

ASBURY CIRCUIT RIDER

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FEBRUARY 16, 2025

Redeemed (The unlikely)



Diversity, equity, and inclusion programs were first implemented in businesses and government hiring practices following the civil rights movement.

A recent New York Times article cited a webpage on the U.S. Department of Labor website that defined diversity

as acknowledging how people differ. These differences “include race, sex, gender, age, sexual orientation, disability, socioeconomic status, religious beliefs, and more.” The webpage was removed two days after the new administration officially started.

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Mary (Jesus follower)



We begin our new series, *Friends*, as a precursor to our next series, which will examine the people and systems that chose to become enemies of Jesus. In doing so, we cannot help but notice the contrast as we consider current circumstances.

Our companion devotional guide began with the profound comparison that “every follower of Jesus has a not-so-great ‘before.’” This is a time before meeting Jesus that, in some minds, should disqualify us from consideration.

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**EVERYONE HAVE
A WONDERFUL
AND SAFE
WEEK!**

DONATE

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Redeemed (The unlikely) *cont. from pg 1*

Journalist Neil Vigdor, who reported from every battle-ground state during the last election, writes that DEI became a four-letter word for conservatives and a wedge issue. The new administration pledged to eliminate DEI programs altogether. DEI programs expanded following the 2020 murder of George Floyd. His brutal murder “ushered in a national reckoning over racial discrimination that brought sweeping changes to many powerful institutions and a renewed emphasis on D.E.I. initiatives.”

In an interview on PBS, Shaun Harper stated that eliminating DEI is “Bad for our democracy” because it increases polarization and divisiveness. Moreover, Harper anticipates that these changes “will cost the American taxpayers millions, perhaps billions of dollars as many Americans are experiencing harassment, discrimination, and abuse,” problems that DEI policies and programs helped protect against.

Speaking of diversity, this week’s devotional readings encourage us to read about Jesus inviting His “motley crew of misfits” to become His disciples. Our authors remind us

that Simon Peter was often emotional and impulsive, and he was also afraid of things. Nathanael was certain that no one coming from Nazareth could be great.

None came with as much baggage as Matthew, however. In Luke and Mark, he is referred to as Levi. His vocation is associated with dishonesty and a willingness to exploit friends and neighbors. Matthew is a “money-grubbing tax collector.”

Amanda Jenkins and Kristen Hendricks remind us that Matthew’s credentials “was exactly the kind of self-reliant, succeed-at-all-costs, follow-your-own-truth ethos our world goes bananas over.”

But Matthew left his lucrative past-life behind when He met Jesus. In *The Chosen* series, you see him in the background in earlier scenes. He’s curious about Jesus but keeping his distance.

All three synoptic gospels tell us that Matthew jumped at the chance for redemption, anxious to leave his past behind and follow Jesus. Afterwards, Jesus and others eat supper together at Matthew’s home, where Jesus is condemned by those who find it disgraceful that he would sit at the same table with “those people.”

Our worship band often sings a song about the diversity of persons invited to the Lord’s Supper. A ritual we call Holy Communion. The song begins with the reality, “We all start on the outside. The outside looking in. This is where grace begins.”

Jesus was having a meal in Levi’s house. Many tax collectors and other outcasts followed Him, joining Jesus and His disciples at the table.

Mark 2:13-17

The bridge names and describes the diverse crowd expected, including thieves, doublers, heroes and cowards, prisoners and soldiers, the young and the old, the hungry and the thirsty, the last and the first, the paupers, princes, all who have failed, dreamers, those who suffer, those who grieve, the chained and the free, those who follow, and those who lead. Anyone who has been let down, those who feel lost, and all who have been labelled right or wrong are included.

IN OUR PRAYERS

Virginia Bigger
 Sylvia Pittman
 Mirium Watson

Jonathon Misner
 Terrance Williams



FRIENDS AND LOVED ONES WHO ARE
HOMEBOUND OR IN NURSING CARE

Dean Lamoreaux Norma Buzzard
 Nancy Elston

COMING UP THIS WEEK
FEBRUARY 17 - 23

- | | | | |
|--------|-----|-----------------|---|
| Feb 17 | Mon | 6:00pm | Leadership Team Meeting |
| Feb 18 | Tue | 10am-until gone | Produce will be available each week, along with canned goods, until further notice |
| | | 10:00am-2:00pm | Immunization Clinic— from the Genesee County Health Department— at Asbury Fellowship Hall |
| Feb 19 | Wed | | |
| Feb 20 | Thu | | |
| Feb 21 | Fri | | |
| Feb 22 | Sat | | |
| Feb 23 | 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](#).)

Upcoming Worship Series "Who Dunnit?"

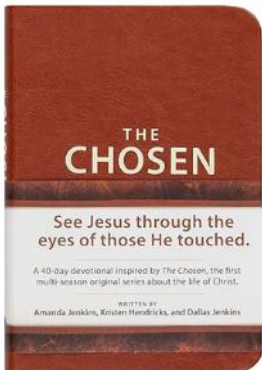


During this year's Lent observance, we, along with several other area UM Churches, are participating in a series titled *Who Dunnit? The people who wanted Jesus dead* (see article). The series begins after Ash Wednesday on Sunday, March 9.

So, in preparation, our February series will focus on the friends of Jesus in our series titled *Friends - the people who wanted Jesus alive*.

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Book Club News



We began 2025 with a worship series titled *Seconds*. Our last episode is on Sunday, January 26. As our companion

book, we used *The Price of a Second* by Dr. Leonid Altshuler, a board-certified psychiatrist and

writer, who writes under the pen name Leonid Alt. Our focus was on cherishing every moment of life and loving others.

We continue 2025 with a devotional book based on the first season of the TV Series *The Chosen*.

Our companion book for our new series is *The Chosen: 40 Days with Jesus*, which invites us to

encounter Jesus the way his followers did.

The followers of Jesus in the Gospels have a lot in common with us. Like them, we also had a not-so-great "before." In the Gospels, we meet a brash fisherman, a pious religious leader, and a demon-possessed woman, just to mention a few. We also meet a tax collector who exploits others.

In all cases, Jesus saw beyond their brokenness and offered forgiveness. And this was just the beginning. Jesus transforms the lives of all who follow Him.

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Cyndi Worship Leader
Anthony & Jim Ushers
Jonathon & Terrance Production Team
Yasheah & Mirium Nursery
Christine Cafe

Upcoming Worship Series — “Who Durnit?”

In researching companion books, I checked in with friend and colleague Adam Hamilton at the Church of the Resurrection in Kansas City, Missouri (and Kansas). Although he hasn't written a book specifically on this topic, his church is already doing a series on it, which began in January. The series is based on the popular made-for-TV series *Chosen*. We will follow their lead but with our own version and schedule.

*We rejoice and delight in you.
We will praise your love more
than wine. How right they are
to adore you!*

Song of Songs 1:4

For a companion book, we'll use a 40-day devotional guide based on *Chosen* (see Book Club article). We'll begin reading these daily devotions on Monday, January 27, but our series does not start until February 9. We have a guest speaker on February 2, so we will celebrate communion on the second Sunday in February.

Here is the outline of our series:

<u>Title</u>	<u>Sunday</u>	<u>Reading</u>
Guest Preacher	February 2	Days 1-7
Mary	February 9	Days 8-14
Afraid	February 16	Days 15-21
Tbd	February 23	Days 22-28
Tbd	March 2	Days 29-35
Week of Ash Wednesday		Days 36-40

I pray that you will join us each Sunday morning at 10:30 a.m. We share our weekly episodes on [Facebook](#) and our [YouTube channel](#), and we go live at 10:30 a.m. You can find these links, along with more information about us, or join our live broadcast on our [website, FlintAsburyChurch.org](#).


Pastor Tommy

Amanda Jenkins, Kristen Hendricks, and Dallas Jenkins. The Chosen: 40 Days with Jesus. © Savage, MN: BroadStreet Publishing, 2019.

“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

LIFE GROUP QUESTIONS & MORE:

Jesus was having a meal in Levi's house. Many tax collectors and other outcasts followed Him, joining Jesus and His disciples at the table.

Mark 2:13-17

NOTES FROM WORSHIP

QUESTIONS FOR LIFE GROUPS:

1. Read Mark 2:13-17. As you read this story, do you relate more to the tax collectors, the other outcasts, or the disciples? Why?
2. Read the article in this week's *Circuit Rider* titled *Redeemed*. Describe how Jesus has redeemed you. Were you an outcast or an insider before? What are your views on diversity, equity, and inclusion? Why?
3. How can your group members help you be more receptive to hearing and understanding the Word of God this week? Pray for each other to have the Holy Spirit bless you with more courage.



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11:00am-12 Noon at South Flint Soup Kitchen,
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Any questions, please call 239-3427 or 235-0016 or
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Each of the forty devotions offers scripture, a glimpse into a Gospel story, prayer suggestions, and questions that help you deepen your relationship with Christ. You're invited to see Jesus through the eyes of those who knew him best and explore the backstories of people like Mary Magdalene, Peter, Matthew, Nicodemus, and others.

If you choose to follow along, I suggest beginning day one's reading the Monday after our current series ends (January 27) and using the following schedule:

<u>Sundays</u>	<u>Devotional Readings</u>
February 2	Days 1-7
February 9	Days 8-14
February 16	Days 15-21
February 23	Days 22-28
March 2	Days 29-35
Week of Ash Wednesday	Days 36-40

We will have a few books available for purchase, copies are available through Amazon or ChristianBooks.com for \$6.74 for the paperback edition. The price is \$9.99 for the Kindle version.

Our Book Club does not meet as a group. However, our weekly messages reference that week's chapters. You can anticipate spoiler alerts unless you keep up with the pace. You can purchase your own copy or visit your local library.

You can contact our office with questions by phone or simply type your question or enter a prayer request on our website's homepage — FlintAsburyChurch.org.

Pastor Tommy

Cash or checks can be sent to/dropped off at South Flint Soup Kitchen, 3410 Fenton Road, Flint, MI 48507. Please make checks out to South Flint Soup Kitchen!

Online at www.mightycause.com/feedflint

Donations can be dropped off Monday-Friday 11am-12Noon. Calling ahead is not necessary, but our needs change frequently, so calling ahead of time is a good idea!

Give time! We need volunteers!!! Volunteers arrive at 9:30am and are done by 12:30pm. Tasks include handing out lunches, assisting in the Angel Closet, light cleaning, putting together items to pass out to clients, and more.

Refer people!!

Questions??? Call 810-239-3427

or email southflintsoupkitchen@gmail.com

In fact, anyone who hears this song is invited to the table of Jesus Christ. Wow! Talk about diversity, equity, and inclusion!

The second verse invites us to “Come meet this motley crew of misfits. These liars and these thieves.” The verse concludes with “There’s no one unwelcome here.”

What if Jesus decided to eliminate DEI programs in how He chooses people to follow Him? Who would be left out?

The truth is, no one is left out who is willing to leave their past behind and is willing to sit and have a conversation about the truth of the gospel.

All who follow Jesus know that they’re among the formerly left out.

You can join us each Sunday in person or online by clicking the button on our [website’s](#) homepage. [Click here to watch](#). This button takes you to our [YouTube channel](#). You can find more information about us on our website at FlintAsburyChurch.org.

This is a reminder that we publish this newsletter called the *Circuit Rider* each week. You can request this publication by email. Send a request to FlintAsburyUMC@gmail.com 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

Parts of our series are inspired by The Reverend Adam Hamilton’s series “The People Jesus Loved.” © Church of the Resurrection, 2025. And by Amanda Jenkins, Kristen Hendricks, and Dallas Jenkins. *The Chosen: 40 Days with Jesus*. © Savage, MN: BroadStreet Publishing, 2019. Neil Vigdor. “*What’s Next for D.E.I. With Trump Back in Office?*.” © New York Times, Jan. 22, 2025. Retrieved from: [link](#)

.John Yang, Ali Rogin, Kaisha Youn, and Zoie Lambert. “*The history of diversity, equity and inclusion efforts in America.*” © PBS News, Feb 8, 2025. Retrieved from: [link](#)

Ben Glover, Ben McDonald, and Dave Frey. “Come to the Table.” © 9t One Songs; Ariose Music; Mike Curb Music; Pencil Prophet Publishing; Run Run Milo. CCLI License # 1180758. CCLI Song # 7036352.

Fortunately, Jesus sees through our brokenness. He sees who He created us to be and recognizes that we simply need help to overcome the burdens we carry and eventually get past our past.

It's amazing how easy it is to reach a point where we believe we're unredeemable. A place where we're beyond the limits of grace. A lot of us faced situations too early in our lifetime that led us to the false conclusion that we're unworthy of God's love. Many of us learned that love must be earned only to discover we can't afford it or can never quite make the grade.

We see this in some of our political leaders. Perhaps feeling like they had to earn love motivated them to seek the public respect that is often found in holding a position with power over others. Certainly, receiving more votes than someone else for a powerful position is a huge ego boost.

We can only guess at the motivations behind destructive behavior and a need to avenge anyone who dared question the capabilities of a public figure. But we know one thing for sure. Such behavior doesn't reflect the teachings of Jesus.

God does not call us to support brokenness that does not reflect love and mercy.

Never the less, as we'll see in our next series, even some who claim faithfulness to God reflect the opposite in their actions.

The reality that we all fall short is comforting but doesn't excuse us from returning the love and grace God offers us by treating others with compassion.

Jesus surrounded himself with a diverse group of individuals that reflected the community around Him. He saw through their differences and loved through their deficiencies.

Luke tells us that both men and women were among His closest followers. But He only names a few of the women, including Mary, Joanna, and Susanna.

Mary was known as Magdalene, likely since she came from the village of Magdala, located on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee. Perhaps she met Jesus on His way to Capernaum.

We're told that Mary was possessed by seven demons, which Jesus helped her shed. The idea of demons was a catch-all for anything that couldn't be explained. Demons were likely blamed for emotional challenges, including depression.

Demons had voices, according to scripture. We're all familiar with the idea of hearing voices. Some of us hear voices cheering us on, while others hear condemnation. I suspect most of us hear a mixture of mostly familiar voices.

How we respond matters. Some voices lead otherwise good people toward destructive behaviour, hate, or a lack of compassion. When people do destructive things, I often wonder if they are responding to inner voices of condemnation.

The twelve disciples traveled with Jesus, as did some women who had been healed of evil spirits and diseases, including Mary (who was called Magdalene), from whom seven demons had been driven out.

Luke 8:1-3

The gospel writers don't tell us much about Mary from Magdala. Only Luke tells us she was an early follower. But they all mention her near the end of their stories. She was with Mary, the Mother of Jesus, at the cross when Jesus was executed. Mary was also the first to see Jesus after the resurrection.

The most powerful story about Mary from Magdala comes near the end of John's Gospel. Mary went to the tomb by herself and saw that it was empty. Jesus appeared to Mary, but she didn't recognize Him, mistaking Him for the groundskeeper.

However, when Jesus says her name, Mary realizes Jesus is alive.

Mary from Magdala continues to be a metaphor for the various ways that people come to believe the stories told by the gospel writers. Some hear Jesus call their name, and others feel a pull toward belief.

Whatever your story, Jesus knows your past. More importantly, Jesus knows who He created you to be and loves you, despite your past and whether or not you choose to love Him back.

You can join us each Sunday in person or online by clicking the button on our [website's](#) homepage. [Click here to watch.](#) This button takes you to our [YouTube channel!](#) You can find more information about us on our website at [FlintAsburyChurch.org.](http://FlintAsburyChurch.org)

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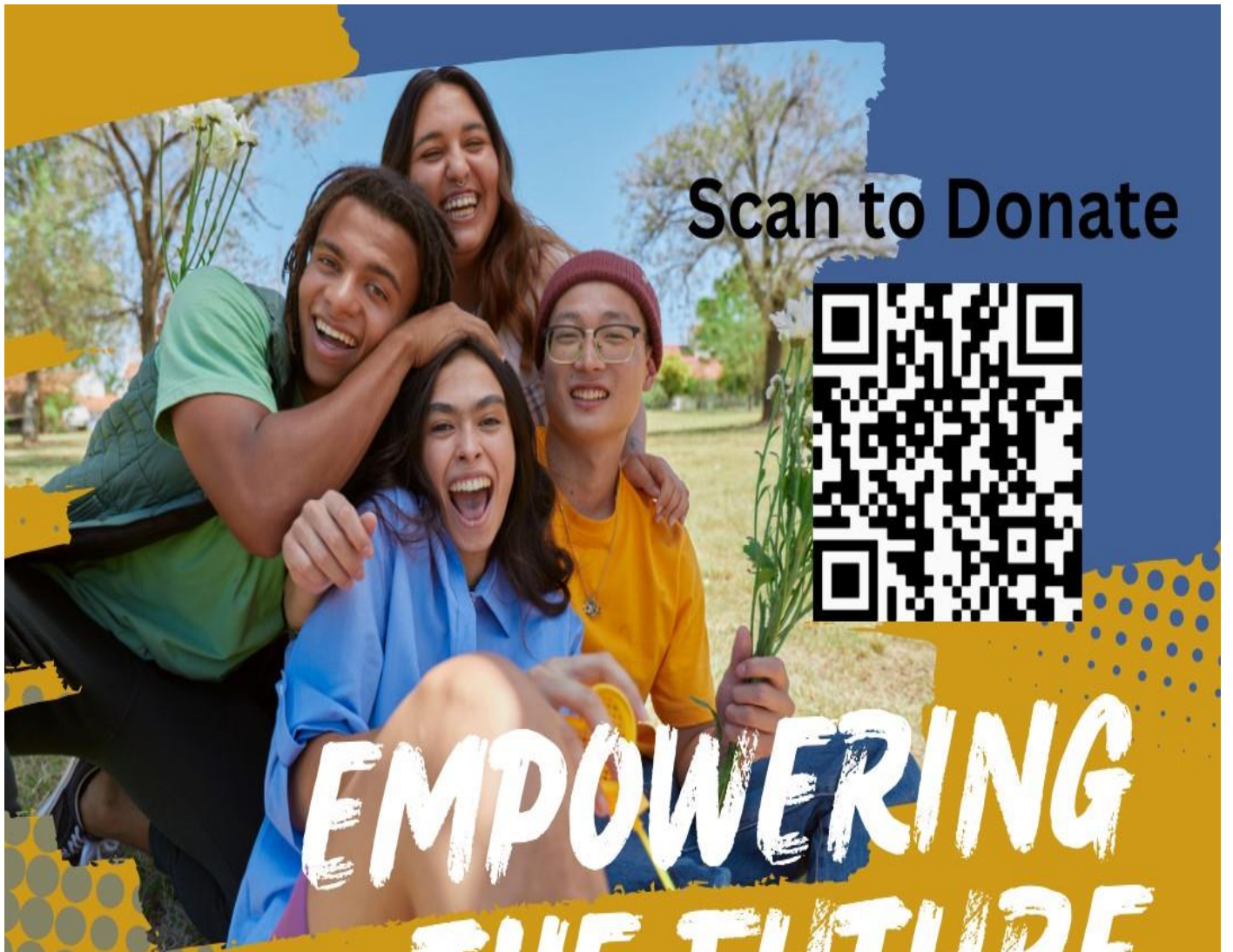
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In Sunday school when we asked our teachers, “Why did Jesus have to die?” they answered, “Jesus died to save us.”

Maybe they gave us that simplistic answer because it seemed safer than saying, “Jesus died because he challenged the powers of this world.”

In this series we will learn about the people who wanted Jesus dead, and we will discover that God is calling us still to resist the powers that conspired put Jesus on the cross.

SERIES OVERVIEW

(Italics indicate pulpit swap Sunday)

March 9	<i>The King</i>	Matthew 2:16-18
<i>March 16</i>	<i>The Neighbors</i>	<i>Luke 4:20-30</i>
March 23	The Religious Folk	Mark 3:1-6
<i>March 30</i>	<i>The Clergy</i>	<i>Luke 21:37-22:2</i>
April 6	The Disciple	Luke 22:3-6
April 13	The Governor	John 19:16b-22

A NOTE ON ASH WEDNESDAY

Ash Wednesday presents an opportunity to remember that our struggle is not against flesh and blood. In this series we will focus on people who attempted to cut short the ministry of Jesus, but those people represented, in one way or another, the spiritual powers of this world that Jesus encountered in the wilderness. The people who tried to kill Jesus were consumed by selfish desires - the desire for comfort, the desire for power, the desire for glory. Matthew 4:1-11 reveals why so many people believed that Jesus had to die: he refused to play the game, and in doing so he exposed the players and threatened to topple the “winners.”