

ASBURY CIRCUIT RIDER

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The Religious Folk (Who Dunit?)



The gospels are filled with stories in which Jesus faces off with the Pharisees. They are his most consistent foils, which is odd, considering that Jesus and the Pharisees had a lot in common. In fact, they had so much in common that some scholars have suggested that Jesus was a Pharisee.

The story of the Pharisees starts hundreds of years before Jesus, just after the end of the Babylonian Exile. The Persian King Xerxes conquered the Babylonians and, in doing so, set the captives free. He encouraged the Jews to return to Jerusalem, to restore their city, and to build a new temple. He did not, however, allow them to establish a new king.

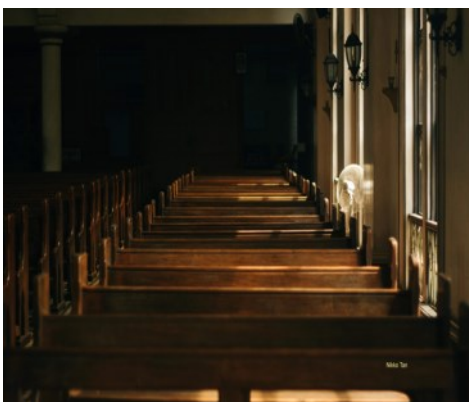
**EVERYONE HAVE
A WONDERFUL
WEEK!!
WELCOME
SPRING!!**

DONATE

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The Clergy (Who Dunit?)



Why did Jesus have to die?" There are a few scripted answers to this question, a plethora of theological justifications, and perhaps just as many explanations and speculations. Perhaps "why" is too heavy. Likewise, "Who dunit?" is too simplistic without nuance.

And that's the point of this series? We plan to dive into the nuances surrounding the circumstances of His murder. Oh, is "murder" too provocative?

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Without a king on the throne, the new temple and its priests became the most powerful force in Jewish culture. Not everyone supported the priestly leaders, however. The Jewish people had managed to keep the faith alive for decades, even without a temple. The Jews left behind in Judea focused on gatherings in local houses of prayer (which later became synagogues). The Jews in exile kept the faith alive by emphasizing adherence to the law.

Without a system of temple sacrifices, every child of Abraham could be a sort of living temple, offering their own heart in sacrifice to God. When the exile ended, there were those who wanted to hold onto this idea of the priesthood of all believers.

In time, two major parties emerged: the Sadducees (who represented the ruling elite and the temple priests) and the Pharisees (who were closer to the common people and emphasized the Law). The Pharisees and Sadducees were often hostile to each other, and they had bitter disagreements about important points of Jewish belief. Jesus, as far as we can tell, mostly sided with the Pharisees.

For example, the Pharisees believed in the resurrection of the dead, while the Sadducees did not. The Sadducees were defenders of the temple system, while Jesus criticized the corruption of the temple leaders. We also see that Jesus had followers among the Pharisees, including Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea.

Why, then, did so many Pharisees oppose Jesus? The answer might lie in the meaning of the word "Pharisee." Most scholars believe that "Pharisee" comes from the Hebrew word *parush*, meaning "separated, set apart." Many Pharisees set themselves apart from Gentiles (unlike the ruling elite, who embraced the Hellenistic culture of the Roman Empire).

Jesus said to them, "Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do harm, to save life or to kill?" But they were silent... The Pharisees went out and immediately held counsel with the Herodians against Jesus and plotted how to destroy Him.

Mark 3:1-6

They set themselves apart from unclean things and from Jews who did not strictly practice

the Law. And this idea of separation, apartness, and purity would put the Pharisees on a collision course with Jesus.

Jesus refused to set himself apart. In Mark 2, the first recorded conflict between Jesus and the Pharisees happens when they object to his practice of eating with sinners and tax collectors. In the parable of the Good Samaritan, Jesus demonstrates that a desire to avoid unclean people and things can cause us to stumble in following the law of love and compassion.

By the time we get to Matthew 12, some of the Pharisees are already looking for an opportunity to undermine Jesus and end his ministry. They plan to do this by accusing Jesus of violating the law of the Sabbath.

Jesus sees what they are up to and exposes their plot with a pointed question: "Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do harm, to save life or to fill?" the silence of the Pharisees reveals that they know the correct answer, but their hearts are so hardened that they no longer care about the Law for its own sake.

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 MARCH 17- 23

Welcome Pastor Ruth VanderSande to Asbury UMC!!



Pastor Ruth was born in Goshen, IN to Rev. Dennis and Dr. Sherri Irish. In 2017 she married her husband Elijah and later they welcomed two children, Lily and Finley. She graduated from Spring Arbor University with a Bachelors in Pastoral Ministry in 2015. In 2018 she graduated from Asbury Theological Seminary with an MDIV. Ruth was then ordained as an elder in the United Methodist church in 2022. Prior to coming to Flushing UMC she has served at Macon UMC, Britton Grace UMC and Midland First UMC.

Mar 17	Mon	6:00pm	Leadership Team
Mar 18	Tue	10am-until gone	Produce will be available each week, along with canned goods, until further notice
Mar 19	Wed		
Mar 20	Thu	1ST DAY OF SPRING!!!!	
Mar 21	Fri		
Mar 22	Sat		
Mar 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 Dunit?"

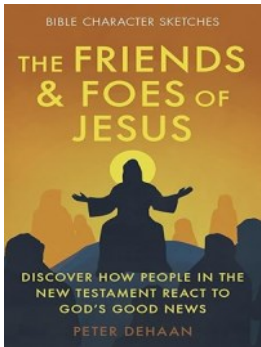


During this year's Lent observance, we, along with several other area UM Churches, are participating in a series titled *Who Dunit? The people who wanted Jesus dead* (see article). The series begins after Ash Wednesday on Sunday, March 9.

In Sunday school, when we asked our teachers, "Why did Jesus have to die?" they usually answered, "Jesus died to save us." This is a really confusing, although truthful answer.

Perhaps they gave us that simplistic answer because it seemed safer than saying, "Jesus died because he challenged the powers of this world." Page 5

Book Club News



For our Who dunit? Series, we will use *The Friends and Foes of Jesus* for a companion book by Dr. Peter DeHaan.

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 to put Jesus on the cross.

Our author says he often makes religious people squirm, but spiritual seekers cheer. He is not trying to be provocative, he says, but he seeks truth. And the truth makes some people uncomfortable.

Throughout history, some people have called Jesus Lord, while others called Him a great prophet. And some called him a

troublemaker and nailed him to a cross.

The Jesus of the New Testament is both human and divine. He was adored but also feared, and He was both meek and powerful. We cannot sum up Jesus by a word or simple phrase. His impact on world history and on the spiritual lives of believers today can't be overstated.

In our companion book, you'll learn about the closest followers and most outspoken rivals of Jesus, from the High Priest who hated Jesus to the beloved disciple who laid his head on Jesus's breast at the Last Supper.

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Terrance Williams Arts Center Mgr
Venus McBeth South Flint Soup Kitchen

Leadership in Worship & Service

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

Upcoming Worship Series — *“Who Dunnit?”*

In *Who Dunnit?*, we focus on people who attempted to shorten Jesus's ministry. After all, they represent, in one way or another, the spiritual powers of this world that Jesus encountered in the wilderness.

Let me explain. After His baptism, Jesus spent 40 days in the wilderness, where Satan attempted to exploit His human weaknesses. During Lent, we are asked to reflect on our temptations and how God may call us to respond.

The people who tried to kill Jesus were consumed by selfish desires. The desire for comfort, desire for power, and desire glory. Many believed Jesus had to die because He refused to play the game, and in doing so, he exposed the hypocrisy of those who claimed to know God and live accordingly.

So the Pharisees left the synagogue and met at once with some of Herod's party, and they made plans to kill Jesus.

Mark 3:6

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 to put Jesus on the cross.


We'll use *The Friends and Foes of Jesus* for a companion book by Dr. Peter DeHaan. Our author says he often makes religious people squirm, but spiritual seekers cheer. He's not trying to be provocative, he says, but he seeks truth. And the truth makes some people uncomfortable.

Reading from our companion book is divided into mostly equal pages each week. Since our companion book is a whirlwind tour of dozens of names, our series won't connect directly. However, we'll have an opportunity to consider how the messages each week inform our understanding of each person's view of Jesus.

“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 said to them, “Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do harm, to save life or to kill?” But they were silent...The Pharisees went out and immediately held counsel with the Herodians against Jesus and plotted how to destroy Him.

Mark 3:1-6

NOTES FROM WORSHIP

QUESTIONS FOR LIFE GROUPS:

1. Read Mark 3:1-6. What strikes you about this text? Can you see both sides? Explain. Read the article in this week’s Circuit Rider titled The Religious Folk. Consider how we would feel if Jesus were to stand in the pulpit today and say, “When I said, ‘Love your neighbor,’ I especially meant the ones who are wrong, the ones who don’t get it, the ones who stubbornly refuse to see the light. For the sake of the kingdom, are you willing to let go of your need to always be right?”
2. 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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Donate Now



More Information :



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funding@flintasbury.org

Since our series focuses more on groups of people than individuals, although a few are named, our weekly messages generally won't follow the companion book. However, our companion book offers excellent insights into the various individuals in the bible and their connections with Jesus.

If you choose to follow along, I suggest using the following schedule:

<u>Sundays</u>	<u>Devotional Readings</u>	
March 9	1 - 16	1st Sunday in Lent
March 16	17 - 29	2nd Sunday in Lent
March 23	30 - 42	3rd Sunday in Lent
March 30	43 - 58	4th Sunday in Lent
April 6	59 - 75	5th Sunday in Lent
April 13	76 - 87	Palm Sunday
April 20	88 - 100	Easter Sunday

We'll have a few books available for purchase, copies are available through Amazon for \$15.99 for the paperback edition. The price is \$9.99 for the Kindle version. This book may be available at the local library.

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

Peter DeHaan. The Friends and Foes of Jesus: Discover How People in the New Testament React to God's Good News. MI: Rock Rooster Books, 2019.

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

The Law at this moment is only a means to an end, a tool they can use to condemn Jesus - why? Because they believe He is wrong. They believe He is loving the wrong people, they believe He is living his faith in the wrong way, they believe he is interpreting Scripture wrongly, and that idea of Jesus' wrongness is so powerful and so upsetting that it makes the Pharisees want to kill him.

If that response on the part of the Pharisees seems extreme - if it's hard to believe that people might want to kill somebody for the crime of being wrong - then consider how much of social media consists of people saying to one another, "I believe you're wrong and that makes me angry."

Consider how many wars have happened (and are happening), how many schisms have splintered the church, and how many friendships have ended because people said, "If that's the way you see it, then there is no place for you in my heart."

Consider how we would feel if Jesus were to stand in the pulpit today and say, "When I said, "Love your neighbor," I especially meant the ones who are wrong, the ones who don't get it, the ones who stubbornly refuse to see the light. For the sake of the kingdom, are you willing to let go of your need to always be right?"

Rev Jeremy Peters

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 Connect - choose [Newsletters.](#)

Pastor Tommy

Our series was inspired by The Reverend Jeremy Peters of Court Street United Methodist Church, Flint, Michigan in collaboration with several United Methodist Pastors serving the Flint area.

Our opening answer to the question of who dunit is "Jesus died because he challenged the powers of this world." This answer is rational and consistent with historical experience. Those who challenge power oftentimes fail in their attempts, and many end up dead. Power is an addictive elixir, and there is no greater power than to determine whether another person lives or dies.

The most powerful person during Jesus' ministry was Caesar, the dictator in charge of the Roman Empire. Arguably, the President of the United States is similarly powerful in modern times, although power is shared among numerous world leaders.

In first-century Palestine, the people had no say in who held power. The same is true in several authoritarian nations today. But in the U.S., each of us has a say in determining who we put in charge. And Christians, in particular, are among the most influential voters.

Dr. George Barna, Director of Research at the Cultural Research Center of Arizona Christian University, argues that it was self-identified Christians

who made the biggest difference in our last presidential election. This is because 56% voted for our current president, and Christians represented 72% of the voters who turned out.

While Kamala Harris received 60% of the non-Christian vote, this segment was outnumbered five to one. Voter turnout was down significantly from prior elections, including among Christians. However, turnout among non-Christians was even lower.

One group in particular, known as Spiritually Active Governance Engaged Conservative Christians, turned out in force, with 99% casting a vote in the last election and 90% voting for our current president. Catholics also turned out in higher numbers than in past elections.

Notably, only a quarter of Christian voters cited the party platform as influencing their decision.

One source of influence consistently identified among conservation Christians, however, was clergy and churches. This source was clearly more impactful than individual research. On average, voters estimated spending less than two hours figuring out who and what they would vote for. And one in five admitted spending no time looking into the facts before voting.

Just under 60% of Christians connected with theologically conservative segments cited religious beliefs as their primary motivation for how they voted.

Inflation topped the list of issues cited by Christians that influenced their vote, followed by immigration. However, immigration was more likely to influence theologically conservative Christians. Abortion and the candidate's view on Israel were secondary to every group.

Immigration also influenced Christians from mainline denominations, along with defending freedom and democracy.

More than half of Christian voters reported encouragement by their pastor or church to vote, and just under half received information connecting particular issues to biblical principles.

Our current president received just under 50% of the popular vote, a much smaller margin than earlier presidents. The American people did not give him a mandate to do whatever

pleases him. Like all presidents before him, we expect him to uphold and defend our constitution. In particular, he is expected to further reign in inflation, improve our ability to pay our bills and have a little left over for a rainy day.

Collectively, Christians are mostly responsible for whatever outcomes, good or bad, our nation and the world experience over the next four years and beyond.

But what does this all have to do with who murdered Jesus? If we investigate this case simply as a historical event, the answer is not much. But what if we focus more on the dynamics leading up to His death? What can we learn about speaking truth to power?

Priests living in first-century Palestine were in the upper-income levels of society. Following the Babylonian Captivity, there were no kings in Judah for five hundred years. Power centered among the priests, who collectively acted as a ruling class. They retained much of their political power even after kingship was reestablished around a hundred years before the birth of Jesus. However, a few decades before the birth of Jesus, Judah lost its independence when Rome decided to intervene in a Jewish civil war.

Priests also wielded a lot of economic power. One source of their income came from a temple tax levied on every Jewish person.

Priests lived in luxury at a time when most were struggling to survive. Archeological excavations of priestly residences have revealed great reception rooms with mosaic floors, large dining rooms with

extravagantly carved and painted walls, and lots of fine furnishings.

The biggest threat to the priests' economic and political power was Rome. The priests knew that the Romans were willing to intervene again in the event of another conflict. So, the priests appeased their occupiers by making daily sacrifices for Caesar in the temple. They also used their power and influence to keep the peace among the Jewish people.

The chief priests and the teachers of the Law were afraid of the people; and so they were trying to find a way of putting Jesus to death secretly.

Luke 21:37-22:2

Jesus made the priests nervous. For example, when Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey, he was celebrated by a great crowd of people. Soon after, Jesus went to the temple and warned the people to beware of religious leaders exploiting the vulnerable to live in luxury. He also blamed the temple tax for forcing widows into poverty. Jesus even predicted that the temple itself was about to be destroyed and that a war was about to shake the nation.

Jesus' connection with common people worried the priests. Jesus had an influence over people that they could never hope to have. But when Jesus cut into the daily profits by turning over the tables of the moneychangers in the temple, the priests concluded that Jesus had to go.

What do you suppose Jesus might say about religious leaders today? What about followers who live in comfort while our neighbors struggle to survive? What might he say about our economic systems and our increasing wealth inequity? What might he call us to see, and what might he call us to relinquish, and would we be any more willing to give it all up than the chief priests and scribes?

Lent is a great time for reflection on our own priorities and to gain inspiration through the help of the Holy Spirit to chart a new course for the future.

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Pastor Tommy

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George Barna. "2024 Election Research - Report #2." © Arizona Christian University, November 13, 2024. Retrieved from: [link](#)

Peter DeHaan. The Friends and Foes of Jesus: Discover How People in the New Testament React to God's Good News. MI: Rock Rooster Books, 2019.



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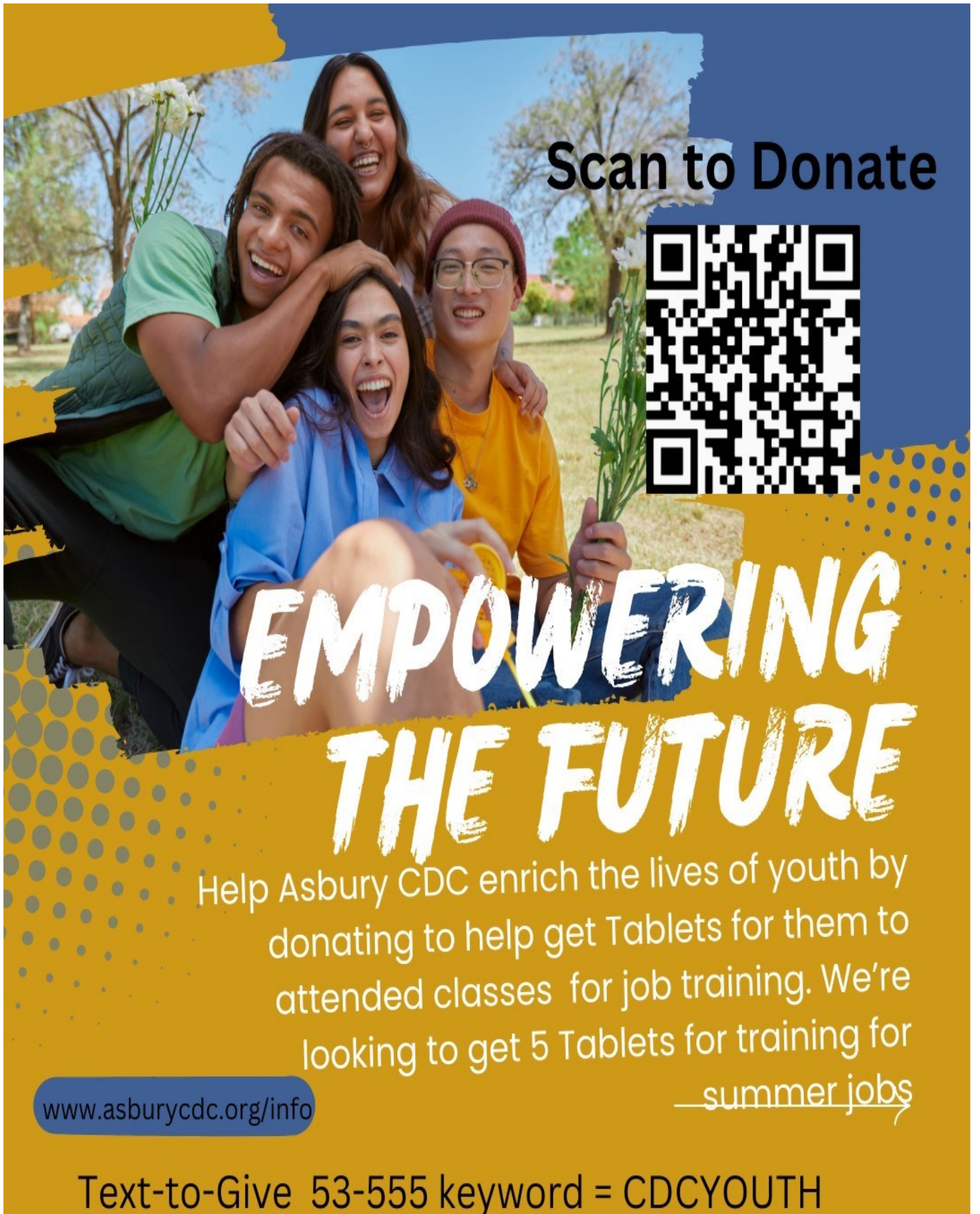
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WHODUNNIT?



A series
about the
people who
wanted Jesus
dead, and why

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.”

Here is the outline of our series:

<u>Title:</u>	<u>Sunday:</u>	<u>Scripture:</u>	<u>Guest Speaker:</u>
<i>The King</i>	March 9	Matthew 2:16-18	
<i>The religious folk</i>	March 16	Mark 3:1-6	Ruth VanderSande
<i>The clergy</i>	March 23	Luke 21:37-22:2	
<i>The neighbors</i>	March 30	Luke 4:20-23	Vince Slocum
<i>The disciples</i>	April 6	Luke 22:3-6	
<i>The governor</i>	April 13	John 19: 16b-22	Palm Sunday
<i>The revelation</i>	April 20	John 20:1-25	Easter Sunday

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

Peter DeHaan. The Friends and Foes of Jesus: Discover How People in the New Testament React to God's Good News. MI: Rock Rooster Books, 2019.