

Anabaptist History (Day 1) Welcome

by Dean Taylor

Dean Taylor introduces Anabaptist History by sharing personal experiences and emphasizing the importance of understanding one's faith heritage.

Duration: 1:10:03

Scripture: Matthew 7:24, John 13:35

Topics: "Christian Living", "Repentance"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of living out the teachings of Jesus in a practical way, rather than just having head knowledge of Christianity. It highlights the need for true repentance, Christian love, and a transformed life as evidence of faith. The Anabaptist theology is presented as a call to follow Jesus wholeheartedly and to prioritize Christian ethics and living out the teachings of the New Testament.

Transcript

Well, how's everybody's day been so far? It's been a blessing. Well, I'm Dean Taylor. I'm really excited about this course.

I've dreamt about doing something like this for a long time. So you've signed up for Anabaptist History, and I think that's incredible. So what I'm going to do is just go through, make sure we have everybody.

There was one little mix up with the class. They had two classes in the same room. So let me just make sure that everybody is here that's supposed to be here.

So you did all sign up for Anabaptist History, and that's why you're here, right? Amen, they had a Stephen Koblentz ministry class scheduled for 208 as well. So, okay. All right, just for a couple preliminaries here to start off the class with, I had it for textbooks to get.

Anybody bought the textbooks yet? Yeah, I had these two. And you know, the whole picking of a textbook is an interesting thing. I mean, they're all painted one way or the other, and I guess so are we, but you just kind of have to read through that.

But I found these two to be pretty interesting. And this cup on the cross was actually even a little surprising, even has some nice appendixes in the back that give some different information about different documents and things like this. This one, this Moon Knight History book by Cornelius Dick, it does better going into Russia and Holland and that type of thing, where a lot of the books with just the Swiss Brother

and emphasis doesn't cover.

So I think you'll like this book as well. It covers an area, you know, who were the Moon Knights in Canada? Who are these, you know, those types of thing. It kind of spells out some of that.

And then of course, the Martyrs' Mirror. Now, if you don't have a Martyrs' Mirror, this is online. And so I think that most of the things that you can get, can get out of here.

But I will say, you know, what kind of self-respecting, you know, Anabaptist doesn't have a Martyrs' Mirror. But if you don't have one, this would be a good time to get one. And if you do, if you don't, but I understand it's expensive.

And I don't know what, what are they charging for it now? How many? 39 bucks. Oh, come on. But 39 bucks.

And well, hopefully we're gonna do this, not so much textbook, but I'm gonna try to start each day with stories. I'm a storyteller. And I like to tell history like stories, and not just a bunch of boring dates and things.

And, you know, they had to switch class there. And so in telling these stories, I want this Martyrs' Mirror to become a little more alive to you, instead of just kind of the book that you press your flowers with and things like that. So I think that would be good for us.

So I'm gonna pass out, since I see you don't have a, I'm gonna pass out the introduction to the Martyrs' Mirror. And we're gonna read that today. I think it has some good words for us today.

There you go. I don't read it quite yet. Just don't look yet.

If you have your Martyrs' Mirror handy, then it's page eight in your Martyrs' Mirror. That's it. Okay, and what we're gonna do is I'm gonna first, you know, as I was thinking about how do you start a class that you're gonna spend five weeks talking about Anabaptist history.

And I started thinking, you know, I gotta think of some particular Anabaptist in history that, you know, I can like make a story from, and then go from there. And I started thinking about, and one of the past, you know, I thought of some of the famous ones, you know. And then I started thinking, well, now I need something kind of modern.

And then I thought, hey, I should give my own testimony. And so I'm gonna tell you a little bit about myself. Then I would like to know, after I'm finished, you can prepare thinking of this, just a little bit about yourself.

And then I'd also like to know what your heritage background is. Do you come from an Amish background? Do you come from a Mennonite background, a Russian Mennonite background? And that kind of a thing. So I think that's gonna make our dynamics more interesting as we look through the history.

And it also can make sure I hit a particular area as we go through this. But, so before we get started, though, let's start with prayer. Dear Heavenly Father, we come to you, the beginning of this survey of history in the name of Jesus Christ.

It is you that we want to lift up, Jesus. We don't wanna lift up a man, a denomination, any kind of a people. But we wanna see what you have done within your servants through the ages.

And dear God, we want to be a part of that thing that you want to do here on earth. And so Lord, we just commit these five weeks to you. We commit our hearts to you again, Lord, just to say, Lord, we read these things and we say, God, do it again.

Do it again in our generation. Do it again in our life. And let these brothers and sisters and children and all their faith that has shined so brightly before us inspire us to keep the faith in our generation.

It's in Jesus' name we pray, amen. I can remember the very first Mennonite church I ever went to. I was starting to look through Mennonite literature and things like that in the army.

And matter of fact, the first time I heard the word Mennonite I thought it was perhaps like a tribe of Israel. You know, you got your Midianites and your Mennonites and that type of thing. Okay, so I finally got past that and I started studying more over there in Germany.

There was this kind of a radical bookstore that had some impressive stuff and that's where I got some of those things. And while I was there, we started reading about the Mennonites. And one time I was driving around in the streets of Germany with a friend of mine, a couple that also got out of the army with us.

And as we were there, we're just swerving through. Actually, we were just driving around to talk about what we're gonna do with our life kind of thing. I still ask those questions.

But anyway, we keep driving around. And as we're driving around, all of a sudden I said, stop the car. He said, why? So he stopped this little Fiat and he said, that said Mennonite Kirche.

He says, yeah, yeah. I said, I don't know, but I'm thinking that's a Mennonite church. So he said, all right, well, what are we gonna do? I don't know, well, let's go in.

So it was like a midweek or something like that and the lights were on upstairs. It's a big church, you know. So we pulled the car off, two little couples.

We got out and we went over and we found the catacombs through the, it's a modern church, and got to this, it was a youth gathering, probably a room about the size of this room. It was a youth gathering and they're all in there, you know, and we walk in the door. These American soldiers, you know, we walk in the door.

And they looked at us, you know, and we said, you're Mennonites. And you can imagine what their response was. So what? And you know, that response has been a response that I think has continued on way too much.

There's a non-appreciation of a heritage, there's a non-understanding of the heritage, and there's a non-understanding of some of the things that I think are much more like Christ, which I think it makes it so much more important. Why is it even important? Because I think it's more like Christ. So let me tell you a little bit of how I got to that little Mennonite church.

I was raised a nominal Methodist. And then later in my life, because of a friend of mine, there was this church that had lots of pizza parties and football games and things. So I joined the Baptist church in town, the Southern Baptist.

And as I was there in the Southern Baptist, I had an understanding of faith, which I think is very common in American evangelicalism. And I think it's very common amongst our people by corruption, by us losing the

things that are true to us. And that is, I believed in a sinner's prayer salvation.

Do you know what I mean by sinner's prayer salvations? Who can give me an idea? You've heard that term. Yeah. Exactly.

Forever, exactly. So that was my concept of Christianity. Now, I was sincere, I was a young man.

The preachers were always good preachers. But my understanding of what was given to me of Christianity was, if I understood the atonement for a moment, for that moment, if I understood that atonement for that moment, that is it, that's Christianity, my fate is sealed for all of eternity. And although no one would outwardly, well, yeah, we did say, we called it fire insurance.

We would use that terminology, actually, without apology. And why I think that's so detrimental to the church is because it really destroys Christianity from its core. It becomes just this sort of head knowledge, this sort of thing in your mind.

So anyway, like I was very patriotic. My father's real denomination was probably Republican. And as he raised that way, I was very patriotic.

I actually very much enjoyed being in the Army. And as I joined the Army, I was a musician in the Army. I mean, I was a musician in high school.

I met my wife in high school in the high school band. And I decided, well, I didn't know what it's gonna do with my life, so I joined the Army band and became a musician. Unfortunately, the kind of music that I played led into more and more things.

I ended up in a Army rock band, using your tax dollars for things like that. And also, there's different assignments that the band would do, traveling around Europe. And I got a European assignment, and that's where we sent, where I was sent to.

My wife got sent over just as a civilian. But we thought, hey, we'll just spend the rest of our life in the Army, not have any children, and live this life. And then she, so she decided to join the Army too, left from Germany, went to basic training, and came back and joined me in the Army band as well.

So there we were, young couple, 21 years old in the Army band. But something happened. When she moved into our, the apartment, we got a double-sized apartment, and I was in this really nice valley.

And so for the first time in my life, I was away from the television. I mean, I, my entire life, I was in front of the television. I mean, you know, it was like a TV dinner in front of the television.

It was like, that was our little family thing, was there on the TV, and it was, I mean, you know. So there, for the first time, that noise was cut off. And it was interesting, it did something to me.

And it made me start doing things like read. I had never read before in my life. I was not a reader.

I cheated through high school, you know, got the Cliff Notes or something, and just trying to find my way through. But now suddenly, I started to have questions. And that's the way we should read.

And that's the way we should read through this Anabaptist history class, and all your classes, read with questions. I wonder, what about this? I wonder about that. Just reading for reading's sake is really pretty

boring.

But when you're reading to ask questions, it does something to you, it goes deeper. Because really, the answer is in the questions that you're asking. We're gonna see that over and over again.

Well, it wasn't long that I was there that our, first of all, that rock music and the things that we did led to our life more and more in a very bad way. And since you already knew the songs to play for the troops, we started into playing in these clubs around the way, and it was terrible. And it began, I just began to wrestle with the fact that all along, I was going to my church, all along living this double life.

But everybody was blessing me and saying how great it was, because I was doing it for the Army. But yet, there was something inside of me that was saying, this is not real. This is not real, it's just a head Christianity.

So the Germans call something Fasching. It's like a Mardi Gras for the Germans. It was way up in Mützen-Glaubach, Germany, way up north Germany.

And while we were in there, it was this terrible decadence of all that, I just, Tonya and I went into our hotel room that night and said, you know, this thing that we're calling Christianity, it just doesn't make sense, and we're living this double life, and we're gonna either need to just reject Christianity or take it with no compromise. So we got on our knees, thanks be to God, in that hotel room that night, and both of us totally surrendered our lives to Christ and said, and the thing that we said was, no compromise. It's going to be God.

It's just him, and we're gonna stop this double life. Well, the first thing that we did as we, the music challenged us, so we quickly got out of the rock band, which was easy. You know, there's a line of people waiting to be in something like that, so that was easy.

So there were other musician jobs we could be in, so we were in that. But then I'll never forget the time that I opened up the Bible, we had started reading in bed, and I said, Tonya, let me read this to you. And it was sort of like, you know, Josiah, how he went into the temple there and found the law.

I said, I don't know, but see what you think of this. I mean, okay, so I started, I picked up the Bible, and I said, okay, listen, just listen. You have heard that it has been said, an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.

But I say to you that you resist not evil. But whosoever shall smite thee on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if a man will sue thee at the law and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also.

And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, you go with him twain. Give to him that asketh, and for him that would borrow thee, turn not thou away. You have heard that it has been said, thou shalt love thy neighbor and hate thine enemy.

But I say unto you, love your enemy, bless them that curse you, and do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be the children of your father, which is in heaven. For he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love them which love you, what reward have you? Do not even the publicans do the same.

And if you salute your brethren only, what do you more than others? Do not even the publicans so. I closed the Bible. I said, so what do you think of that? He said, well, it seems pretty simple, Doug, didn't I mean? I said, yeah, it seems simple, but we're in the army.

And for the first time in my life, I was confronted with the fact that my entire world was contrary to the teachings of Jesus Christ. And that's where I found myself in a huge crisis. Just look at that door, that angel music in the back sounds beautiful, but I'll start listening to it.

I found myself at crisis and with the fact that of looking at these words of Jesus and saying, what if he like meant those things? I mean, you know, I thought of my salvation just as sort of a sinner's prayer, but now suddenly if the word was to become a blueprint for me, a model for me, and that changed my life. From there we began the, I talked to a chaplain and he gave me a book written by the head of the chaplain core and the head of the chaplain core explaining what it meant, how you could have a just war theory. And as I read through that book, it was one of the first books I completed, especially a theology book, certainly was the first book.

I got to the end of that book and I was a bit scared. Because you see, when I felt that the theologians and all the big guys knew what they were talking about, when I thought, well, they had this thing figured out that we've been going to war and killing people for thousands of years. But when I read their reasonings, it frankly scared me.

I thought, well, these are terrible reasons. These are weak reasons. How can you just negate the plain words of Christ with, well, the end justify the means? So I began to search more.

At this time, there was a man growing in popularity. This is by the name of Saddam Hussein. And he started to rise in power.

And I was already talking to some friends there, Christian friends at work at the army. And then things began to kind of nag on me more and more. And then I started to think about a scene that happened a year before this.

I went to Berlin twice. Once was in the year 1988. And when Tonya was in basic training, my wife Tonya.

When I was in basic training, I went there. And while I was in Berlin, it was filled with military things and all the Babwar, the Russian soldiers and the East German communist soldiers that are pointing their guns at you and all this. And it was very intimidating.

But then I was going back in 1989 when Tonya got out of the army and I was there. And does anybody know what happened in Berlin in 1989? That was all before your time. Are you all born yet? All right, you're all born.

All right, what happened? The wall fell down and I was there. And it was really incredible because I was there just the year before, but now I was standing at that wall. And these people had like knocked holes in the wall, you know, with chipping it away and guys were having these battering rams and they were knocking it in and all this type of thing.

And they were making this big holes in the wall. And then these communists and East German Russian guys were putting their hands through the holes in the wall, asking to kiss me through the holes in the wall, handing champagne through the holes in the wall and saying my brother and freedom and peace and that

type of thing. And it was a very powerful moment.

But the thing that stunned me was this. I just simply asked the question, what changed? And something about that moment made me think of the kingdoms of this earth in a lot different way. What changed? Last year, I could have been called on to shoot this guy.

This year, he's kissing me through a hole in the wall. You know what I mean? There's a big difference there. What changed? A few politicians got together in Washington and Moscow and Berlin and suddenly my enemy is my friend.

And that bothered me. Because as I begin to study Christ more, I realized that this kingdom that he came to bring in was beyond all these things. It had already knocked down all those walls.

And then now those people were my brothers now in Christ, if they are my brothers in Christ, but nonetheless, even my enemies and not to be someone to be shot. So as I began to study that and look at that, I got to the point, now the Persian Gulf War, I gotta speed this up a little bit. The Persian Gulf War is going on.

It's starting to get more heated up. And I didn't know what to do, so I sent a letter to one of the books that I was reading. This was before email and all that, you know.

I sent a letter to one of the books that I'm reading and saying, hey, we're two soldiers, we don't know what to do, we're gonna go AWOL help. And fortunately, they sent that to the Mennonite Central Committee. Mennonite Central Committee sent that to two counselors, Andre and Kathy Stoner, who were living over in Germany at the time, and they really were instrumental in helping us with the process of becoming conscientious objectors.

And that was very much of a learning time for me. But now something happened, and this is what I think is the Anabaptist difference. This is what I think is the Christ following difference.

It's as if Jesus, through the Holy Spirit, was opening up the word and just simply said, I mean it, I mean that, the difference. That is the difference. When this becomes something that's not a meditation, it's not something that you just stow away somewhere, it's not something that just makes you feel guilty and then you confess your sins and feel better, it's a design for life.

It's a whole way, endued by the Holy Spirit, being born again from above, causes these things to occur, and he means it. And so that was powerful for me. Make a long story short, you have to do certain things when you become a conscientious objector.

I first had to face the commander, and he saluted and I gave him the regulations about becoming a conscientious objector. And then you had to go to a chaplain, you had to go to a psychiatrist, which is a funny story, I can tell you sometime, maybe I'll tell it later. And then you go to, finally you go to this court hearing, and the court hearing is powerful because they challenge every little thing about trying to look at inconsistencies with you, and he was a captain who was in charge of asking all these questions.

And that was interesting because beforehand, the Mennonite Central Committee sent us this little book on how to answer those questions that they typically ask you. And I got a little group, now we had shared our faith with another couple, and they were getting excited and wanted out of the army too. And I said, wait a minute, the scripture says, when you are brought before magistrate, you will not prepare beforehand what

you shall say, but the Holy Spirit would give you utterance.

Let's claim that promise and go in, and that's what we did. We just testified and gave our testimony of Christ to that man at the table, the judge there, so to speak, who was running the hearing. And as we did that, we each individually did that, and it was eight months until the beginning of the process to the end of the process, till we found out it was all over.

And here's what happened. The war was now over. America, the first Persian Gulf War, they went in, went out, it was all over.

And we had lots of stories in between there. Maybe I'll intersperse them throughout this five weeks, but it's now the war's over, and they're calling us up into this little room. It's a tiny little room, a quarter of the size of this room.

And the same lawyer who was there running the court hearing was there with four manila envelopes on his desk. And he said, okay. He said, I have the results of your conscientious objector application here on my desk.

He says, but listen, the war's over. I mean, I have the authority just for you to say, forget this, you have a nice job, you're all young, go, I have the authority just to be able to say that, and you go on from that. So I knew they didn't.

So I said, no, sir, the Lord wants us to do this, we're gonna go on. He said, well, I thought that's what you were gonna say. He said, well, I wanna tell you, you've all been approved of conscientious objector discharge.

We got honorable discharges because we were approved. And so we had kind of celebrated our military way, you know. And he stopped us, he said, but wait, there's something I wanna tell you.

Okay, the suspense was really big. He says, I, too, now am getting out of the Army for the very same reason. And we're like, whoa.

It was one of those whoa moments of life, you know what I mean? I mean, I couldn't believe it. I mean, and I thought about it, you know, what if during those court hearings, I would have said, well, my church believes in, you know, or I think this and that, you know, and I'd, oh, this isn't for everybody or whatever. No, but it was a reality in our life, it was reality in my wife's life, it was reality in Rick and Don's life of testifying of what Christ was doing in our life and that we were wanting to put the words of Jesus into reality.

And it moved this man who was running the actual court hearing. So after that, it's been a journey. I've tried to live that idea that it's about Jesus and it's about believing that he meant every word that he said.

During that time, that interim time of getting out of the Army, I was kind of lonely. Didn't have much of a church. Our Baptist church told us, I think you'd be more comfortable worshiping elsewhere, was his literal words.

And so history became to be a bit of a church for me for a while. I began to say, am I crazy or has there been other people who thought this way? And I found that there's been a lot of people who thought this way. That a lot of things that we're going through today has been things that people have gone through

over and over again.

And that we have an immense amount of wisdom that we can gain from them. A lot of powerful things we can learn. And so for that reason, history became very dear to me.

And I want to give you some of that passion that I have learned and I have gained from that into some of these people that we call Anabaptists. So before I go on to our first section here, could you just tell me a little bit about yourself? I know we did the introduction, but I wanna know. I don't think it's a bad thing.

You talk to Mennonites, it's kind of like the ones that I visited up there in Germany. Everyone's kind of embarrassed. Well, I go to a Mennonite church.

Everyone's embarrassed by it or your heritage. I love it. I want the colors.

I want the colors of your heritage. So anything you know about your heritage, whether it's Amish, Hutterite, Beechy, Russian, anything, I wanna know some of that so we can, well, sorry about that. How many of you have been to a church split? Curious.

Yeah, well, that's good. I mean, good, that's not all you had. That's not good, the ones that you've been.

But that's, we're gonna see that in our Mennonite history and our Anabaptist history. I think it's a problem, and we're gonna talk about that. And one of the things I would like to do during this time, I wanna be real with this history.

These guys weren't saints in the sake of, well, they were saints, but they weren't perfect, you know? And I want them, I wanted to go deep in preparation for this class to be able to tell this history like stories instead of just the who split with who and fought over what doctrine. I wanna know, well, why were those doctrines important? You know, what were you fighting over? Because usually, as I've found in my experiences, is that it's usually not the surface issues. You know, there's something a lot deeper.

One of the expressions I've heard is that when you wanna beat a dog, it's easy to find a stick. And so these issues become the stick to beat the dog. And there's been a lot of dogs through history, and probably even more sticks.

But so as we look to these people, I want to bring the crisis alive to you. If we talk about the Amish and the Mennonite division, when we get to there, I wanna bring it to you, and I wanna ask you, so where would you have been? When we talk about Holland in the 1700s, which I think is very much like America in 2012, I want it to be able to be real to you so that we can learn to use history like a practice that we can, I'm in the medical world. And so when we look at things, you know, you practice medicine, you have things that happen that are pretty predictable.

And I think that we're gonna see after going through this five-week course that these things are painfully predictable. And for us, just be able to say, hey, do you like where this is going? Or do you not like where this is going? Because usually what I've seen happen over and over again, I think you're gonna see it, when it splits happen, a lot of time truth is lost on both sides, and that's a shame. And so I want us to be real with these things.

I wanna bring out the warts, I wanna bring out, you know, if Minow has some funny Christology or if Conrad Grebel has some interesting past, you know, I'm gonna bring that stuff out as much as I can in

story form so these people can be real for us. And the biggest thing, the biggest reason for that is, so you can say, you know, I'm not that different. And if he can do it with a rugrat like Conrad Grebel, he can do it with me.

If he can do it for these people through time, he can do it for our church, he can do it today. And so that's what I'm hoping to do. So with that in mind, I'm gonna read a very sobering introduction to the Martyrs' Mirror.

That's what I passed out there. If you have your Martyrs' Mirror, I think it's page eight here. And I'm gonna read this.

And the question that I want us to ask is, you know, what do you think? Is he right? Is he over the top? Are we weak? Well, you know, or what? You know, just, I have till 1055. All right. I'm gonna skip through some of this so I try not to make it get too long.

But each day, I'm gonna try to just, kind of like in a storybook fashion, I'm gonna open up the Martyrs' Mirror and I'm gonna read a story. When we get to the How to Write, so I'm gonna read from the Chronicles. And so I like to make these history stories come alive.

I love telling stories. In my preaching, I tell stories. And so if for anything else, I hope to give you a bunch of preaching stories that you can use or stories you can use in life.

It's telling the story that a lot of time makes a big point, big difference too. All right, in page eight of the Martyrs' Mirror, in the preface, this is the time written where persecution in Holland had ended. And the Mennonites had quickly become extremely successful.

Successful in church growth, successful in their businesses, successful in all the different things that they were doing as far as at least the way the world would see from the outside. But some of the concerned brethren thought, you know, I don't know if we have the success that you're talking about. As a matter of fact, what I'm seeing is that we have lost something.

And as I read these words, I'll be honest with you, I think, wow, he's so intense. I wonder if I'm how far gone I already am that this seems so over the top to me. You know what I mean? So here I go.

I'm gonna read it. I'm gonna jump around a little bit. I notice if you see in your text there where it's kind of italicized, that's the footnote section.

Just jump over that. That's the way it printed out when I did that. But on page eight, here it is.

Of greater, under the title, of the greater danger there is at this time than in the bloody and distressing times of the martyrs. These are sad times in which we live. Nay, truly, there is more danger now than in the time of our fathers who suffered death for the testimony of the Lord.

Few will believe this because the great majority look to that which is external and corporal. And in this respect, it is now better, quieter, and more comfortable. Few only look to that which is internal and pertains to the soul on which everything depends.

And he quotes, for what is a man profit if he gains the whole world and loses his own soul? For what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? These times are certainly more dangerous. For then, in those times of the martyrs, Satan came openly through his servants, even at noonday, as a roaring lion, so that they

could be known. And it now and then was possible to hide from him, you know, because these are obvious.

Besides, his chief design then was to destroy the body. But now he comes as in the night or in the twilight, in a strange but yet pleasing form, and in a twofold way lies in wait to destroy the soul partly, to trample underfoot and annihilate entirely if this were possible, the only saving Christian faith, partly to destroy the true separated Christian life, which is the outgrowth of faith. I'm gonna jump down a paragraph there.

It grieves us to the heart that we must live to see these times, and therefore speak in us wise. Oh Lord, strengthen our faith. Thy weak trusting lambs, that they may not be led into error, nor moved from the foundations of the most holy faith.

On the other hand, through his instigation, the world now reveals itself very beautiful and glorious, more than at any preceding time. In a threefold pleasing form, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, almost all men run after her to worship her as Queen Supreme, but all are deceived thereby. Yea, many who have drunk of the poisoned wine of her lust from the golden cup of her iniquities and deceptions die a spiritual death.

Jumping two paragraphs. These things which we tell you are no riddles or blind speeches. For we speak the truth, or the word of God must be false, but the word of God cannot lie.

What we have said is certain and infallible since God in his word bears witness of it. Yea, he declares it emphatically and abundantly. Skipping now down a paragraph.

It certainly was through worldly lust that the old world perished, that Sodom, Gomorrah, Zebium, and Admah was consumed, overthrown, and totally destroyed by the fire from heaven, that in 40 years through serpents, fire, and other plagues, the wanton and lustful people of Israel perished to the number of over 600,000 in the wilderness, and that the mighty maritime cities, Ziddan and Tyrus, whose ships were trimmed and embroidered, silken sails from Egypt, whose rowers set on benches of ivory where incalculable riches were bought and sold, and from carnal incentives, almost inconceivable arts practiced were reduced to a heap of stones, and so leveled to the ground that the fishermen stretched out their nets to dry on the rocks upon which these cities once stood. Skipping two paragraphs. Hence arises that shameful and vast commerce which extends far beyond the sea and other parts of the world, Ezekiel 27, but which notwithstanding cannot satisfy those who love it, but on the contrary brings greater danger.

I'm reading this so we can understand the piety, we can understand what made these early Anabaptists ticked. But notwithstanding cannot satisfy those who love it, love the world, but on the contrary brings great danger that that which has already been gotten may be lost, others defrauded, and they themselves, both in soul and body, stripped and robbed of their possessions. Skipping a paragraph.

The wearing of clothes from foreign countries, whether of foreign materials, uncommon colors, or of strange fashions as obtained in the course of time, according to the custom of the openly worldly-minded, which are as changeable as the moon, and which custom is followed by many humble and seemingly plain people, confirms greatly what we have said before. The giving and attending great dinners, lavish banquets and wedding feasts, though one may never be found in taverns or tipping houses, where everything is in profusion, in other words, it's just food and wine and everything everywhere, and where the beneficent gifts of the Lord, which should not be used otherwise, then with great thankfulness, and of which a portion naturally belongs to the poor, are squandered and consumed without the least necessity,

even by those who are considered sober and temperate. Skipping down two paragraphs.

Here shall obtain what is recorded concerning the end of the luxurious rich man, and that of poor Lazarus, that the rich man, when he saw Lazarus in Abraham's bosom, while he himself was in hell, received this answer to his doleful lamentations. Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receiveth thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things, but now he is comforted and thou art tormented. Appropriate is here also in wisdom five.

Skipping one, two, three, four paragraphs. There is therefore a great danger of being deceived. 35 paragraphs.

There is therefore a great danger of being deceived, O ye upright children of God, be on your guard. That's what he's saying to us today too. Let your simplicity be coupled with prudence.

Your faith as well as your life are the objects aimed at. If Satan gained the mastery over you, your precious faith, which has been commended to your keeping as dearly as your soul, is ruined. If you are overcome by the world, it will soon put an end to your Christian and virtuous life, without which latter the best of faith is of no avail.

In other words, if it's not real, it's not gonna matter anything. Care therefore, my dear friends, equally well for both your results of your life and your faith. For the one is as important as the other.

Faith without the corresponding life or the life without the faith can, will, and may not avail before God. They are like two witnesses who must agree and of whom the one cannot stand or be received without the other. And now towards the end, one, two, three, four paragraphs from the ending.

We would now commend you beloved brethren and sisters to the Lord and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and to give you inheritance among all them which are sanctified. Our work, which has been done for you, for your benefit is now finished in this respect. I thought how fitting.

Here we are reading this history. Now he's saying our work, which has been done for your benefit is now finished in this respect. He was talking about the martyr's mirror, but we can also now look at their lives.

Their work is done and finished for our benefit. That you may make good use of it is our friendly desire. Remember us always in your prayers.

Skipping down, last thing I'm gonna read here. Meantime, we rejoice in the salvation of the Lord for it sometimes seems to us as if heaven had come down upon earth or that we were ascending from earth to heaven. Let's close the scripture.

Or that we who are still among men held communion with God, his holy angels, or that eternal heavenly joy and glory were offered to us. May that we had a foretaste of those things which mortal eye had never seen nor ear heard nor heart experienced in this life. Now, you hear in Telemann's preface there, this cry, this appeal of we're losing it.

We look back to those times in the 1700s and say, wow, it'd be great to live in those days. He's already saying, we're losing it, we're losing it. And when you get into, and we'll get to Holland, we'll be there vicariously.

We'll be there in our readings. But when you get there, you're gonna see as you look at that and you hear that burden coming out of these men of God. The question rises up in your soul.

Where do I stand in all of that? What about today? Is he so over the top or have we lost so much that this seems totally out of fashion? I just thought that'd be a fitting read there as we begin. To give you a little bit of an overview of what we're gonna do through the five weeks, this is my plan. Lord, give me grace to do this.

What I'm hoping to do is to take us on a journey and tomorrow we're gonna start with the early church and we're gonna see, looking at the early Christians and how they lived their life and some of the difficulties they had and we're gonna follow that up to Constantine. From Constantine, we're gonna go through the persecuted church and trace this persecuted church through the period until the Reformation. Now, when we study churches like this, sometimes when you read church history, you kind of think you can kind of go there again.

It's no longer there. It's like, I remember once, I'm sorry, I'm breaking into my synopsis here, but I remember once I visited Mariah Chapel, which is where the Welch Revival was in Locher, Wells, Locher, and as I was there, I wanted to see where the birthplace of the Welch Revival was. It was powerful being there.

I stayed in Evan Roberts' house. I prayed in Evan Roberts' kitchen where he prayed for the Welch Revival and I walked to church that Sunday like Evan Roberts would have done and when I was sitting in there, I was like, wow, I finally made it to Mariah Chapel and I looked around and there was like 12 little old ladies and a borrowed preacher because they didn't have one of their own and I was gone, I was gone. I read in the Keswick Week, those are transcribed sermons, a sermon preached 10 years after the Welch Revival where, oh, I forgot his name right now.

He was there. He said, I just was at Locher. I was just at Wells and it's gone, it's gone.

And the point is that church history, churches aren't lakes, it's rivers. You kind of wish it'd be a lake. I'd like to go to this lake and see these great saints, the early Christians, the persecuted church, but it's a river and it goes on and this river starts flowing in this, that flew out of this side of Jesus when his side was pierced and it's gone on and this river goes on and on and it's our turn now.

But anyway, so we're gonna go from that early church, we're gonna get in that river in the early church, we're gonna ride that river up to Constantine, tomorrow, Lord willing. From Constantine, the next day, we're gonna go through a lot of the persecuted church movements and we're gonna see that any church, any group of people that got together, took the word of God and just opened up and said, I think he means it. We're radical and persecuted churches and we're gonna follow that up to the Reformation.

From the Reformation, we're gonna look at some of the spiritual and the next day, this will be Friday now, we're gonna go from the Reformation and getting up to Zurich, building up to the Anabaptists. Because what I want you to do is, I don't want the Anabaptists to look like some particular group that came out of the blue. You know, we went from the early church and nothing happened until Conrad Grebel and Felix Mann started studying their Bible.

You know, it's not completely a fair way to give it. This has been a river of life that has flowed where people have tried to take the words of Jesus seriously ever since, ever since, and it still is to this day.

Okay, that'll be the first week.

Then after that, I would like to spend a whole week on Switzerland. We all here, with the exception of Jacob, genetically, and me and Jacob and I are the only ones who genetically don't come from a Swiss background. He comes from Russia, we'll get to that weeks after that.

But all of us, I would say ideology on our way we think, our Swiss brethren and our mindsets. If you were to say the Swiss brethren mindset, that would be even closer to say than I think a Mennonite. And so I'm gonna spend a whole week on the Swiss brethren.

It's also fun because there's a lot of kind of cool stories and interesting things. People have done a lot of neat research on Conrad Grebel's life and Felix Mann's and there's some, just a lot of research has been done on that first five years. So there's some really fascinating stuff.

And you can get to a lot of details of saying, okay, what about me? So we're gonna spend week two talking about the Swiss brethren and talking about the Zurich and all that. And again, I throw myself in that Swiss brethren camp and I know Jacob I'm sure does as well. And there are no grandchildren of Christianity, amen.

It's a faith church and I love the heritage but it's a faith heritage and not that we're, we have children of Abraham or such, so to speak. From there, we're gonna follow the Swiss brethren into the Moravian Anabaptists and we're gonna pick up some radical movements of the Moravian Anabaptists including some of the communal Swiss brethren and then of course into the Hutterites. Following the Hutterites all the way through and some of the most impressive missionary activity we see in the Anabaptist world I think of any time.

And I'm gonna bring up some of those mission scenes and some of the things that happened. Some incredible martyrdom stories. They kept some great chronicles and so some fascinating stories are gonna come out from that.

So we're also gonna look at the Swiss, I mean the Austrian and South German as part of that. We'll pick up Pilgrim Marpeck as well through that. From there, we're gonna go to Holland.

Next week, we're gonna go to Holland and we're gonna follow the little movements that got the faith up to Holland. And Holland's a whole different flavor of Mennonites. And on our way to Holland, we're gonna stop by Munster.

And if anybody heard the whole tragedy that happened in Munster, well, it's crazier than you ever thought when you dig it deeper and I've done some deeper research into it and you're gonna have a lot of no way that you're gonna say when I'm giving you the things that happened in Munster. It was a tragedy indeed. But if there's anything we can learn from Munster, I think we should try to spend a day on.

I'm gonna give a whole day to Munster just to give you some of the crazy stuff that happened there. And you'll understand, you'll feel a little bit sorry for Menno Simons. They were gonna spend the rest of Holland looking into Menno Simons.

And yeah, he was kind of tough, but you're gonna see he had a lot to deal with. He was a, and if it wasn't for Menno Simons and his brilliant organization and things, I think we'd be lacking. From then, that gave birth to an exciting movement of Mennonites that went into Russia and went into Poland and some of

these eastern areas, actually met up with the Hutterites over in the same area through that progression, through persecution and different things there.

And some exciting things, we're gonna follow the Russians into Canada and to Central America and look at some of their incredible testimonies of faith that they did. And also learn from all these people's mistakes, Swiss brother and Dutch as well. And then, and then we're gonna try to bring these people back to America and see how some of these things affect us and how some of these things are finding their way.

And this is the, by that time, I really wanna get to the point where you can articulate the crisis, that you can understand some of these splits and difficulties. And one of the choices for your essay question that's gonna be is, where's my church in this continuum? And do I like where it's going? Or do I not like where it's going? What am I gonna do as a young person that's gonna press this further into the kingdom and see closer who Jesus really is? Okay, then just the last section here, I'm just gonna give another quick introduction on how people talk about Anabaptist. But before we do that, let's take a break.

Let's stand up just where you are there and kind of shake the dust off. And I'm gonna pass out my motto. Here's my motto.

And this is where I think the secret is. And if we miss out on this and miss out on everything and all of our problems, I think can be traced to not being this. There, with all that adieu.

Okay, it's a great break. Okay, all right, you can be seated here. All right, Anabaptism.

If I have to bring the difference in my biggest, really I have a burden for this class. I have a burden that I believe that all of you, including myself, have been painfully influenced by modern American evangelicalism. And it's not just a matter of us versus them, one denomination versus another denomination.

I think it's a great concern. Because why I think it's a great concern is because it's getting us further away from Jesus Christ. And that's the bottom line.

The genius of all the persecuted churches, the radical churches through the Middle Ages we're gonna look at tomorrow, and the early church has been this. Here's my little sheet of paper that I have on your paper. What if Jesus really meant every word he said? Just ponder that.

You think he did? So let me ask you the next question. The answer's really in the question. In fact, can you be a follower of Christ without following Christ? Somehow in my background, we said we could.

Can you be a follower of Christ without following Christ? I don't believe you can. And I believe Jesus said, why do you call me Lord if you don't do the things that I say? There is a huge paradigm. You know what I mean by the word paradigm? If I give a word, then you don't know, you don't say, hey.

A whole way of thinking that has corrupted us and corrupted our people, and it's this, that Christianity is in your head, that it's a theology that you agree to, that it's a certain just doctrines that you say yes to, and that's gonna kill us, and it's gonna get us away from Jesus. But if you and if anybody through history, and if your church or any little group together picks up that Bible that you have, and you'd say this, you know, what if he means it? What if these aren't just little nice stories? It's gonna change everything. And what's more impressive, it is a recipe to change the world, not just in the way they think, but in the way they act,

the way they treat.

It is the cure for humanity. Jesus Christ is the answer, and I believe the gospel has the answers for everything, everything. And so when we start getting mixed up, we say, well, he's a Christian.

I mean, and what we're gonna see as we look through Mennonite history, Mennonites started to turn into fundamentalists that happened to have non-resistance and head coverings and plain clothes. And but they still describe themselves as fundamentalist in their doctrine. They still explain them the same way a Baptist would explain their way, except we have non-resistance and we have head covering them.

And you've missed it, because the questions that they ask reveal that their answer is far away. But if you ask this question, what if Jesus really meant every word he said? It's gonna bring you back to the right question. You know, you can get the right answer to the wrong question.

Do you know that? So you can get the right answer to the wrong question. Let me give you an example. Let's say I'm counseling this boy and he's a Mormon missionary, okay? And we all think, okay, well, Mormons, he shouldn't be a Mormon, right? But he's a man who wants to give everything to spread Mormonism.

So but then he's kind of saying, well, should I spend a year spreading Mormonism or should I buy me a new red sports car? Which one, God, which one? Another year on the mission field and the Mormons or a red sports car? You see how you can get the right answer to the wrong question. So which one, God, which one? Neither. So we need to ask the right questions.

And this class is gonna be about asking the right questions. And the right question that I wanna keep coming back to is Jesus, not just in our heads, not just one part of Jesus, but every part of Jesus, that we can all be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ. And let me give you this quote.

This quote by Soren Kierkegaard, who was, I don't agree with everything he says, but this is an excellent quote, so I gave it to you. Check this quote out. Ponder this quote.

All right, he puts it this way. He says, the matter is quite simple. And this is how I'm gonna argue Anabaptist theology in its proper form.

I'm gonna argue Jesus theology in its proper form. The matter is quite simple. This is easy.

This isn't deep theology here. The matter is quite simple. The Bible is very easy to understand.

But we Christians are a bunch of scheming swindlers. We pretend to be unable to understand it because we know very well that the minute we understand, we are obliged to act accordingly. In other words, if you read something like Love Your Enemies, you go, I don't understand that.

No. A woman who prays without her head cover. I don't, what does he mean by it? So we know that very well, the minute we understand, we are obliged to act accordingly.

Take any words in the New Testament and forget everything except pledging yourself to act accordingly. My, you'd say. If we do that, my whole life would be ruined.

How would I ever get on in this world? And he says sarcastically, herein lies the real place of Christian scholarship. Christian scholarship is the church's prodigious invention to defend itself against the Bible, to

ensure that we can continue to be good Christians without the Bible coming too close. Oh, priceless scholarship.

What would we do without you? Dreadful it is to fall into the hands of the living God. Yes, it is even dreadful to be alone with the New Testament. Powerful, huh? If you let me quote Mother Teresa, the gospel is very simple, but it's not easy.

His yoke is easy, it means a right fit, but it's painfully simple. And I believe the Bible is childlike simplicity. And I believe the beauty of Anabaptist theology in history is its childlike simplicity.

Jesus said it. Hey, let's try it. Let's do it, let's see what happens.

And that beautiful childlike thing is what comes out over and over again. Anabaptism, I wanted to throw a quick little thing in on, if you've taken notes, you can mention this. During the 50s, a man by the name of Harold S. Bender, anybody heard of him? I'm gonna have y'all listen to a sermon of his that I recorded maybe some night, I might do it for homework sometime.

But Harold S. Bender in the 1940s and 50s was a real brainy guy who did some great research in Mennonite history and started the Mennonite Quarterly Review and all that sort of thing and helped Mennonite scholarship like never before. But he really made it where if you weren't a Swiss brother and you weren't an Anabaptist, I mean, no way around it. And I mean, he had some good points.

All the other groups faded away and became nothing, all the different extreme things just faded away. But later on, when people stopped being conservative Mennonites, they said, hey, aren't I still an Anabaptist? And so the trend then came into the 60s and the 70s of bringing up all these different fringe groups and saying, well, they're Anabaptists, and so we're kind of like those people, that's why we're doing these strange things, because those people did. And all this arguing on who can be an Anabaptist and who can't be an Anabaptist is a bit academic, but for your purposes, understand that modern Mennonite would like to say that Harold S. Bender went too far with his explanation of saying, if you're not a Swiss brother and you're not an Anabaptist.

But I think Harold S., I think he did go a bit far with that but so be careful that I think the liberal Mennonites today just say, hey, we want to still be called Anabaptists. But also the term is strange in the sense when historians use the word Anabaptist, they're mainly talking about the group of people in history. They're not necessarily meaning it as an identity for you today.

And that's also something that can get you tricked out in your readings, when you do your readings. They see it as like, let's say you're talking about the Huguenots or the Puritans or something, they see it as a historic people. We use it a lot today as an identity.

And I have mixed feelings about that, I like it, I call myself an Anabaptist, particularly when I'm amongst conservative. And I do that to be truthful out of humility. I could just say, I'm a Christian and that's my bottom line, but I don't know what to do with people who say you can follow Christ and not follow Christ.

So with these teachings of non-resistance, these teachings of the Sermon on the Mount, I don't see them as extras, I see them as the gospel given to us by Christ. But I want to be careful with that and not say that this is the only way. So I use Anabaptist as a bit of humility, saying this is the way I have a platform to be able to explain Christianity in that way.

But people use that in different ways. And people, for the most part now, would come up, the historians, and I'm gonna give you some of that, would come up with an idea that there's been three main origins of Anabaptism. And I would follow this along pretty well.

They would say basically the Swiss Brethren area around Switzerland had a huge origin, obviously. Then also they would say that the South German and Austrian areas had a different flavor. And we're gonna talk about that a little bit.

And then, of course, the North German and Dutch. Those would be three main origins of Anabaptist theology. And you should know that for a test.

I don't know. But so basically the three ones are the Swiss Brethren, the South German, Austrians, and the North German and Dutch make up those three areas. So again, the beauty of their simplicity and their expression can be seen in some of their writings.

And I'm gonna give you just a couple of those, and then we're gonna close here. It is nothing new that we struggle with a Christianity that's head knowledge and a Christianity that we believe changes your life. The Anabaptists weren't people that believed that you were saved by faith and works.

They didn't try to balance some kind of a, but they believed that you had a faith that works, a faith that truly was seen in your physical actions. They believed, Middle Simon's particularly, well, I'll share one. They talked about being born again.

That was the evidence. You must be born again to see the kingdom. They saw being born again as something that truly you were a changed life, not something you went and did on one day.

And this concept of between just a head knowledge Christianity and a whole life Christianity is something that's affecting every one of you. Somehow we are saying, well, I got my intentions right, my heart's right, and you're excusing your sins, and you're excusing your behavior. Too easy.

And I speak for myself as well. And to give you an idea of some of those differences, here is a quote that I found. This was from, this was from, found in a letter in Bern about 1536, and he explains while he was captured the difference of why he left the Evangelicals and joined the Anabaptists, very early letter.

And here was what he said. It kind of can set the stage for the way we think through this. While yet in the national church, that would have been the new reformation by Evangelicals, while yet in the national church, we obtain much instruction from the writings of Luther, Zwingli, and others, concerning the mass and other papal ceremonies, that they were vain.

Yet we recognize a great lack as regards repentance, conversion, and a true Christian life. Upon these things, my mind was bent. I waited and hoped for a year or two, since the minister had much to say about amendment of life, of giving to the poor, of loving one another, of abstaining from evil, but I could not close my eyes to the fact that the doctrine which was preached, and which was based on the word of God, was not carried out.

No beginning was made toward true Christian living, and there was no unison in the teaching concerning things that were necessary. And although the mass and the images were finally abolished, true repentance and Christian love were not, watch the word, in evidence. Changes were made only in concerned external things.

This gave me occasion to inquire further into these matters, and then God sent his messengers, Conrad Grebel and others, with whom I conferred about the fundamental teachings of the apostles of the Christian life and practice. I found them men who had surrendered themselves to the doctrine of Christ by Bussfieterkeit, which means in German, repentance, evidence by fruit. With their assistance, we established a congregation in which repentance was in evidence by newness of life in Christ.

And that is the, that is the, that is the difference. Then the last quote I'm gonna give to you, I got this from John D. Roth. He wrote this quote, there was a fight, this is like in the 1570s now, and they're trying to bring in the Anabaptists and just give them questions, and frame the questions to a theological mindset.

Remember what I just said? The answer's in the question. Watch this little dispute, and then we'll close. Because it really brings the different minds to thought here, and this is John D. Roth wrote, he says, the state theologians insisted on this debate, on the topics of the debate remained focused on classical formulations of Christian doctrine.

In other words, explain to us the nature of God, the Trinity, explain to us sin and the redemptive work of Christ, et cetera, and they framed their arguments in the technical, highly nuanced language appropriate to the university training. The Swiss brethren, by contrast, were far more interested in practical questions of Christian ethics, and they defended their position with a literalist approach of the New Testament. In other words, he said it, we mean it.

That their exasperated opponents regarded it as naive, they saw this was naive and simplistic. Not surprisingly, the two sides often talked way past each other, thus, so he says. Thus, when Reformed theologians at Frankentod pressed the Swiss brethren minister for his views on the salvific status of the Old Testament patriarchs, which means, do you think the Old Testament patriarchs were saved, how did they get to heaven? Asking these theological questions, here was his reply.

The Lord knows best whom those of old entered heaven. I am not commanded to dispute what took place one or 2,000 years ago. I am commanded to do right, and this is my lifelong aim.

The secrets which God revealed for himself, I wish to entrust to God. We go too far in proving the deity. Another one argued the same thing, another minister there, that the created should reason about the creator is too difficult for us.

We are not told that any apostle delved into such deep matters, and here's the point. Unimpressed by these appeals to biblical constraints, the exasperated head of the Reformed delegation responded. Ready for this? Then why debate? You could just have sent us the Bible and said, this is our understanding, end quote.

And that is the essence of Anabaptist, and I believe early Christianity, and I believe today the burden that I have is it's gonna be our essence. Let's get to Jesus, let's put these things to practice, and let's make them real. So okay, well that concludes today's lecture, and if we could, maybe we'll end with prayer.

Jacob, if you could close us with prayer, and then we'll go. Amen.

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