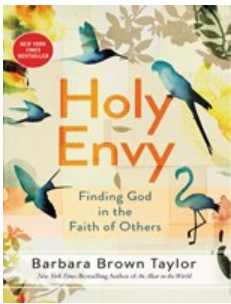
- Sept 6 Mon
- Sept 7 Tues 10:00am-12:30pm
 Food/Water Distribution
- Sept 8 Wed 12Noon Pastor Book Club
 11am-12N Food Giveaway at
 South Flint Soup Kitchen
- Sept 9 Thu
- Sept 10 Fri
- Sept 11 Sat 12Noon Food Not Bombs
- Sept 12 Sun 10:30am
 New Beginnings
 Contemporary Worship

(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



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 McDaniel | 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-

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

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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

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](#).

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



Holy Envy ... *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.

Pastor Tommy

¹ 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?

Six Hindu men from India marched in the annual July 4th parade in Salem, Massachusetts, in 1851. They were employees of the East India Marine Society. The first Hindu Temple appeared in San Francisco in 1906 by the Vedanta Society. Based on a particular Hindu philosophy, this group was first organized in the United States by Swami Vivekananda, who spent two years speaking at numerous events around the country. His 1893 address at the first World Parliament of Religions in Chicago was so popular that he became a favorite guest speaker. This kept him in this country for a couple of years beyond his original plans.

It's believed that Buddhists began showing up during the mid-1800s working in various capacities as miners, loggers, fishermen, farmers, and construction workers. By 1860, ten percent of Californians were of Chinese descent. Montana experienced similar growth. Some of the earliest Buddhist temples appeared in the late 19th century.

The first Jewish Synagogue in the United States was constructed in New York during the 17th century, a decade after 23 Sephardic Jews arrived in New Amsterdam from Brazil in 1654. By 1820, the largest Jewish community in the United States was found in South Carolina, likely due to a 1790 law that gave Jewish men the right to vote and hold office.

Not all immigrants were welcomed with open arms. For example, the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1862 stopped most immigration from China. The Immigration Act of 1917 added exclusions for persons from India, the Middle East, and other Asian countries. A national-origins quota was made into law by the Johnson-Reed Act of 1924, which reduced the number of immigrants from Southern and Eastern Europe to "preserve the ideal of American homogeneity." Some of the laws were repealed in 1943 and 1952, with more extensive revisions adopted with the Immigration Act of 1965.

A professor of world religions, Barbara Brown Taylor, recalled a comment from one student who said, "If you really are a Christian, then you are going to help us see what is wrong with these other religions?" If this wasn't her aim, the young man planned to drop her class. In the mind of this student, being Christian required absolute loyalty to the truths he believed and defending them against any and all rivals. So he dropped her class after the first session.

I'm wondering if her student plans to celebrate Labor Day this year? If so, will his celebration be limited to workers who attend his church?

This brings me back to the end of the 20-year war in Afghanistan. Sadly, If I were writing this article during my senior year of college, my illustration might be the ending of the Vietnam War. The pictures of thousands of people trying to hitch a ride to the United States before the last U.S. Soldier left look familiar.

The Honorable Phan Quan Tue writing last month in the *Washington Post*, shares his painful memories of desperation as he recalled his family of four, including his pregnant wife and two small children sitting on the floor of a C-130. The former Immigration Judge described the scene as "A moment of collective humiliation, to have to leave one's country under these circumstances. The irony was that we knew we were being saved by the very same foreign government that did not stand behind its commitment to its allies in South Vietnam."³

After twenty-one years, the presence of U.S. Troops in Vietnam was finally coming to an end. I remember it well because military withdrawal began a couple years earlier and kept me from being drafted and potentially serving in Vietnam as my brother did a few years before. It was a war that the U.S. couldn't win. Despite the overwhelming differences in the size and might of the two enemies, the North Vietnamese were well supported by our larger enemies. This is one of many striking similarities to the circumstances surrounding our 20-year involvement in Afghanistan.

Life groups questions & notes:

Those who drink this water will get thirsty again, 14 but those who drink the water that I will give them will never be thirsty again.

John 4:1-30 (GNT)

NOTES FROM WORSHIP

QUESTIONS FOR LIFE GROUPS

1. Read John 4:1-30. Is this story familiar to you? If not, read this story substituting well for religion and water for loving God. Any change in what this text is telling you about God?
2. Read the article in this week's Circuit Rider, *Thirsty*. In what ways is Labor Day a holiday for you? Do you think about the celebration of labor on Labor Day? Do you know co-workers or neighbors who have different religions? What have they shared with you about their beliefs? What are your views regarding the arrival of refugees from Afghanistan? What are your concerns?
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**



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!



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- TRY OUR WEEKLY VEGGIE BOX FOR \$10.00 -

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

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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 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

- ¹ 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..
- ² St. John of the Cross. *Dark Night of the Soul (Dover Thrift Editions) Kindle Edition*. Dover Publications, 2003.
- ³ Ernest Hemingway. "A Clean, Well-Lighted Place." *The Complete Short Stories of Ernest Hemingway: The Finca Vigia Edition*. New York: Scribner, 1987.

That same year, the judge and his young family would find a mixed bag of hospitality and hostility towards their presence. Phan Quan Tue initially worked in numerous low-paying jobs. But he eventually attended law school, served as an immigration attorney, and failed in his bid for election to the U.S. House of Representatives as a Republican candidate in 2014. The sources I found on Phan Quan Tue only stated that he "moved" to the United States without mentioning the circumstances of his family's mode of transportation and status as refugees.

Barbara Brown Taylor offers this warning to her students of Religion 101 that is just as important to you and me. She writes that "Religious illiteracy is a luxury they can no longer afford."

As a student of the historical Jesus of Nazareth, the parallels between 1st Century Palestine and the present never ceases to amaze me. And as a Christian who believes that Jesus is also God living among people, His teachings mean much more to me than the wisdom that I find in thousands of other sources.

Nevertheless, I appreciate Barbara's distinction between the metaphors of living water and the well. I know and appreciate the nuances of the well I depend on, and I've come to rely on drawing enough nourishment with each pump of the handle.

But I've also learned the importance of respecting that more people know a different well as their source of living water than

know the well I count on. So navigating between my calling to share my own experiences with Jesus and God's insistent that I treat each person I meet as crucial to God is challenging at times.

One of my favorite stories about Jesus occurred when He was traveling among foreigners. Stopping at a village well in Samaria, a woman comes to the well to draw water. The woman is puzzled when Jesus asks her to share her water. People from the place where Jesus came from didn't spend time with Samaritans. Moreover, a Jewish man would never speak to a strange woman.

Those who drink this water
will get thirsty again, but
those who drink the water
that I will give them will never
be thirsty again.

John 4:13-14

Jesus tells the woman about water that gives life to the thirsty. "Give me some," the woman responds, perhaps with a bit of attitude and disbelief.

Most of us Christians interpret this story as an example of effective evangelism. We emphasize that the only well where this living water can be found is the well we know. But Jesus was in Samaria and assured the woman that living water can be found wherever we happen to be at the time.

Perhaps we sometimes confuse the water with the well.

In this month's series, *Holy Envy*, we look for God in the faith of others. In doing so, we expect to experience holy envy from time to time. That is, we anticipate once in a while wondering whether the water might be a bit sweeter coming out of our neighbor's well. I anticipate that the outcome will be a greater understanding and knowledge of our own well. 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](#).

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¹ Much of the content of this series is based on Barbara Brown Taylor's book: Barbara Brown Taylor. *Holy Envy: Finding God in the Faith of Others*. Harper One, 2019.

² Karen Zraick. "What Is Labor Day? A History of the Workers' Holiday," © *New York Times*, Sept. 3, 2021.

³ Phan Quang Tue. "I came to the U.S. from Saigon in 1975. Here's what Afghan refugees can learn from my family's experiences," © *Washington Post*, August 24, 2021.