

Anabaptist Missions

by Dean Taylor

Dean Taylor emphasizes the integral role of community and the local church in Anabaptist missions, advocating for a return to biblical methods of evangelism.

Duration: 1:06:20

Scripture: Jeremiah 1:10, Matthew 4:19, Matthew 7:24-27, Matthew 22:37-40, Matthew 28:19-20, Acts 1:8, Revelation 21:4

Topics: "Community"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher encourages the heroes of Israel and the strong men of Zion to take courage and rejoice, as the time of their triumph is near. He assures them that all their tears will be washed away and their reward is ready. The preacher also highlights the importance of not making the gospel too easy, as it can lead young men astray. He challenges the audience to consider how they will lose these young men, either to the world through video games and the army, or as martyrs for Christ. The sermon concludes with a reference to a mission conference in the late 1800s, where the idea of the Jesus fire spreading and igniting hearts is emphasized.

Transcript

Like I said, I'm Dean Taylor. Today I'm going to talk about Anabaptist missions. Let me get this out of the way.

You may be asking, the theme that was given to us this year was looking at community, the sense of community that we have amongst the Anabaptist people. So you may be wondering, why didn't I just save this for a mission conference or something? But it's just this very thought about the role of the sense of community that the Anabaptists have had in missions, and it's the very point that I would like to make. So, if we could, I'd like to just start with a word of prayer, and then I'd like to get started and explain first what I plan on sharing throughout the message, and then go from there.

So let's pray. Dear Heavenly Father, we come to You in the name of Jesus Christ this morning. Lord, and I thank You so much that, as Brother Reuben told us, how You promised that You will build Your church, and that the gates of hell will not prevail against that church that You build.

And so, dear Heavenly Father, we come to You, Lord, today, God, and I, as we see Your people, as we've seen Your people grow weak and grow lax, O God, we do again cry out, Lord, spare Thy people, O God. Give not Thy heritage to reproach that the heathen will say, where is their God? I pray, O God, as

according to Your promise that You said, when the enemy shall come in like a flood, that You will raise up a standard against it. And so, dear God, I pray that this morning that You would remind us of Your vision that You have for humanity, as we sang from those words that Zinzendorf gave, that You will make a new humanity out of us, a people born again, not of flesh, but of Your seed, O God, taking Your kingdom, Your kingdom, to the ends of this earth.

O God, have mercy upon us this morning. Lord, have mercy upon me. Please stop my words and let Your words be spoken.

It's in Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Amen.

I very much appreciated Brother Ruben speaking. It was a blessing, and it was very exciting to hear all that you've been through there, and I would like to see that recording too, Brother, of that. And if somebody could get a glass of water, please, I'd appreciate it.

I'm Dean Taylor. I, as I think some of you might know this, I didn't come from an Anabaptist background. My wife and I, around 20-something years ago, were converted while we were soldiers in the army.

The biggest thing that affected us in our conversion was we simply took the words of Jesus, and I was, my wife and I were just shocked at these words, and we felt that, well, how do you, this is so different than what we're expressing. And of course, one of the biggest things that we dealt with was non-resistance, being the fact that we were in the army. That's a whole different story.

But my journey that I've tried to do, and I miss out on this a lot, but I've tried to put in practical application, if I had a mission statement, if I did something in my life that I've tried to do, is to be faithful with those words of Jesus Christ. And to not just explain them away as I did 20-something years ago as a soldier in the United States Army, but to truly believe that Jesus meant every word He said. And I believe that this topic here, speaking about missions, is another one of those words that Jesus talks about.

And it's the words that I believe our forefathers, our Anabaptist forefathers, took very seriously, along with some of those other things that we typically talk about in these circles. And so, I would like to talk about the Anabaptist concept of missions. I'd like to give just a few how I came about this, and what I'm going to plan on doing during this message.

Here in Lancaster County, I was a pastor with a ministry team here, a pastor that was of a relatively conservative Anabaptist church that was also starting a mission. And I noticed that in Lancaster County, and maybe you can testify to this, there was almost a fear of missions. You talked about missions, there was almost a trembling about it all.

I personally witnessed the inner conflict that mission brought to a local congregation, and the congregations that I was associated with. I did not feel that was the way it was meant to be. So, when it was my turn to be involved with starting a mission, I also was scared.

And so, I began to study, and I began to study missiology. And this is the point that I found. I found that, to my surprise, when I noticed that when I started to read the different books on missiology, that even the conservative evangelicals, who are also seeing trouble amongst their missions, and many of them were talking about this Anabaptist style of missions.

Well, and so, in this first part of this message, I would like to discuss and give you some of these quotes from those conservative evangelicals of what they're calling what's supposed to be our style of mission. And the second part, I would like to show that the idea of mission and evangelizing was a vibrant and active mission. It was a driving force that led our forefathers from the very beginning.

That is an essential part of what the Anabaptist package should look like, and it certainly was from the beginning, and I hope to be able to show you that today. So, the first part, I'm going to give you the quotes from the conservative evangelicals. I'm going to show you what they're saying about the trouble of missions.

The second part, I would like to remind of our heritage, and then I would like to encourage us to put it into practice. Not so much as a carbon copy. We serve a creator God, Brother Reuben, right? But I do believe He wants to do something amongst His people today.

Okay, some disclaimers. I want to say that I appreciate anyone who is living a sacrificial life serving God in the mission field. I really do.

And that I consider every form of mission, every cup of cold water, better than what I'm doing in my life. And I'm not just saying that as a token. I don't want to say that when I'm comparing these that I'm somehow, you know, condemning all these brave missionaries around the globe.

Historians have noticed differences in missionary methods of the early Anabaptists compared to the modern evangelicals, and I didn't think this up. And I'm going to demonstrate that to you in just a moment. And also, there are probably many missionaries in this room with lots of experience, so I will defer to you as well.

And again, I want to say that what I'm suggesting is not necessarily a carbon copy, but I believe the essence of this passion to spread the kingdom of God to the ends of the earth was something that was part of what we stood for. And I believe it needs to be, if we're faithful to the words of Christ, part of our plan again. All right, I'm going to be giving you a lot of quotes.

I'm going to read them pretty much straight from here. I have a stack of 25 of almost every quote that I'm giving on a paper here. If some of you would like a copy of those quotes, you may get those after the message.

They're here right up there on the top there. After I talk about our heritage, at the very end--and I'll run about five minutes late, brother, sort of--at the very end, I'm going to be talking about some of the stress that the Lancaster County missions got into in the 1950s, and maybe some lessons that we can learn about how the evangelical model and Anabaptist model clashed as they went to Sharati, Africa in the late 1940s and 50s. I'm going to show that right at the very end.

All right, my main point is to be a Jesus-following people. And why I became an Anabaptist today is because I found a people that believed that Jesus really meant what he said. That's it.

That's what I want to be about. The words of Jesus. I always say, if you meet me at the red letters, we can talk.

And so, taking those words of Jesus. And so, that's why I've embraced the things on non-resistance. It's the word of Jesus.

That's why I've had to come to terms with things like lawsuits, and swearing, and divorce, and some of those things, and realize that I believe that Jesus meant those things. But if we're going to be sticklers on those things, and I think we should, he also gave a lot of talk about sharing this kingdom with the ends of the earth. And that's also those red letters.

From the beginning, the Anabaptists were driven with a zeal to propagate the gospel. Number three, and here's the point, the local church community, and I believe in the words of Jesus, the apostles, and particularly with our early Anabaptists, the local church community was God's chief instrument, and it still is, for spreading the gospel. Historically, the Anabaptists considered missions, the whole idea of missions, as the planting of church communities with discipleship, and not just preaching of messages somewhere.

And then the loss of the church community in missions, number five, has hurt both the church and missions, I believe. And number six, the biggest point, if we regain the ancient biblical methods of spreading the gospel of the kingdom, I believe we will once again impact this world. And may I say something? Over the 20 years since my conversion and Anabaptism and the journey that I've been on, I've seen lots of different things, and I've been so richly blessed.

And I want to encourage us. I like to be a bridge builder. I want to encourage us.

I don't want to be critical. I really want to see God do a work again. But I want to say that through these messages, I did not just prepare a message to say something.

And if I could give a cliché, I do have something to say. I have something to say that's coming out of a burden in my heart. And these quotes that I'm giving you, the facts that I'm giving you, both from the modern conservative evangelicals as well as our early Anabaptist forefathers, comes out of a burden on my heart that I hope to see a difference in my life and the life of my children.

All right. I start with this question. I wonder if some of the reasons why, when I notice this tension amongst the Anabaptist groups with mission and church, I wonder if some of the reasons why for the tension between church and mission comes from the fact that they should have never been separated in the first place.

Did you hear what I said? Some of that tension between the mission people and the church people, perhaps that concept should have never been separated. And I believe that's my whole point. And then the second question I ask is, why are American Anabaptists adopting modern evangelical methods of missions just at a time when the evangelicals are starting to discard them? And now I want to back that up with some quotes from conservative evangelicals.

I would like to begin that section of this sermon now talking about my study into what the conservative evangelicals were saying about missions. One of my favorites here, an essay by Dave Harvey. This is a minister in the Sovereign Grace Ministry.

These are the people who do, C.J. Mahoney, the brother who does I Kiss Dating Goodbye, Joshua Harris, and conservative in the evangelical world. And they saw a problem and they wanted to do missions a little differently and it was amazing some of the things they were saying in this essay. Dave Harvey of Sovereign Grace Ministry said this, it is not enough simply to preach the gospel and to see people converted.

He says the Great Commission is fully satisfied only when converts become anchored in their faith, instructed in the context of the local church, and equipped as ambassadors of Christ, that is, made disciples. He goes on, this brings us far closer to the New Testament way. The idea is not so much that individuals are to be sent out from the local church, rather they are sent out as expressions of the local church.

And that's since the local church sends itself, its gifts, values, maturity, and resources, and are reproduced in another location in a way that uniquely fits the context where it is planted. Because church planting exports biblical community rather than church traditions narrowly defined, it works across towns and across cultures. I have a little saying that I say, I don't trust doctrines that change overseas and over centuries.

I don't. I believe that these principles are true in every generation and in every land. He goes on to say this, he says, sad to say, Christians in western culture, with its emphasis on individual vision of personal spirituality, often erase the local church factor from the equation.

He said this is what you usually get in the average modern American church. The gospel plus the commissioned individual equals world evangelism. He says, no, that's not the way I see it in the Bible.

He says the application that he sees is that this, the gospel, the commissioned individual, and the local church community will give us world evangelism. That this element of taking the church community out of that evangelism is a huge mistake. That's what he says, and here's the way he's looking at it.

Going back, an Anglican minister by the name of Roland Allen, I don't know if we'd agree with everything, but it's interesting some of the things that he brings out, and he was noticing at the early on in the 1900s, as seeing the era in missions, and Roland Allen said, quote, we cannot but recognize that everywhere we have established missions, and missions are not churches. If we establish missions instead of establishing churches is because we differ from the apostles and the early church in principle and in spirit. I think well said, and he has this little nice statement.

Everywhere we have churches without missions, and everywhere else we have missions without churches, and it shouldn't be this way. It shouldn't be separated. Oops.

Another one, Paul Tripp, a conservative Presbyterian from Philadelphia, I believe, talks about the loss of the full commission. In his book, he says this, and watch his point, and watch where he's going, and what he sees in his circles. He says, I believe that the church has been weakened by its tendency to neglect the second half of this commission, the great commission in Matthew 28.

Jesus calls us not only to go and make disciples, but also to teach them what it means, to teach them what it means to live lives that are obedient to every command of Christ. There's your education, brother Reuben. It is a call to exhort, encourage, and teach so that we would be progressively freed from old patterns of sin and conformed instead to the image of Christ.

The great commission is not only a call to bring people into the kingdom of light, but also a call to teach them to live as children of light once they are there. When we lose sight of this second half of the great commission, that is teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you, we lose sight of its claim on our everyday talk. Well said.

Well said. A Dallas Theological Cemetery man by the name of Aubrey Malfress, conservative evangelical, had this to say. He said that a careful reading of Acts reveals that the early church implemented the great commission mandate primarily, this is how they did it, by planting churches.

A study of the missionary journeys recorded in Acts revealed that they, in fact, were church planting forays into what was predominantly a pagan culture. As a result of these, Paul and others planted high impact churches in key cities such as Derbe, Lystris, Iconium, Antioch, Philippi, Thessalonica, Brea, Corinth, and Ephesus. And he goes on, he says, armed with the good news, we are commanded to follow the New Testament pattern of penetrating new regions to communicate God's Word and to create God's community.

In contrast to traditional missionary enterprise, which often center primarily on proclamation, church planting establishes a mission base for the threefold purpose of the proclamation, the integration that is making the disciples, and then further expansion. It's about world conquest, brethren. It's about taking this and having something that grows and self-replicates and continues to go on.

He said local churches reproduce themselves. One of my favorite that I found was in this book, A Biblical Theology of Missions, by George Peters. George Peters, I think also a Dallas Theological Seminary man, I think from a Plymouth Brethren background, if I recall.

George Peters noted this, he says, the history of the church in mission, when you talk about looking at, when you pick up your typical history book of missions, if you're today and you're, and our young people go grab a missionary book, he says, the history of the church in mission is in Maine, mainly the history of great personalities and of missionary societies. Only in exceptional cases has it been the church in missions that you read about. He says, thus individuals have felt called to follow in the steps of the apostles and to pioneer the, and pioneers for Christ in mission lands independently of the churches and church direction.

Well, as a result, many churches as such have remained practically uninvolved in mission, while individuals or small groups from within the church have aggressively carried on foreign mission work. And he says, this has changed the emphasis in a wrong way. And he goes on, he says, since the church is the pillar and ground of the truth, the great commission falls principally upon her.

The whole concept of the church, of the great commission falls upon the church. She inherits the great commission from the apostles of Christ and becomes responsible for its realization. I underline this next part.

It's interesting that this man would say this. Too long has pietistic individualism dominated the mind and scene of Protestantism in relation to the great commission while the church was left asleep. I was surprised.

And he said, well, where did all this come from? Where did all this come from? Where does this whole idea? He says this misconception that missions was the responsibility of individuals rather than the obligation of churches came from. He writes this erroneous idea abrogated by Zwingli and his successors has only gradually and in part been overcome in recent decades. Zwingli's maintained that missions is the business of specially called apostles and that the church as such has nothing to do with missions.

The same idea carried over into pietism and became dominant in much of Western Protestantism. It still survives due to the inertness of many churches and their inability to organize effectively for missions on the one hand and the strong and vital individualism of some leaders on the other hand. He talks about this.

Now, did he just say what I think he said? Where did this come from? He said this whole concept of this individual concept of missions was erroneous idea advocated by Zwingli and his successors. Now, I think most of you here know a little bit about your Anabaptist history, but do you remember where it started? That there was a difference between Zwingli and the birth of the Anabaptist people. He sees that as an essential difference, an essential difference.

So again, I ask the question after reading these conservative evangelicals, why are American Anabaptists adopting modern evangelical methods of missions just at a time when they are just starting to discard them? Perhaps we need to look at something that even these people are seeing and maybe that's it could tell us something. I tell you, it breaks my heart as someone who's come into these circles and seeing why I came here because of what I saw as representative of being faithful to the words of Jesus and seeing people discard these things all the time. I come in through the front door and I see people running out the back door and it breaks my heart.

And this concept of missions is one that I think that many times has hurt our churches, sadly, and we're not even doing the things that are this New Testament and particularly even in our heritage, which takes us to our heritage. Part two. All right, here's a little painting Mike Attenat painted for me.

Okay, church historians, what's relatively considered the birthday of Anabaptism? Somebody raise your hand. January 21st, 1525. Okay.

So January 21st, 1525, the proclamation was made in Zurich. The Anabaptist brother met over what we think is Felix Mann's house and they're beginning to pray and they had their first baptism there. And all these things, these mandates were written against them, all the pressure that they were just going through all this council.

Now I ask this question, what would you have done January 22nd, 1525? If it were me, I gotta be honest, I'd probably be hanging out at home saying, wow, what are we gonna do? I should write something about this or, you know, something like this. It is amazing to me and what I'm going to show you, it is amazing to me that this faithfulness to the words of Jesus, which these early Anabaptists had, very much incorporated this concept of sharing this passion to share Christ to the ends of the earth from day one. And it's amazing.

So what you have done January 22nd, 1525, let's see what some of they did. And this idea of the words of Jesus, and I would like to bring this, if I could bring what I like about Anabaptism and why I'm here, is this concept that I see in one of the early letters that Conrad Grebel wrote to Vadian. Vadian was one of his old friends, scholars, and Vadian began to compromise and not join with the radicals.

And he gave him this little rebuke in one of his letters. And I think in this underlying section here, I believe is what the essence, I believe, of New Testament Christianity is, and I believe it's the drive that these early Anabaptists were about. I say it is the essence of early Anabaptism.

He says first to his friend Vadian, he says, achieving financial advantage brings us at best a temporary happiness in this world. He took some position in St. Gall. And it can be disguised, and it can often

disguise the naked force which supports it.

Conrad Grebel continues, it is impossible to reconcile the love of money with God's truth. Now here's the point, and it's so simple. I believe the word of God without a complicated interpretation, and out of this belief I speak.

It's really very simple. The Bible is very simple, if we would simply believe every word it says. May God give you the mercy to submit to his word without reservation and obey it.

Otherwise, things probably don't stand as well with us as you may hope. The way is narrow. And he ends this, ends the letter.

Watch this, and I believe this is the essence. The teachings of the Lord has been given for the purpose of being put into practice. How do you look at your New Testament? The teachings of the Lord have been given to us to be put into practice.

Why not give it a try? I believe God wants us to look at this. It's interesting, he signs this letter no longer at Grebel, and he was giving up all his high positions there in Zurich. Okay, Jesus gave us this command.

I got this from a message from Hudson Taylor III, this little phrase, no go, no low. Jesus promised us and commanded us just as much as he did with swearing of oaths and keeping the different things that we keep so well in Lancaster County, and I'm blessed for that. And Jesus spake unto them saying, all power is given unto me in heaven and earth.

This is big. Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe, yes, all things whatsoever I have commanded you. And lo, I am with you always, even unto the ends of the world.

Amen. This promise has a condition to it. No go, no low.

Lo, I am with you always. I'll be there. I'll be in your presence.

I will be there. But it comes with a condition that we obey these teachings of Christ as much as we do about the others. So I see in this that they saw this word of God, that they looked at this and they saw it as a blueprint.

One of my big things is people talk about applying the Bible. I'm going to apply the Bible to my life. There's a big difference between applying the Bible to your life and applying your life to the Bible.

And I believe that these early brethren and all the radical groups through history just simply took the words of Jesus and these words of the apostles and said, hey, you know what? I think he means it. Let's do it. And this seemed to be driving these early Anabaptists.

Listen to this incredible quote by Menno Simons and talking about the emphasis of these people as they took this gospel up now in Holland. Menno Simons says, he said, therefore we preach as much as is possible, both by day and by night, in houses and in fields, in forests and waste, hither and yon, at home or abroad, in prisons and dungeon, and water and in fire, on the scaffolds and on the wheel, the torture wheel, before lords and princes through mouth and pen, with possessions and blood, with life and death. We could wish that we might save all mankind from the jaws of hell, free them from the chains of their sins, and by the gracious help of God, add them to Christ by the gospel of his peace.

For this is the true nature of the love which is of God. That's the kind of drive that these early Anabaptists were about. And I'll tell you, this is Holland, but down in Switzerland, that next day, that early next day is when I said, what would you do on the next day? Grebel was only a few weeks there and around Zurich and Zolokon, and he went up to St. Gall and led a revival there.

St. Gall, over 500 people were converted there, began to share the gospel so much that in a few years, when the authorities of Bern and the authorities of Zurich had got so much, and Moravia had opened their doors, and Nickelsburg, in just a few years, over 12,000 people migrated all the way to what, in Nickelsburg, they were allowing them, and this first wave of that evangelism that was going on, did you see? It's not like we're just adding missions like one more thing that I would try to encourage you to do. Oh, let's add a little of this and have conferences. It seems that to me, that there was something inside of them that was just driven that way, that you must tell people about Jesus.

And that's why we're here today, brethren. This great little story here, as Citizen of Helebron testified before a court in 1539. The historians have found church records, and I'm going to give you a few of these quotes.

They're incredible quotes. And let's say an Anabaptist is being convicted or something, and these little church records, some of these court records, we have these precious little quotes. Well, Citizen of Helebron testified before a court in 1539 that prior to his baptism, he actually fled from the Anabaptist as from the devil himself because of the fervent energy which they sought to persuade him.

And you get the idea, this man just said, leave me alone. But these brethren would not give up onto him, and he was eventually converted. This is an excellent essay, absolutely excellent essay by a man by the name of Hans Kastorf, an Anabaptist from the Great Commission in the Reformation.

They have this little chart. I have it here. And just talking about the evangelism that these early brothers did through times of great persecution.

Oh, here's Hubmeier, 360, Gribble, an entire possession there in St. Gaw, five or six hundred people, we think. Six thousand was a total of Hubmeier's early work there. You have the different people, and I'll let you see that chart, but everyone was motivated, and this was just part of what they had.

Leonard Bowens had documented somewhere in the neighborhood 10,378 documented conversions. That's a passion to share the gospel. That was up in Holland.

What about the women? What was it like to be an early Anabaptist woman in these days? This is another one of those precious little quotes that come from different archives. This is from the Midnight Quarterly Review, 1962, volume 36, and Wurtenberg government's decision that this propagation activity of the Anabaptist women through word of mouth and through booklets was so grievous that those, quote, mothers who could not be banished because of their little children must be chained at home to prevent their leading so many people astray. They had to chain these women because at the mill or the different places, they were so apt to just share their faith that people were being converted, that these generous Reformed people who wouldn't kick them out because they were with child or whatever, that we have to do something though, so we're going to talk about chaining these women.

You see, there was something driving them more than me just encouraging us to, hey, attack a mission onto our everyday life, but there was something in the part of the entire package of what drove these early

Anabaptists, and the Martyrs' Merit talks about this one widow, and it gives a little idea to the way they're thinking. This widow was asked, you know, one of her friends was pleading with her saying, dear mother, can you not think what pleases you and just, can't you just think what you wish and just keep it to yourself? Then you will not die. The woman responded, she said, dear sister, I am commanded to speak and am constrained to do so.

Hence, I cannot remain silent about it, and she died. We take seriously the commands of Christ. This is a command of Christ, but not in a legalistic sense, in a life-giving, powerful sense of what Christ has.

I'd like to look at the Swiss Brethren and the Hutterites. One of the precious things that we have in our Anabaptist history is the Hutterian Chronicles and some of the documents that they kept for us, and with that we get a bit of an insight into some of this early behavior of the Swiss Brethren and the Hutterites. A very nice book, Brother Packel, in his book called Hutterite Beginnings, mentions this, that even though we don't have some of these documents of the Swiss Brethren groups and the Swiss Brethren radical groups, he believes that it has a, this gives us some idea of the activity that was there as well, and although we have better records of the Hutterites because of the Chronicles, still there is several different, and even in Moravia and these different movements, different pockets of Swiss Brethren, not just the Hutterites, and so it's believed that this was the driving force that was in not just the Hutterites, but the early Swiss Brethren as well.

And it was an organized effort. Not only was this passion like the women sharing at the mill and all that, but they got together and realized this is something the church must do. The Mennonite Encyclopedia says this, it says that the Hutterites particularly, but I believe this represents also the early Swiss Brethren, the Swiss Brethren every year to lands, excuse me, they, excuse me, the Mennonite Encyclopedia said they sent brethren every year to lands near and far according to the commandments of Christ and the practice of the apostles to teach and to preach and to gather for people.

In order to fulfill this task laid upon them by the Lord, and this is documented, and I want us to seriously consider, I'm not saying we have to carbon copy this, but I want you to note their fervency. The church got together semi-annually, twice a year, usually in the spring and fall, and chose from the preachers a number of brethren to perform a widespread missionary service in all directions to preach the gospel in accordance with the commandments of Christ. In the earliest days of terrible persecution, this usually brought these converts back to Moravia with them.

They would bring these converts back with them to Moravia in these early days. Each missionary had a field assigned to him. Thus brethren went out to all parts of Germany, Bavaria, Württemberg, Hesse, Thuringia, Rhineland, and Sicilia, and also some Northern Italy, Prussia, to Switzerland, to Poland, in two cases to Venice, Italy.

A few even came as far as Denmark and Sweden. These are documented cases of early, at least in this case, Hutterite missionaries taking the gospels to the ends of the earth. Southern Germany, also representing the radicals there in Southern Germany and a Swiss brethren, had what's called the Martyr Synod.

And this Martyr Synod, as early as 1527, now we're only two years to the birth of the Anabaptists. Imagine just in two years of church stuff that's happened to you, as we think of our circles. In two years since their beginning, they're meeting here in Augsburg and deciding, well how do we organize a world-conquering force to spread the gospel to the ends of the earth? And these men gathered there, they came up with the

name Apostles to spread this, and Hans Huth was one of those there, and they had this idea of sending out the Apostles to the end of Europe.

Now here's the convicting part to me. The sending church of Augsburg shared the convictions of the missionaries and urgently called for a commitment to evangelism. So they had this big church council that we need a mission.

And if you're like me, you have these meetings and you sit around and talk about them over a lot of coffee and all this, you know, for a long time. But watch this. Within two weeks from the end of the conference on August 24th to the issuance that we start to see laws, mandates by the Augsburg authorities against the Anabaptists on September 6th, the Augsburg church sent out more than two dozen missionaries to strategic centers in Germany and Austria.

Now out of those 60, somewhat 60 pastors and ministers that were there at that at that conference, you know how much it is said that we're surviving in five years? Two. Two or three. That's not good odds.

There's your statistics. Want to sign up to be a missionary in 1527? This is your chance of dying. Ninety five percent chance of dying, five percent chance of living.

But it wouldn't stop them. It wouldn't stop them. They believe Jesus' kingdom was coming.

Yes, people say, well, they were believing the end of the world was coming. I do, too. And Jesus is coming.

And this this idea was something within them that motivated them, I believe, at the very core. The Hutterites taking this again, we have more documented cases. Now, think of the persecution.

And when you read these persecution times, you've seen the pictures of the martyrs. It was a hard time to be a missionary. The Hutterite colonies, these are over 100.

This is from the Midnight Encyclopedia. All these dots you see all over Moravia were entire communities on fire and being sent out. And then they themselves were being sent out and starting a mission machine of spreading the gospel.

Impressive, impressive times to see these people working in this way. There's a good to get a little bit into their their their heart. There's this interesting document found that the greater codex was found in the Brunner archives describes in some detail an Anabaptist commissioning service.

What would it have been like when they're sending out these missionaries? And it says that the first of candidates told the congregation how God had called them into the mission work and to the preaching of the gospel in other lands, particularly Peter Rittman. It mentions this in his his book and talking about the very important part of sensing that calling to be going out in this. Now, they usually didn't take the young men.

It was actually the ministers who went out and did these mission works. And so the missionaries then were asked they they the missionaries then asked the congregation to remain faithful to their local task of visiting the sick and in prison and providing for the poor and the unemployed, this helping the whole person there and of remembering them, the missionaries themselves with prayers and material provisions. Then the people of the congregation pledged their support, wished them well and prayed for God mercies.

And as recorded, they sung. Now they sang. Now, it's interesting in this this archives, there's this ancient believe how to write him.

Brother John D. Roth, who's with us here today, I emailed him. I have here also Joe Springer helped me with this. And John D. Roth is the translation of Hans Castorf gave us these words of that ancient hymn, which has been for the most part, it's not in the Chronicles.

And let me just it gives you a taste of the spirit of these early Anabaptists as they were singing this song before a commissioning service. They says this as God, his son was sending into this world of sin. His son is now commanding that we this world should win.

He sends us and commissions to preach the gospel clear to call upon all nations to listen and to hear to thee. Oh, God, we're praying. We're bent to do thy will.

Thy word, we are obeying thy glory. We fulfill all people. We are telling to men their sinful way that they might cease rebelling.

Less judgment be their pay. And if thou, Lord, desire and should it be thy will that we taste sword and fire by those who thus would kill, they then comfort, pray our loved ones and tell them we've endured and we shall see them yonder eternally secured. Thy word, oh Lord, does teach us and we do understand thy promises are with us until the very end.

Thou have prepared a haven. Praise thy holy name. We love the God of heaven through Christ, our Lord.

Amen. Wow. What a song.

What a mentality. What a theology. You can get into their mind there of how they saw that.

Now, as I did when I started doing my reading of the Hutterian Chronicles, you get to a part of the Hutterian Chronicles. It's actually grotesque. It's through the 30 year war.

And through this period, I had to write on the margins of my chronicles. It's actually much worse than even the martyr's mirror. The details that the chronicler gave on what they were going through as persecution, the head vices, the different wheels, the different torturing of the women and the different things.

And I don't think anybody would have faulted. No one here would have faulted them to just lay low during these years. But I came upon this passage in the chronicles that just frankly amazed me of this innate passion that was built into this early Anabaptist people.

In 1620, it writes in the chronicles, after the midst of all this 30 year war stuff is going on, the 30 year wars, both the Catholics and the Protestants are going against each other and the Anabaptists are caught right in the middle. And it's terrible. But they said this.

If you go through pages of this community was burnt, this one was this person was killed, and then finally it says, but 1620 said this year, too. We follow the examples of our forefathers by sending out several brothers, several brothers to the various places in Germany. They went to seek those on fire for the truth and to call people to repentance.

It amazed people in Bohemia, where both hostile armies were encamped, as well as in Germany that are defenseless members sent out during a time of such terrible danger when scarcely anyone, whether of

high or low estate, could travel in safety. But the Lord was their protector and they relied on him alone. When their task was completed through the intercession of his people, he led them home again in peace and safety.

That's actually in volume one, page 678. Impressive. I don't think any of us would have faulted them, but there was something driving this mission machine to spread the gospel to the ends of the earth.

It doesn't matter what the times are like. Now, Robert Friedman gave us this statistic through this period of the chance of survival during this time, 20% chance of survival, looking at these missionaries as they went out. That's from our churches and our things.

And we start to think, well, what are we all about? There's something happens when we become inward focused. And I'm for one that actually believes, and I don't mind talking about every detail. I look at the Moravians.

And brother, let me just be honest with you. I don't care how conservative a group you're here today. Those brothers cared about every single thing, how you came into the church, how your button look, how your shoe work, how your head covering.

But the Moravians did it with a zeal and purpose to spread the gospels to the ends of the earth. And if it has that purpose attached to it, it's going to be powerful. But if we start just to be center focused, it doesn't matter what the format is.

It doesn't matter how you're going to do it or whether you have this for that rule or that or whatever it becomes. We kill ourselves and we consume ourselves. I appreciate this quote by Shane Claiborne.

Now he would use a little vocabulary that I think would be different than us. But nevertheless, he brings up a very good point. It was just at my house just a few days ago before his meeting over here.

I didn't have much time to talk to him. But in this, he brings up a very good point on how we are, how people lose their youth and how people are. Let me just read you his quote.

It's a very good quote. Again, he uses some vocabulary that I don't think is more casual than our circles usually. But let me give it to you.

Just in my youth group days, I had seen all too many wild would be Jesus radicals fall by the wayside because they had never been trusted with the adventure of revolutionary living. When I was a youth leader, one of the high school kids who had, quote, given his life to Jesus, unquote, got busted on a few weeks later for having acid in school, a hallucinogenic drug. I remember asking him in disappointment, what happened, bro? What went wrong? And he just shrugged his shoulders and said, I got bored.

Bored? God forgive us for all those we have lost because we made the gospel boring. I am convinced that if we lose kids to the culture of drugs and materialism, of violence and war, it's because we don't dare them, not because we don't entertain them. We lose them because we don't dare them, not because we don't entertain them.

It's because we make the gospel too easy, not because we make it too difficult. He said, kids want to do something heroic with their life, which is why they play video games and join the army. But what are they to do with a church that teaches them to tiptoe through life so that they can arrive safely at death? You

know, we asked this question, we lose people.

I know many of you could probably give me testimonies of young men that you've seen that started off good and they just, they went away and it just breaks your heart to see these young men get involved with the worldliness and the entertainment, the video games and all these different things. But you know, maybe we're going to lose some people. Maybe, maybe it's, it's, maybe it's predestined that we will lose some of our young men.

But here's the question perhaps I challenge us with, how are we going to lose them? We're going to lose them to the world through video games and the army and these different things, or are we going to lose them as martyrs for Christ? Take your pick. Let's look at the next wave. I'm just going to briefly go to this next wave.

That was the, this early people in the Anabaptist people. Now the next wave as we come into the 1900s, this has continued a little different flavor though, but it has continued to the Muslims then in the year 1851, Peter Jantz here, a Dutch Mennonite and the Dutch had let missions go for a while. They began to pull their resources and send a missionary.

Interesting because the theme again is the, the role of this church community in missions. Peter Jantz actually, when he went there to Indonesia found that, you know, they kept killing the Muslim converts. So he actually incorporated a community based there in Indonesia.

And as he did that, he set up little self-sufficient agricultural colonies that was a, that was more effective in reaching the Muslim converts. Very interesting. And he, he'd also did Bible translating discipleship.

And it was, it's a very interesting example of a revival of, of Anabaptist missions as it came into the 1850s. I got this Heinrich Dirk was a Russian Mennonite. The Russian Mennonites had grown a little bit lax and Heinrich Dirks had been experiencing a incredible revival that was happening among the colony Mennonites there in, in Russia.

Now, when it comes to revival, my take on it is this, what was Pentecost the birth of? The church, not just nice meetings. It was the birth of the church and a radical called out people that were set about spreading the gospel to the ends of the earth and real revival, I believe produces this church community. It produces this called out people.

Peter Hoover translated this little sermon from Heinrich Dirk's mission conference that he had in Russia. And I'm going to give you this, just a snid bit of this, of this revival preaching that happened from these Russian Mennonites and what they believed, how they should take this to the ends of the earth. Beginning this mission conference in the 18, late 1800s, he says fire spreads quickly.

Watch this theology. I like it. It blazes up and send showers of sparks high into the air.

Then whenever a spark comes to rest, it sets off a new fire. And that is how it goes when the Jesus fire lights up our hearts. If it blazes brightly, it lights up many more to speak without a metaphor.

If we, it will drive us out with the Jesus fire in our hearts and the torch of the gospel in our hands to the uncivilized, the pagans and the Muslims, and no parents, no brothers, sisters or friends will dissuade us or keep us back. The savior wants that fire to burn in us to flame up and throw out many sparks. If we love him, none of us will fail to take part in the work of missions one way or the other.

The church back home is absolutely part of what's happening on the mission field for the one that refuses does not love the savior, or at least not very much. And oh, how much needs to be done around the world into the fire that Jesus has kindled will burn everywhere among all the peoples of the earth. Now it is estimated the population be at 1 billion.

What are we today? I don't know, six, seven, I don't know. 400 million people of these only a very smart or Christian believers through the work of our churches and the Dutch Indies on Java and Sumatra, the Jesus fire has started to burn in the hearts of more than 2,500 heathen and Muslims. Even though it may not burn too brightly in some, it is burning and our missionaries are stirring it up so that they may burn all the more strongly and well.

Oh, what a marvelous work, this work of missions to spread the Jesus fire throughout the world. Amen. Coming now to America, we entered the 1900s.

There's a bit of a revival of looking at these things and we had what's called even a Mennonite great awakening. Five minutes. Okay, I'll keep.

John D. Roth, who's here with us, speaks of this period here and he talks about how they embraced these things, went to different countries, went to South America, but he brings out a very good point in his book stories. He says that in both Europe and North America, Mennonites tended to borrow heavily from the strategies and methods of the broader Protestant mission movement. For example, Mennonites in the Netherlands and the Palatinate consciously modeled their early efforts after the Baptist missionary societies in England and Russia.

In Russia, Mennonites follow the lead of the Pietists and German Baptists, and in North America, the revival meetings of Dwight L. Moody, etc. He says this generation, the 1900s, left deep imprints on Mennonite mission strategies. This borrowing was undoubtedly a catalyst for early Mennonite missions, but when it was done uncritically, the gospel preached by Mennonites on the mission field tended not to differ in any meaningful way than the other Protestant groups.

I think it's a good point. I'm going to skip, just skim through here. When you look at the, here in 1934, Lancaster County got involved in missions.

As they did, they were very excited about that. Time Magazine even covered the article here, you can read my quote, about what it looked like when all these Mennonites showed up in New York, sending out these missionaries to Sharati, Tanzania. But as they did that, as they began to grow, they met up with the East African revivals.

And as they met up with the East African revivals, they began to think that their Anabaptist ways back home were outdated, were something that was not as exciting as what this new revival could give them. And so, it was looked at, and I'm going to skip through, but in six years, they had 10 churches and 100 baptized members. And my way of thinking, I'm thinking, not bad.

But comparing to the mass growth of what was happening with these East African revivals, it looks like small potatoes. But as these East African revivals happened, they began to replace church with mission team. They said that they don't want to be their Holy Spirit.

There's a book called Mennonite Safari, who said the early Mennonite missions there didn't even teach non-resistance, and they didn't want to, you know, bring those things. They began to use things like the

Schofield Bible study, and it was even causing splits up the road here in Pennsylvania. But I wonder if some of the reasons the typical tension in Anabaptist churches, between church and missions, comes from the fact that they should never have been separated in the first place.

They lost, I believe, a sense of church community that they were giving there to Africa. Now, I'm going to make something, a bold statement here, and I'm going to back it up with missionary journals from South Africa. I studied the East African revival, and it wasn't just the Mennonites.

The evangelicals, the Catholics were getting involved, and it was such a sweeping revival that people were calling Rwanda and Uganda an entire Christian nation. And I begin to wonder, as I studied even our own people and how we compromised, I believe, some of our teachings over there, what gospel did they get, and what are the consequences of a half-baked, half-gospel? Did any of you hear of the Rwanda massacre of 1994? What, just a few years previously to this day, would have been considered a Christian nation ended up by 800,000 people being slaughtered. A thousand bodies a day went up the river between Tanzania and Rwanda.

And as I began to wonder that, I had this thought, well, what was the missionary activity? I did some search, and I found that a journal of South African Missiological Society, this journal called the Miscellanea, dared to ask that very question. An African missionary journal speaking about this trouble, coming to the end here, and they asked this. This is their words.

Rwanda is generally regarded as one of the most Christian countries in Africa and the world, one of the real successes of Christian missions in Africa. Statistically speaking, some 80 to 90 percent of the population regarded themselves as Christians. Much of this Christian is of a strong evangelical persuasion.

Why didn't the revival show the same transforming power during the last three decades? And they said, the first part of the answer is that the revival had become institutionalized and nominal. The fires of revival had died down, and Rwanda's spiritual development rarely progressed much past the initial point of conversion. The saved were called to be saved Sunday after Sunday, and the emphasis was on conversion.

The repentance that was called for was often limited to the pattern of no alcohol, no adultery, and pay your tithes. There has been a lack of the Pauline terms of preach the whole gospel counsel of God. A spiritual revival, their words, alone is not enough.

It must work its way through the daily life of the people, and it should be carried into every sphere of life. I have a quote here from Cry the Blood Country that I'm going to skip because I'm going to give you this last quote. In Jeremiah 1 10, the Bible does say, see I have this day set over thee the nations and over the kingdoms to root up and to pull down and to destroy and to throw down, but also says and to build and to plant.

And I will close sort of with this incredible quote that I will give to us here centuries later. This is an interesting quote from a how to write missionary by the name of Jeronim Kahls, who was caught between Moravia and South Tyrol, and he talks about this easy way out that many of the Catholics and Protestants of his day were taking, and I believe we are too. And I'll end with this quote.

But I want to end with this quote to not just look at it in its historical niceties, but I would like us to receive the rebuke of this quote. It's a serious quote written from a martyr in prison, and this is what he said. I believe he was a martyr.

He says, many in our time think the opposition has ended. They look back and think the war is over, but they are deceived. If they would live the life, they would get persecuted again.

As long as the lion has its cub with him, he might act friendly and playful enough, but when he loses his little ones or his prey, he cannot keep himself back. He rages and roars. He rants and he raves as only lions can until the fire shoots from his eyes.

Certainly, Peter does not warn us in vain that Satan comes upon us like a roaring lion or as a wolf at nightfall. But may God be praised that the lion of the tribe of Judah is bigger than the lion of the Philistines. He has already split the other lion's head and wounded his body.

Therefore, he knows that his time is short and he will soon be overcome. Therefore, he is so desperate, so angry, Satan is. He sees the lake of fire into which he will be thrown.

Watch yourself, therefore, heroes of Israel. Take courage, strong men of Zion. Rejoice, oh city of Jerusalem.

The time of your triumph is near. All tears will be washed from your eyes. The reward of your labor stands ready.

Just hold on a little longer. The fat cattle have already been butchered. The fowls have all been plucked.

The tables stand ready, and the guests have begun to arrive. It's our turn now. Let's just close with a word of prayer, then I'll hand it over to Brother Jerry.

God, do it again. Do it again, Lord, and let us come before the words of Jesus Christ like we do in so many other areas and comprehend this idea, this calling, which is the command that you have given to us. Give us the grace to keep it.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Brother Dean, I must tell you that it was very hard for me to get out of my seat.

That's okay. It's good for me. I felt I was becoming a little bit unsanctified doing it.

No, no, no. All right, what are your questions? Raise your hands. Those of you who would like to pose a question.

A couple. I'm Conrad Goodwin from Shippensburg right now, from Chile, South America. Okay.

Excuse me. This is a question that somebody asked us at our community. She had a whole list of questions doing a study, but she said, what is the most important contribution that your community has for the modern society in the country where you live, maybe the Anabaptist community? I believe here in Chile and Afghanistan, everywhere.

If I can quote from Brother John Dee, our job is to show the world what the world should look like if everybody would follow the words of Jesus. And making that life of Jesus real on this earth is the call of

the church. So I think that's the biggest thing we can do as a living witness of the words of Jesus.

Chris Gorton from Titusville, Florida. It's an honor to sit under your teaching. In our day, we can read in the comics, anybody who reads the comics, Pogo says, we've seen the enemy and it is us.

I wonder who do you think the enemy has used more effectively in chaining women to home, the leaders of Wurtenberg or Mennonite tradition? I'll be honest with you, brother. I've come the other way and I've left evangelicalism to embrace Anabaptism. And I do understand and I appreciate the clashing together of you telling me the warnings of dead legalism and me giving you the warnings of a modern American.

I believe that what I would like to see, I had an Amish brother come up to me a few years ago. And he came to me, he started apologizing for having suspenders and a buggy. And I said, brother, I said, you know, please don't apologize for this.

I said, we need lots of rebukes about the way we dress and our entertainment and our cars and all this. Do it on purpose. Take those buggies to, I don't know, China or whatever it takes, but do what you do on purpose.

I mean, the Salvation Army had some of the most bizarre uniforms and practices on the face of the earth, but yet they did it with the purpose and that purpose shook the world. And I believe I'm not against the conservatism that I see in the Anabaptist world. I would just like to see it done on purpose and a completion of the fulfillment of what Jesus has given to us.

So, but yeah, I appreciate the challenges back and forth, though. Mike Atnip from Lancaster County here. Brother Dean, part of the problem I've heard is in our Anabaptist churches is that when we go looking for, you know, books on missions, we go to the bookstore and there are none Anabaptist missions.

So people are buying evangelical type mission strategies and learning from that. And it's caused a handful of problems, at least. What are some books that you would recommend if someone's, you know, interested in learning more about the Anabaptist concept? What are some books you would recommend about Anabaptist missions? You know, it's funny you should mention that, Brother Mike, because Mike Atnip has given us several little books on the Moravian methods of Anabaptism, I mean, of missions of the Anabaptists, some different things.

And I will testify to you and I admit it is very, very hard. These quotes that I've gotten out of here, I mean, they were through digging deep through Mennonite encyclopedias, through Mennonite quarterly review articles and digging deep in these things. And it is a shame that we don't know this history, an absolute travesty that we don't know this history.

I believe that people are starting to write some things. I think you can find some things. Robert Friedman, I appreciate him, some of the early Goshen brothers there.

I appreciate some of the different Anabaptist things that are being published today. But I do encourage us, let's start telling the story and not being and not allowing ourselves just to be swept into the other way. And Brother Mike Atnip does have several books that I would recommend on some of these methods as well.

Good question. We have time for one more question. You're all done.

Brother Harold. My name is Harold here. I'm from Ephrata, but I live in Haiti.

Brother Dean, were there any positive aspects that come out of the African revival? Was it all negative? It's a very good question, Brother Harold. I think definitely. When you read, particularly when you read the early years there, I mean, people repented of sin.

Marriages were got back together. There was genuine a move of God. I'm of the belief that many of these revivals are truly planted by God and that the purpose of them, as it was in Pentecost, was to produce a called out people that would be separate from this world and that would then propagate this kingdom to the rest of the earth.

And so many times I see these revivals, the Welsh revivals. I cannot deny the repentance and the true genuine work of God amongst these people. And I believe the early African revivals were some of the same way.

And I believe that it went wrong after that. It was diluted, obviously, with a lot of bad stuff. But yeah, I do think, I think there was some definite genuine revival there.

He said, when he sends a spirit, he will reprove the world of sin and of righteousness and of judgment. And I saw that in East African in the early revivals there.

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