

# ASBURY CIRCUIT RIDER

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## Anger (All y' all)

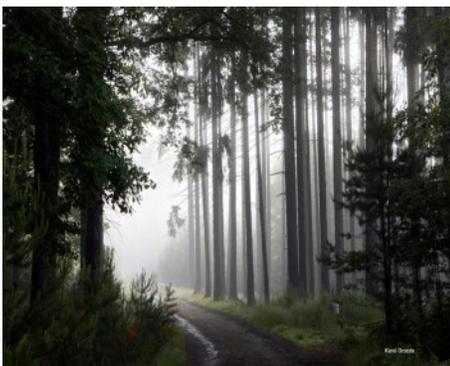


This week marks the beginning of the Season of Lent and a new series based on some difficult teachings of Jesus on anger, adultery, retaliation, divorce, swearing, and love. But before you tune out, hang with us at least long enough to find out that our traditional ways of hearing what Jesus said don't tell the whole story.

For example, there is a strange word in Jesus' teaching on anger. The word "Raca" is Aramaic, the everyday language Jesus spoke. It is an old insult. It isn't profanity. It isn't explosive. It doesn't sound like much. It means something like: "empty one." "Worthless." "Good-for-nothing."

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## Transformation (Epiphany)



When we travel today, we rarely choose roads the old-fashioned way. Most of us enter a destination and are offered a route shaped by preferences we don't even remember setting. Preferences like "fastest route" or "avoid tolls."

We tap "Go" and trust the voice guiding us forward. Only occasion-

ally do we override the map and choose a different way.

How many roads in life do we travel that way? Roads suggested, shaped, selected for us long before we stop to ask where they lead — long before we even notice we're on them.

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27 more days for  
Spring!! ...



**DONATE**

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It's a word that hasn't been used since the first century, though the meaning it conveys is used way too often. It is what happens when a person shrinks in our imagination. When Jesus reminds His listeners that the Ten Commandments prohibit murder, He does something unexpected. Instead of beginning with murder, He begins with this word "*Raca*."

Jesus begins with dismissal. With contempt. With the quiet moment when someone becomes "nothing" to us. It is what happens when a person shrinks in our imagination.

So, before we talk about violence, we need to talk about anger.

After all, anger is part of the human condition. A father snaps at his child after a long day. A wife replays a cutting comment for hours. A coworker smiles in a meeting but fumes in the car on the way home. We feel it when we are cut off in traffic. When we are misrepresented. When we feel ignored, threatened, dismissed, or afraid.

Anger itself is not rare. It is not abnormal. It is not always wrong. Often, anger tells us something matters. It signals that a boundary has been crossed or that something we love feels endangered.

Most of the time, anger rises and falls. It flares, then cools. But sometimes it doesn't cool. Sometimes it lingers. Sometimes it begins to build. Quietly, steadily — like pressure beneath the earth's surface. You don't see it at first. You only feel the tremors.

Think about road rage.

A driver merges abruptly. We feel disrespected. Unsafe. Invisible. Our pulse rises. Words come out that we would never say in church. What happened? Often, it is not the maneuver alone. It is the story that forms beneath it: They don't care about me. They think they own the road. I don't matter.

And because we cannot see their face — because they are anonymous, they're just a vehicle — it becomes easier to react without empathy. The other driver becomes an obstacle. Not a person. They become a small version of *raca*. It feels minor. But something is heating beneath the surface.

Road rage is a small example of a larger phenomenon. When faces disappear, empathy often follows. We are wired to read faces. A glance tells us whether someone is angry, afraid, uncertain, or calm. Remove the face, and uncertainty grows. And when uncertainty grows, fear is not far behind.

We see this dynamic play out beyond the highway.

In recent years, public debates about borders, enforcement, safety, and belonging have stirred strong emotions across communities. Policies carry real consequences for real families. Some feel protected. Others feel threatened. Many feel unheard.

When U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement officers conduct operations, some of which involve physical aggression and even cruelty, wearing masks adds another layer to an already tense environment. Hidden faces increase ambiguity. Ambiguity heightens fear. Fear hardens into anger.

And anonymity works in more than one direction. When a person becomes primarily a role — "officer," "immigrant," "protester," "citizen" — the human story can recede behind the label. Roles replace names. Categories replace stories.

This is not about assigning blame. It is about recognizing how quickly human beings can become abstractions to one another — especially when fear is in the air. And once again, it becomes easier to stop seeing a neighbor and start seeing a symbol.

But we need to widen the lens even further.

IN OUR PRAYERS

Virginia Bigger	Paula Gamble
Sylvia Pittman	Richard Oram
Miriam Watson	Jonathon Misner



FRIENDS AND LOVED ONES WHO ARE HOMEBOUND OR IN NURSING CARE

Dean Lamoreaux	Norma Buzzard
Nancy Elston	

COMING UP THIS WEEK: FEBRUARY 23—MARCH 1

Feb 23	Mon		
Feb 24	Tue	9:00am-until gone	Produce will be available each week, along with canned goods, until further notice
		12Noon-6pm	Taco Tuesday in Fellowship Hall
		3:00pm	CDC Board Meeting
Feb 25	Wed		
Feb 26	Thu		
Feb 27	Fri		
Feb 28	Sat		
Feb 29	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 "All y' all"

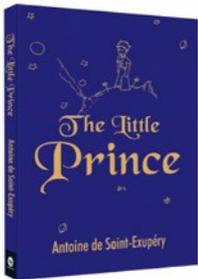


Over the past year, most of us have felt unmoored. Truth feels fragile. Anger feels constant. Power feels reckless. And too often, fear has been rewarded while compassion is dismissed as weakness. In moments like these, it's tempting to retreat, to disengage, to harden, or to surrender our moral imagination to the loudest voices in the room.

During the season of Lent, Asbury will join other congregations in a shared worship series entitled *All y' all*, rooted in Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. In this sermon, Jesus sets before his followers a vision of life that is both breathtaking and unsettling. Again and again, he takes familiar commandments and intensifies them:

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## Book Club News



During the season of Lent, our worship series, *All Y'all*, invites us to hear the words of Jesus in the Sermon on the

Mount the way his first followers heard them: not as a list of impossible individual expectations, but as a shared way of life meant to shape a

community that can heal the world.

To accompany this season, our suggested companion book will be *The Little Prince* by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry.

At first glance, *The Little Prince* appears to be a children's book. Its language is simple. Its illustrations are playful. But readers quickly discover that it asks profoundly adult questions.

Through a series of brief encounters, the story explores how grown-ups come to value the wrong things, how power and possession distort relationships, and how love always carries responsibility and risk.

In this way, *The Little Prince* pairs surprisingly well with the Sermon on the Mount.

The *Little Prince* is a deceptively simple story that asks adult questions about power, truth, love, and responsibility. During Lent, we'll read it slowly, alongside Jesus' words in the Sermon on the Mount, letting the story help us notice what we might otherwise miss.

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## Asbury Staff

Rev. Dr. Tommy McDaniel	Pastor
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Kim Sims	Finance Director
Terry Kinze	Ops Manager/CDC
Sylvia Pittman	Empowerment Arts
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Terrance Williams	Arts Center Mgr
	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 — “All y’ all”

You have heard that it was said... but I say to you...”

In All Y’ all, Jesus speaks to a people living amid instability, division, and the abuse of power—and calls them to become a community shaped by truth, restraint, courage, and love. These teachings are not abstract ideals. They are practical guidance for communities learning how to live faithfully when the world feels like it’s coming apart.

This series matters because the way we respond to anger, desire, truth, retaliation, and love will determine what kind of people we become—and what kind of future we help make possible. Each week builds on the last. Each teaching presses deeper. And together, they form a vision of shared life that can resist chaos without becoming chaotic itself.

This Lent, we will not look away. We will listen closely. Because how we live together now matters more than ever.

Jesus’ teachings on anger, desire, divorce, truthfulness, retaliation, and love have often been treated as impossibly high moral ideals. As a result, Christians have found ways to sidestep them, explain them away, or reduce them to private spiritual aspirations rather than lived practices.

This Lent, *All y’ all* invites us to ask a different question. What if Jesus was not giving instructions for individual moral perfection, but describing the kind of community that could heal the world?

The Gospel of Matthew was written for a Jewish Christian community living through upheaval. The Temple in Jerusalem had been destroyed. Jewish followers of Jesus were being expelled from synagogues. Long-standing religious and social structures were unraveling.

In response, Matthew presents Jesus as a figure deeply rooted in Israel’s story. For Matthew, Jesus is a teacher like Moses, calling God’s people into a renewed way of life. Just as Moses went up the mountain to receive a law meant to shape a people, Jesus goes up a mountain and teaches a way of life meant to form a community.

When Jesus speaks in the Sermon on the Mount, he is not addressing isolated individuals. He is speaking to a gathered people. They are a diverse crowd of the poor, the overlooked, the wounded, and the hopeful. And Jesus calls them salt of the earth, light of the world, and a city set on a hill.

*Do not presume that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish, but to fulfill.*

Matthew 5:17

This communal context matters.

In English, we lose an important distinction that exists in the biblical languages. When Jesus says, “But I say to you...,” the “you” is plural. Jesus is speaking to all of them together. A Community. If we were to translate Jesus’ words into a Southern vernacular, we might hear him say, “All y’ all have heard it said... but I say to all y’ all...”

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## Upcoming Worship Series — “All y’ all”

The title of this series comes from this anomaly.

The “higher righteousness” Jesus describes is not about spiritual heroics or moral scorekeeping. It is about how a community treats its members, especially the vulnerable. And how that community bears witness to God’s reign in the world.

For example, anger is not just a private feeling because anger corrodes relationships. Lust is not just a thought because lust objectifies and dehumanizes. Divorce laws are not abstract; they shape lives and power dynamics. Oaths and promises are not rhetorical flourishes. They reveal whether a community can be trusted. Retaliation is not inevitable because cycles of violence can be broken. And love extends beyond friends and allies to enemies.

Taken together, these teachings describe a people learning how to do right by one another and by God. Most of us read the Sermon on the Mount as a set of impossible standards meant to drive us toward guilt or despair. But the early church heard these teachings differently. For them, the Sermon on the Mount functioned as a rule of life. It served as a practical guide for shaping communities marked by reconciliation, honesty, accountability, and love.

In other words, rather than asking, “Can I live up to this?” the better question may be, “What would it look like for us to practice this together?” This shift from individual achievement to communal formation stands at the heart of *All y’ all*.

While guest preachers and pastors will bring their own voices and contexts to these texts, the shared question remains the same. What kind of people are we becoming when we take Jesus seriously and take each other seriously in the process?

This Lent, we will allow Jesus to challenge our assumptions, stretch our imaginations, and invite us into a deeper way of living together. Not perfectly. Not individually. But faithfully—all y’ all, together. Throughout Lent, we will explore six teachings from Matthew, chapter 5:

<u>Episode</u>	<u>Sundays</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Scripture</u>
One	Feb 22	Anger	Matthew 5:21–26
Two	Mar 1	Adultery	Matthew 5:27–30
Three	Mar 8	Retaliation	Matthew 5:38–42
Four	Mar 15	Divorce	Matthew 5:31–32
Five	Mar 22	Swearing	Matthew 5:33–37
Six	Mar 29	Love	Matthew 5:43–48

Our journey begins on February 22, the first Sunday after Ash Wednesday.

Please join us each Sunday at 10:30 a.m. We share our weekly episodes on [Facebook](#) and our [YouTube channel](#), and go live at 10:30 a.m. You can find these links and more information about us, or join our live broadcast on our [website](#), [FlintAsburyChurch.org](http://FlintAsburyChurch.org).

Pastor Tommy

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# “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)

**LIFE GROUP QUESTIONS & MORE:**

*All y'all have heard that people were told in the past, "Do not commit murder," But now I tell you: if you are angry with your brother, you will be brought to trial.*

Matthew 5:21-26

**NOTES FROM WORSHIP**

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**QUESTIONS FOR LIFE GROUPS:**

1. Read Matthew 5:1-12 (blessings) and then read Matthew 5:21-26, and this week's Circuit Rider article titled Anger.
2. This week, when you feel anger rise, do three things before you respond: Pause, to interrupt the spiral. Then pray, "Lord, show me what's beneath this."
3. After praying, reframe what happened by remembering, "This is a person, not a category." And if reconciliation is needed, try taking one step. Not the whole staircase.
4. How can your group members help you be more receptive to hearing and understanding the Word of God this week? Pray for one another to be blessed by the Holy Spirit with greater courage.



## Show Your Support For Your Local Farm

We need your help to purchase fencing to keep our furry friends from eating up all our crops and not sharing with us.

### How You Can Donate

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- Text "FARMCDC"
- to 53-555
- Scan QR Code

**Donate Now**



More Information :

 (810) 235-0016

 [funding@flintasbury.org](mailto:funding@flintasbury.org)

Like Jesus' teaching, this story does not argue its case. It tells the truth sideways. It invites reflection rather than compliance. And it reminds us that what matters most is often invisible to those who are certain they already understand the world.

Rather than offering a strict reading schedule, we invite you to read this book slowly and lightly during Lent. Some may read it all in a sitting. Others may return to a few chapters again and again. Either approach is faithful. The goal is not completion, but attention.

Throughout the series, themes from the book—seeing clearly, resisting domination, loving without possession, and accepting responsibility for one another—will echo the questions raised in worship. You do not need to read the book to participate fully, but for those who choose to do so, it may offer another way of listening for what Jesus is saying to all y'all together.

This Lent, we invite you to read a story, listen deeply, and practice seeing with the heart. Here are our planned themes for this series:

<u>Sunday's</u>	<u>Themes</u>
Feb 22	Misunderstanding and frustration
Mar 1	Possession versus love
Mar 8	Responsibility and consequence
Mar 15	Words, meaning, and trust
Mar 22	Power and resistance
Mar 29	The cost of love

We'll have a few books available for purchase at \$6 each. Additional copies of the paperback edition are available through Amazon for \$6. This book may also be available at the local library. Our Book Club does not meet as a group. However, our weekly messages reference that week's chapters or themes. 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](http://FlintAsburyChurch.org).

Pastor Tommy

Antoine de Saint-Exupéry. *The Little Prince*. Translated by Richard Howard. NY: Harper Collins, 2000.

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](http://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](mailto:southflintsoupkitchen@gmail.com)

Most people who feel anger never become violent. But researchers studying mass violence have noticed recurring themes that go beyond momentary emotion. Mental illness alone is not the strongest predictor. More common are patterns such as long-nurtured grievances, social isolation, a deep sense of humiliation, or the belief that someone has taken something essential away. A story of blame that grows more rigid over time.

In these cases, anger is not a flare. It becomes a story. A story rehearsed. A story refined. A story that explains everything. Violence rarely erupts without pressure building first. It often grows where resentment is fed, and isolation deepens. But when pressure builds long enough, eruptions are no longer surprising.

Violence erupts once anger becomes identity. And once someone is reduced to a symbol — an enemy, a category, a threat — harming them feels less unthinkable.

*Raca!* Empty!

We are living in a time when anger sits close to the surface. Public rhetoric is sharp. Policies carry real consequences for real families. Decisions about borders, enforcement, safety, and belonging stir fear and frustration across communities.

On both sides, it becomes easier to stop seeing a neighbor and start seeing a category.

*Raca!*

The ground trembles. Sometimes the pressure lingers. Sometimes it begins to build — quietly, steadily — like pressure beneath the earth's surface. A volcano does not erupt without warning. Magma gathers. Heat rises. Pressure builds slowly underground long before anyone sees flame.

You don't see it at first. You only feel the tremors.

It's true that anger is common. But when anger is fed by grievance, insulated by isolation, and intensified by fear, it can become something else — something more combustible.

Jesus does not begin with the weapon. He begins with the word. Jesus begins with the moment someone becomes less than human in our imagination. And that is where the pressure starts to build.

According to Matthew, Jesus began His public ministry on a mountain with a lengthy teaching.

If you weren't with us last week to hear about what happens later, also on a mountain, here is what matters: before there was light on a mountain, there was a voice. And the voice said, "Listen to him." So we listen. Not as spectators. Not as critics. Not as distant historians. We listen as participants.

Because when Jesus sat down on that mountainside, he was not addressing a spiritual elite. He was speaking to a gathered community—disciples, seekers, skeptics, wounded people, hopeful people.

Fishermen and mothers. Tax collectors and zealots. The devout and the doubtful.

All of them. All y' all. That phrase may sound informal, but it is deeply theological. Jesus began with blessings. But the blessings are not individual self-help slogans. They are communal declarations. Jesus is forming a people.

"Blessed are the poor in spirit." All y' all who know your need.

"Blessed are those who mourn." All y' all who are carrying grief.

"Blessed are the meek." All y' all who are learning restraint.

"Blessed are the peacemakers." All y' all who are trying to hold fractured relationships together.

The mountain is not a stage for a few high achievers. It is a gathering place for the pressured. And we are not so different.

We, too, live under strain. Economic uncertainty. Political volatility. Cultural suspicion. Private disappointment. Lingering resentment. Pressure beneath the surface.

And before Jesus confronts anything in us, he blesses us. That matters. Because what comes next is searching.

We are living in a moment when the roads available to us are being shaped not just by laws and policies, but by rhetoric, fear, and narratives that demand a response.

Across the country, immigration enforcement has intensified. Federal agents have been deployed into cities in search of immigrant families, including those with legal status or pending asylum claims. And people of color, or those who speak with a foreign accent, are living with renewed uncertainty. Ordinary acts, like attending a required check-in appointment, have resulted in detention.

Just days ago, a Colombian family seeking asylum — here legally while their case was being processed — was deported after the father was detained during what had been a routine immigration check-in.

The family attended Newtonville United Methodist Church, located in the hamlet of Newtonville in the Town of Colonie, NY. The church is a historic, active faith community that has been serving the area since 1799. This small church surrounded the family with love and support, including housing, advocacy, and friendship. So, for the people of this congregation, the debate about law and mercy was no longer theoretical. It had names. It left empty seats.

At the same time that we are already reeling from the daily news of immigration crackdowns gone awry, long-standing environmental protections have been dismantled. Once again, accompanied by the repeated claim that climate change is a hoax. It's likely people welcomed that decision. Most of us are alarmed. Once again, the road seems to split.

Rhetoric is offered as explanations. We are told enforcement is about removing "bad people." We are told deregulation is about freedom. Depending on which road we are already traveling, we either exhale or brace ourselves. These are not abstract policy debates. They shape how we think about mercy, responsibility, belonging, and truth itself.

This past week, I sat in a room with other pastors discussing a case study about how a congregation responded to an immigrant family attending their church. The study presented a scenario that recurs in most congregations. Members did not agree on how and how much to help the family. Tensions rose during a meeting in which a request was made for substantial financial assistance.

Our conversation, which lasted for a couple hours, was thoughtful and sincere. Some raised the question of documentation-whether legal status should shape how we respond.

Others reminded us that Scripture calls us to obey governing authorities. That faithfulness includes honoring the law. On the other hand, I can't imagine asking someone whether they had ever received a speeding ticket, cheated on their taxes, or harbored negative thoughts about people unlike them before deciding whether to help them. How is immigration status any different?

What struck me later wasn't that we disagreed. It was how certain each of us felt that our road was the faithful one. No one in that room was trying to be unfaithful. We were all trying to discern what obedience looks like.

And yet we found ourselves standing on different roads. One road emphasizes order. One road emphasizes mercy. One road leans toward caution. Another welcome. We discovered how easily we gravitate toward the road that feels most responsible to us.

And each road can quote Scripture. That's the part we don't like to admit because that realization is unsettling. It's true that the apostle Paul urges believers in his letter to the Church in Rome to be subject to governing authorities. Yet the Bible also

After the blessings, Jesus appears to speak in a different register. "You have heard that it was said...But I say to you..." In the sermon that follows, Jesus does not abolish the law. He deepens it. Jesus narrows the distance between action and intention.

"You have heard that it was said to those of ancient times, 'You shall not murder.'" This command draws a clear line. Most of us feel safe standing behind it. We may have sharp words. We may have tense exchanges. We may even carry quiet contempt. But murder? That feels far away.

And then Jesus moves the line. "But I say to you that if you are angry with a brother or sister..."

*All y'all have heard that people were told in the past, "Do not commit murder." But now I tell you; if you are angry with our brother, you will be brought to trail.*

Matthew 5:21-26

He relocates violence from the hand to the heart. Not because anger and murder are identical in consequence — they are not — but because they

share a root system. Jesus continues: "If you call your brother *raca*...If you say, You fool..." The language shifts from physical harm to verbal dismissal. From bloodshed to belittling. From eruption to simmer.

Jesus is not only concerned with craters. He is concerned with pressure. And suddenly the mountain feels closer. Because now the conversation includes all y' all.

The driver who mutters at the car that cut him off. The parent who snaps at a child. The coworker who rehearses cutting remarks in the shower. The politician who reduces whole groups of people to a single word.

The line has moved inward. And that is uncomfortable. But it is also merciful. Because if violence begins beneath the surface, then transformation must begin there as well.

Jesus is not waiting for the explosion. He is addressing the heat.

But before we defend ourselves or deflect toward someone else's greater failure, let's pause on the mountain and sit among the disciples, and simply feel the pressure we carry. Let's hear the blessings again, before we focus on the warning. Let's hear what Jesus says, not as condemnation, but as care.

Because the One who blesses the meek and the peacemakers is forming a community that can live differently. A community where anger is neither denied nor allowed to rule. Where contempt is named before it calcifies. Where reconciliation is urgent.

"All y' all" means no one is excluded from the blessing. And it also means no one is exempt from the work.

Jesus does not delight in catching sinners. He is not escalating the law so more of us can know how badly we've failed. Jesus is what is in the human heart. He knows the anger. He knows the broken vows. He knows the private compromises. He knows the words we wish we could take back.

And Jesus speaks before the cross — already moving toward it. The One who raises the standard is the same One who will stretch out His arms. So if you feel nervous about what is coming in the weeks ahead — about adultery, divorce, retaliation, oaths — stay seated. Do not step off the mountain. The blessing came first on purpose.

tells us that the apostles declare in Acts of the Apostles 5, "We must obey God rather than men." Moreover, Jesus knowingly broke the law when He healed on the Sabbath and overturned tables in the temple.

Scripture does not flatten the tension between law and justice. It holds it. And so must we. These are not abstract debate points. These are families. These are communities. These are future generations. And the roads being laid out shape how we think about mercy, responsibility, law, and power.

We're all facing a time of discernment. When leaders amplify rhetoric that echoes white nationalist themes...When demographic changes are framed as threats rather than gifts...When legal arguments press toward racial profiling. As Christians, we're called to pay attention.

When scientific consensus is dismissed because it interferes with political goals...When institutions meant to safeguard public health are weakened...When truth itself becomes negotiable depending on who is speaking...as Christians, we're called to pay attention.

Not because we are partisan, but because we are disciples. The question is not simply what policies we support. The question is what shaping us.

What kind of people are we becoming as we walk these roads?

Scripture does not flatten the tension between law and justice. It holds it. Which means the question is not simply, "What does the law say?" The deeper question is: What kind of people are we becoming as we follow these roads?

Matthew tells us that strangers came "from the East" in search of a newborn King. They were foreigners. Astrologers. They were people who dressed differently, spoke with unfamiliar accents, and read the sky instead of the Torah. However learned they were in their own land, here they were travelers—dependent on hospitality, vulnerable to the integrity of the ruler whose territory they entered.

Ideally, they would have been welcomed with warmth. Instead, they were manipulated.

They arrived in Jerusalem asking a simple question: "Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews?" They expected competence. They encountered insecurity. They expected joy. They found fear. Herod received them not as guests but as instruments. His was the road of control—power maintained by threat, information gathered for harm, religion consulted for advantage.

But the story does not end in the palace.

The foreigners continue on. They kneel before a child. They offer gifts without leverage. They listen — not to the anxious ruler but to a dream. After encountering the Christ child, the visitors from the East are warned in a dream not to return to Herod. And so, as Matthew tells it, "they went back to their own country by another road." No confrontation with Herod. No public statement. No political victory. Just a different road.

Revelation often leads to reorientation.

*They returned to their country by another road, since God had warned them in a dream not to go back to Herod.*

Matthew 2:12

Their status as outsiders matters. Matthew could have written a story in which the priests or the scribes recognized the Messiah first. Instead, he tells of foreigners who see what insiders miss. Grace crosses borders before borders are defended. The first to worship Christ in Matthew's Gospel are not guardians of purity, but seekers from afar.



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AFRICAN DRUM AND DANCE PARENT ASSOCIATION

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TACO TUESDAY IN FEBRUARY!!

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**African Drum and Dance Parent Association Presents**

# TACO TUESDAY

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Epiphany always unsettles our assumptions about who is inside and who is outside.

The lectionary this week offers another epiphany story. In the 17th chapter of Matthew, Jesus takes Peter, James, and John with Him up a mountain. There, Jesus is transfigured before them. His face shines like the sun. His clothes become dazzling white. And standing with him are Moses and Elijah — the Law and the Prophets — not abolished, but fulfilled and gathered up in him. Understandably, the disciples are overwhelmed, afraid, and disoriented. When a voice from the cloud declares, “This is my Son, the Beloved... listen to him.” Notice the pattern.

On the road to Bethlehem: light appears. Outsiders kneel. A warning comes. They change direction. On the mountain, a light blazes, disciples fall to the ground, and a voice speaks. They are told to listen — but then they must descend the mountain and return to the work below.

In both stories, glory is not given for spectacle. It is given for guidance.

It is not incidental that the three disciples on the mountain were also outsiders. Fishermen from Galilee. Men without status in Jerusalem’s religious hierarchy. They had walked with Jesus,

yes. They had heard his teaching. But on that mountain, they experienced Jesus anew — not merely as Rabbi, but as the radiant convergence of Law and Prophets, promise and fulfillment. Epiphany does not simply inform. It transforms.

Perhaps the Magi’s transformation was nothing more than geographic. They went home another way, but we’re not told the rest of the story. But the disciples’ transformation was vocational. They would listen to Him — even when Jesus spoke of suffering, even when He challenged inherited assumptions about power and greatness.

In both stories, revelation interrupts the road we thought we were on. And in both stories, the choice that follows is quiet but decisive.

Herod remains on his road — anxious, threatened, violent. The Magi step onto another. The disciples could have clung to the mountaintop, building shelters to preserve the moment. Instead, they descend, carrying with them a deeper understanding of who Jesus is.

Light is given not to dazzle us, but to direct us.

Epiphany invites us to ask: When we encounter Christ—in scripture, in a stranger, in truth that unsettles us—do we double down on the road of control?

Or do we listen and allow our direction to change?

Grace comes first. Listening follows. Then comes the long obedience of another road.

In the final chapters of our companion book, we return to where we began: grace. Not as sentiment, and not as reward, but as the persistent presence of God that refuses to be exhausted by human failure. After walking through identity, truth, suffering, neighbors, and responsibility, the book does not end with solutions or strategies. It ends by reminding us that transformation is not self-manufactured. It is received—often slowly, often unevenly—through grace that keeps meeting us where we are.

These chapters press an uncomfortable truth: grace does not remove us from the world’s brokenness; it changes how we remain within it. We are not transformed *out of* conflict, injustice, or complicity, but transformed *within* them—learning to live differently even when outcomes are uncertain, and power feels lopsided.

The closing sections resist the temptation to declare victory. Instead, they emphasize faithfulness over effectiveness, presence over purity, and endurance over resolution. Transformation,

the book suggests, is less about becoming someone else and more about becoming more fully who we were created to be—people shaped by grace rather than fear.

That arc mirrors the stories we have been tracing.

The visitors from the East are not changed not by confrontation, but by encounter. They do not overthrow Herod. They do not fix the system. They simply cannot return the same way they came. And this is the kind of transformation described in the stories of the accidental saints Nadia Bolz-Weber encountered. Not dramatic reversals, but reoriented lives. Not moral superiority, but deepened clarity. And not escape from responsibility, but new ways of carrying it.

Grace, then, is not the excuse to “let it go.” Grace is what makes it possible to keep going without becoming hardened, cynical, or cruel. It is what allows us to choose a different road—even when the world we leave behind remains unchanged.

Our author sums up grace this way:

There’s this power of God in the universe that is restorative and redemptive, and no one is worthy of it, but everyone gets to receive it. It’s powerful, but it’s offensive at

the same time, because it’s not fair, and it doesn’t work into our notions of justice. It changes us, and it’s what we need, but it doesn’t mean it feels good. If it’s real grace, it’s never going to feel good.

That is not cheap comfort. It is disruptive mercy. Grace unsettles the powerful and humbles the certain. It exposes fear masquerading as strength. It refuses to let us baptize our preferred road simply because it is familiar. And it calls us—again and again—to listen to the Beloved Son and walk accordingly.

If Epiphany reveals light, and Transfiguration intensifies it, grace is what enables us to walk in it. If transformation is directional, then the question before us is not abstract: What road are we on?

Discernment is not about achieving perfect clarity. It is about cultivating the capacity to listen. Listen to Scripture, to the Spirit, to the cries of our neighbors, and even to the discomfort that exposes our own complicity. It is about noticing when rhetoric echoes fear more than faith. It is about asking whether our posture toward strangers reflects Herod’s anxiety or Christ’s welcome.

We will not all map the terrain in identical ways. The clergy conversation reminded us of that. Faithful people can stand at the

same crossroads and describe the landscape differently. But the measure of our road is not partisan alignment or personal preference. The measure is whether we are being shaped by grace rather than fear.

This is the final episode of our *Epiphany Series*. Next week, we begin the Season of Lent, where we’ll stay with Matthew until Easter, looking closely at a part of Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount. As we travel together over the coming weeks, I invite you into three practices:

The first is attentive listening. Return often to the Gospel stories. Sit with the light of Epiphany and the command of the mountain: “Listen to him.” Notice where Jesus consistently stands—who He protects, who He challenges, who He welcomes.

The second is honest examination. Ask where control, resentment, or cynicism may be steering your direction. Grace is offensive precisely because it dismantles the narratives that make us feel secure.

And third, pray for an embodied response. Choosing another road is not theoretical. It shows up in conversations, in advocacy, in hospitality, in the refusal to dehumanize. It may not fix the system. It may not produce quick results. But it is faithful.

We are not called to be spectacular. We are called to be responsive.

The strangers from the East returned home by another road. The disciples descended the mountain and followed. We, too, are invited—not to escape this moment, but to remain within it differently.

Light has been given. Grace is present. The road before us is not predetermined. The question is whether we will listen—and whether we will walk accordingly.

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)

This is a reminder that we publish a weekly newsletter called the Circuit Rider. You can request this publication by email by sending a request to [FlintAsburyUMC@gmail.com,](mailto: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

Nadia Bolz-Weber. *Accidental Saints: Finding God in All the Wrong People.* NY: Convergent Books, 2015. (ISBN 978-1-60142-755-7 ).

Bianca Vázquez Tones. "In Minnesota, sending a child to school is an act of faith for immigrant families." © AP News, Feb 6, 2026. [Link.](#)

Patrick Tine. "Family of asylum seekers 'adopted' by Colonie church leave after father's deportation." © Times Union, Feb 10, 2026, [Link.](#)

There is a story in *The Little Prince* by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry that may seem rather insignificant, but reminds us of what Jesus tells us to do. The Little Prince tends tiny volcanoes on his planet. He cleans them out regularly, not because they are dramatic, but because they are ordinary. If he neglects them, they grow unstable. If he tends them, they remain useful and warm.

Anger is something like that.

Most of us do not erupt into catastrophe. But small resentments, unattended irritations, rehearsed grievances — they accumulate. And what could have been warmth becomes volatility. Jesus is helping us avoid the eruption by inviting us to tend the interior life before pressure becomes destructive.

Pressure beneath the surface is part of being human. But an eruption is not inevitable. We belong to the One who blesses the burdened, steadies the angry, and calls us peacemakers. So let us tend what rises within us. Let us choose restraint over reaction. Repair over resentment. Dignity over dismissal.

And let us walk down this mountain together — not scorched by anger, but formed by grace.

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).

This is a reminder that we publish a weekly newsletter called the Circuit Rider. You can request this publication by email by sending a request to [FlintAsburyUMC@gmail.com](mailto: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

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Additional content from:  
Antoine de Saint-Exupéry.  
*The Little Prince*. Translated by Richard Howard. NY: Harper Collins, 2000.

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