

(Early Anabaptism) Reviving the Righteous Root of Anabaptism

by Denny Kenaston

Denny Kenaston's sermon calls for a revival of the righteous root of Anabaptism, urging believers to return to the spirit of primitive Christianity through prayer and commitment.

Duration: 1:30:05

Scripture: Jeremiah 1:6-8, Matthew 6:33

Topics: "Anabaptism"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher reflects on the state of the church and challenges the congregation to consider how far they may have fallen without even realizing it. He draws inspiration from Job chapter 14, emphasizing the hope of a tree that can sprout again even if it has been cut down and appears dead. The preacher then references Ezekiel's vision of the valley of dry bones, highlighting the significance of the bones being very dead and dry. He concludes by urging the congregation to seek God's mercy and for His face to shine upon them.

Transcript

Hello, this is Brother Denny. Welcome to Charity Ministries. Our desire is that your life would be blessed and changed by this message.

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Have mercy upon us this morning, God. And make Thy face to shine upon us. O Lord, this church, make Thy face to shine upon us, O Lord, that Thy saving health might be known among all the nations of the earth.

God, I don't even know what that means, but we ask You for that this morning, God. We ask You to give us the heathen. You said, ask, and I'll give you the heathen.

Give us the heathen, Lord. Give us the souls that are around us, Father. We just commit the further service to You, Lord, in each and every heart to You.

We trust You, Lord. In Jesus Christ's name, Amen. You may be seated.

The burden of my heart this morning has been on my heart for a long, long time. I'm not sure if I can say how long. And it may surprise you when I give you the title of this message, but I just plead with you to stay with me.

It is fitting with all that God has been doing in our hearts and our lives through this week. Very interesting to me always is to go to the prayer meeting in the morning. I'm amazed how many times the message is prayed in the prayer meeting.

This morning, blessed be God, there were so many prayer warriors in the prayer meeting that we had two prayer meetings this morning. It overflowed into the next room and that one was full. It was interesting to me to hear the burden of prayer in both places speaking about the same thing this morning.

That God would inflame our hearts with a vision. A vision of what He has for us. A vision of the future.

A vision of souls gone astray. That God would do that. And that prayer was prayed so many times in so many ways in both of those prayer meetings.

This morning, I'd like to speak on this subject. Reviving the righteous root of Anabaptism comes from a prayer meeting. Those words come from a prayer meeting.

Reviving the righteous root of Anabaptism. We're going to be preaching about righteous roots this morning. We're going to walk around Zion again this morning.

We've walked around Zion before. Remember, we walked around Zion with the Moravians and the way that they lived. And we were challenged by the way they lived.

We walked around Zion with the Chinese house churches and the way that they lived. And we were challenged by their lives. God wants us to walk around Zion so that we can be challenged by Zion that lived before us.

We want to walk about Zion this morning looking at another righteous root that grew out of that root that grew out of the dry ground. Hallelujah! Which root is Christ? In the beginning of this week of meetings, we considered the great value of seeking God in the good times. And that was our motivation.

That's why we set aside these eight days to seek God. It was because we felt it was right to seek God in the good times. Not to wait until we're falling apart to then get serious and desperate with God.

And so, in a sense, this whole week of set-apartness has been preventative maintenance. But I want to be a bit visionary here this morning in this last meeting. It is still time to seek the Lord until He come and reign righteousness upon us.

Righteousness like the righteous root of Anabaptism, may I say it that way. It's time to seek the Lord until He come and reign that kind of righteousness upon us. Thus, a visionary message that we don't just, you know, okay, the meetings are over.

We'll settle down and go back to the status quo. No, God forbid. As I said already, the title comes from a message.

The title of the message comes from a prayer meeting. I don't remember when it was, but I remember being in a prayer meeting. And these words rose up in the middle of the prayer meeting.

That God would revive the righteous root of Anabaptism. That God would restore that people to their pristine beauty, their strength, their power, their ability, their light, their shining light that they were. That God would revive that righteous root.

It came by the inspiration and burden of the Holy Ghost. And since I first heard it, I've heard it dozens and dozens and dozens of times. Lord, revive the righteous root of Anabaptism.

Oh, I could just as easily pray that God would revive the righteous root of Methodism this morning. By the way, have you read what the early Methodists were like? But as we behold the peoples of the Anabaptist heritage, and their sincere desire to do right, and their tenacity to hold on to their history, as we study their history, and we see what a powerful people they were, our hearts cannot but rise up and cry to God and say, God, do it again! Do it again, Lord! Oh, that God would raise up tens of thousands of Anabaptists that are crying from the depths of their heart and crying out in their poverty. Lord, revive the righteous root of Anabaptism.

Restore us as it was in the beginning. I want to quickly say that the Anabaptists can claim no beginning. I feel like we easily get off on these things and start focusing on a movement instead of the God who created the movement.

And I'm telling you, that never comes out right. The Anabaptists had no beginning, for their righteous root stems back to the book of Acts in the early church in the days of Christ and the root of Jesse. That's where their roots go back to.

Christ. Only Christ. Be honored, loved, and exalted among the people of God.

Only Christ. He is the righteous root springing up out of the very dry ground. Hallelujah.

That's who He is. When I think of reviving the righteous root of Anabaptism, my mind goes back to a psalm, some verses in a psalm that we read some months ago, but I want to read them again this morning and just consider them in the light of this subject and this people, this part of Zion that God may challenge us with this morning. Reading in Psalm 80.

If you'll turn there with me. Psalm 80 and verse 7. This is speaking about Israel, but I believe these verses relate to many of the movements of God in history, and surely they relate to the movement of God among the Anabaptists. In Psalm 80 and verse 7, the cry of the psalmist says, Turn us again, O God, O God of hosts, and cause Thy face to shine, and we shall be saved.

Good prayer for us to pray this morning. Thou hast brought a vine out of Egypt. Thou hast cast out the heath and implanted it.

Thou preparest room before it, and it caused it to take deep root, and it filled the land. The hills were covered with a shadow of it, and the boughs thereof were like goodly cedars. She sent out her boughs under the sea, and her branches under the rivers.

Oh, what a picture of Anabaptism, early Anabaptism, reaching its boughs out across all of Europe. She sent out her boughs under the sea, and her branches under the river. Why hast Thou broken down her hedges, so that all they which pass by the way do pluck her? The boar out of the wood doth waste it, and the wild beast of the field doth devour it.

Awesome words When you think of the power of a people who connected vitally with Christ back in the 1500's, the boar out of the wood doth waste her. Return, we beseech thee, O God of hosts. Look down from heaven, and behold and visit this vine and the vineyard which Thy right hand hath planted and the branch that Thou made strong for Thyself.

It is burned with fire. It is cut down. They perish at the rebuke of Thy countenance.

These words stir my heart this morning as we look back on a movement of God. As we look around us and see where we are in light of where they were. These come as a deep challenge to us this morning.

I wonder how far we have truly fallen, yet may not even know it. We may not even know it. I'd like you to turn now to Ezekiel chapter 37, if we can just read there for a moment.

These verses also touch my heart as I consider this subject. And I want you to consider before we read here in Ezekiel 37, a few verses here in this chapter, I want you to consider it's Ezekiel's day. It's 450 years since David and Solomon walked on the earth.

It's 450 years since Israel was the glorious testimony that God wanted her to be. It's 450 years later. And brothers and sisters, it's over 450 years since God moved in the hearts of a few men who connected with Christ and said, we'll die before we compromise.

Our Christ, our Deliverer, our Savior and our Lord, will die before we compromise. It's over 450 years. That's nothing for God.

God can raise something out of the rubble that's been laying in the rubble for hundreds of years. God can do it. It's nothing for God.

The hand of the Lord was upon me and carried me out in the Spirit of the Lord and set me down in the midst of the valley which was full of bones and caused me to pass by them round about and behold, there were very many in the open valley and lo, they were very dry. I like that. Make it real hard, Lord.

Very dead, very many and very dry bones. And He said unto me, Shun a man! Can these bones live? And I answered, O Lord God, Thou knowest. That was a good answer, Ezekiel.

That was a good answer. Again, He said unto me, Prophesy upon these bones and say unto them, O ye dry bones, hear the word of the Lord. Thus saith the Lord God unto these bones, Behold, I will cause breath to enter into you and ye shall live and I will lay sin new upon you and will bring up flesh upon you and cover you with skin and put breath in you and ye shall live and ye shall know that I am the Lord.

And by the way, that's the reason why God does anything anytime. That ye shall know that I am the Lord and I will be glorified. So, I prophesied.

It seemed a bit odd, you know. If somebody was looking on, I wonder if he thought some of those same things that we struggle with, you know. Lord, what will everybody think if anybody sees me preaching to these dry bones in the middle of a valley? But, he knew the voice of God and he knew that if God told him

to prophesy to these bones, God had a good reason for it.

So, I prophesied as I was commanded and as I prophesied there was a noise and behold, a shaking and the bones came together. Bone to His bone. Glory! He even knew which bone to fit into which bone.

And when I beheld, lo, the sinew and the flesh came up upon them and the skin covered them above, but there was no breath in them. Then said unto me, then said he, God, unto me, Prophecy unto the wind. Prophecy, son of man, and say to the wind, Thus saith the Lord God, Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain that they may live.

So I prophesied as He commanded me and the breath came into them and they lived and stood up upon their feet an exceeding great army. That's far enough to read for this morning's illustration. I know it's talking about Israel and you even wonder what it all means in the end.

You know, it's prophetic. You look out and you can get something for your own heart and you know that Ezekiel got something for the people in his day, but yet you look ahead and you think, God, what does all that mean? But we can still apply it to our own situation. Amen? Days and years are nothing to God and He can raise up a glorious plant out of a very dry root in a very dry ground.

Hallelujah. You know, as I was meditating upon this analogy which came as inspiration in a prayer meeting, it's always a joy to do that, you know, when you get an inspiration from the Lord and then you go to the Bible to search and you find these golden nuggets hidden in there and realize, yes, it was the voice of God because you see the voice of God's Spirit and the voice of God's Word. They are the same thing.

They mesh together so beautifully. But as I was meditating upon this, I realized the Bible uses two analogies that relate to this righteous root. Number one, the grapevine.

We read it there in Psalm 80. And the other analogy is the analogy of the olive plant. Both of these two analogies have some interesting things in common.

Consider them in light of the subject this morning. Number one, they both have deep root systems. A grapevine and an olive plant, they have deep root systems.

Very deep. Number two, they both live for many generations. I like that.

In fact, as I studied it, there was a little picture in the book that I was studying. I think it was ISBN, International Standard Bible Encyclopedia. ISB, that's what they call it, yeah.

As I studied it, there was a picture of a grapevine in there. Ten feet long and ten inches thick. I wonder how long it took to grow that big.

They both live for many generations. Number three, they both have tremendous usefulness. If you've got a vineyard, if you've got an olive yard, you have a very valuable thing.

And number four, they both can die in outward appearance and revive again when proper care is given to them. In fact, you can set a forest fire and that fire can go down through that olive yard or go down through that vineyard and burn all the branches and burn all the vine right off, flat to the ground. But if you go in there after that fire is over and everything is burned up and you start nurturing that root, that root will begin to grow again and push up branches and a vine and leaves and bare fruit and the same thing with an olive tree.

They say there are olive trees that are still alive, that were alive in the days of Christ when He prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane. That's a many generational root. Then I found these precious verses, these little nuggets over here in Job.

Turn with me there to Job. Job chapter 14. Yes.

Beautiful. There is hope of a tree if it be cut down that it will sprout again and that the tender branch thereof will not cease, though the root thereof wax old in the earth and the stalk thereof die in the ground. Yet through the scent of water, hallelujah, it will bud and bring forth boughs like a plant again.

Isn't that beautiful? Oh my! Yes! It can be dead. You can look at it and say it's dead. It's there.

There's no leaves on it. There's no fruit on it. It's just an old dead stump.

It's just laying there. There's not even a stump there anymore. But oh, listen at the scent of water coming down into those roots.

All of a sudden that thing starts growing again. What a beautiful picture of God's people and the history of His pilgrim church down through the centuries. You see, the righteous root is not the righteous root of anabaptism.

It's that righteous root which is Christ! In a sense, the whole history of the pilgrim church down through the centuries is a history of people that are returning to that righteous root which is Christ and His anointed body, which was the early church. Down through history, you see it again and again and again. One movement after another movement, then another movement, then another one in another part of the earth, returning, looking back to the righteous root, which root is Jesus Christ Himself.

Looking back to the beautiful plant that grew from that righteous root. And that plant was an early church, which is recorded in the book of Acts. Down through church history, they look back again and again and again.

Every movement of God, they're always aiming back there. Praise God that we have the opportunity to do the same in our days. Think about the Waldensians in the 1300's and the 1400's.

They were an example of that. The Anabaptists in the 1500's. Another example of it.

The beautiful Moravians in the 1700's in their 100 year long prayer meeting and all the things that they did. And the Methodists in the 1700's and the 1800's. I just recently got a little book that was sent to me about the early Methodism.

And you'd be shocked what radicals they were. The Brethren Movement in England in the 1800's was another example. The Holiness Movement in the 1900's.

And we could go on and on. There are many others that are not mentioned, but all of them are seeking the spirit of primitive Christianity. That's what it was.

In the days of Anabaptism, those first few men there who gave their lives in short order of time, it was those men who rose up and said, let's return. Let's return to the root. Let's go all the way back.

Let's do it the way Jesus did it. Let's go back to Christ. We don't want any new religion.

It wasn't enough to know about justification by faith. They set their sights on everything that Jesus bought and paid for. A return to the spirit of primitive Christianity.

And brothers and sisters, now it's our turn. It's 2004. It's not 1300.

It's not 1400. It's not 1500. It's 2004.

And you and me are alive and well on planet Earth. How far will we return is the question. You know, we're pretty hard on the Protestants sometimes, you know.

Pretty critical of them. They didn't go far enough. They didn't go as far as the Anabaptists did.

They decided to compromise. They weren't willing to pay the price. They didn't go as far as the Anabaptists did.

We're pretty hard on them, aren't we? How far will we return? Let's not throw any stones at them. How far will we return? What are we willing to pay? What will we go through to return to the spirit of primitive Christianity? That's a good question, isn't it? Let's look at this righteous route a bit here this morning. The Anabaptist movement was in its prime for 30 years.

If you study the history, it's kind of sad from 1555 on. But for 30 years, I don't know if there's ever been a people like them besides the early church. For 30 years, from 1525 to 1555, and during that time, God planted a vine whose branches reached all over Europe.

Tens of thousands of converts were baptized upon their confession of the true faith which is in Jesus Christ. Tens of thousands of them. That makes what's happening around here look pretty small, doesn't it? We get a convert every now and then.

Tens of thousands of them were baptized upon their confession of faith. Thousands of them were martyred for their uncompromising stand for Christ and the truth. Total commitment was clear.

Be baptized and die. Be baptized and go to prison. Be baptized and lose all you have.

Be baptized in the name of Christ and lose all your living. Be baptized in the name of Christ. Lose your home and live in the forest and in caves the rest of your days.

Who wants to be baptized this morning? Be baptized and go baptize others and risk your life doing it. Very interesting to me. You know, it was a people movement, by the way.

The early Anabaptist movement, it was a people movement. Somehow, it was the fullness of time. Europe was ripe.

Europe was ready. Those people had been sitting there in their darkness long enough. All of a sudden, they got a Bible.

The printing press was invented. And they got Bibles in their hands. And they were so sick and tired of being sick and tired.

And they were so sick and tired of being empty and having nothing on the inside. All of a sudden, here comes somebody preaching the gospel of the kingdom of the grace of God. And the people just started responding in mass.

I mean, some of these men baptized 2,000 or 3,000 converts in a year. Many of them. But this thing was happening so fast.

Oh, how does it say it? I want to quote it because it's good. The records state that churches sprung up spontaneously like mushrooms everywhere. Have you ever seen mushrooms? I mean, try to get this one, and this one pops up.

And get this one out of the way, and another one pops up. And that's exactly the way it was. It was the fullness of time.

It was beautiful. That holy olive plant prospered exceedingly from her holy anointing oil flowed out to inflame lights that shined all over Europe for 30 years. Europe never saw anything like these people.

They never heard anybody speak like these people. They never saw such simplicity like these people. And they never saw courage like these people.

Nothing would stop them. Young men were commissioned to go and preach the gospel everywhere. I mean, you get born again, changed by the power of God, baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and you're five months in a little congregation, and then the preacher calls you forward and commissions you along with one other young man and says, Go! I mean, we've got to wait 20 years to say go, or ten, six months.

Go! Do you know why? Because the fields were white already under harvest and we can't wait for ten years to grow up. And they went. And many of those young men, unmarried.

I don't think they should have been married for the situation that they were in. Many of them only lasted six months. They died.

They were martyred in six months, eight months. And one died, another one picked up the mandrel and kept right on going. And churches popped up spontaneous like mushrooms all over the place.

Hallelujah! Do it again, Lord! Some lived only six months, others rotted for years and finally died in a prison somewhere. Worshipping God with joy they did. Oh, this root.

It was a righteous root. Oh, it was a powerful root. This root of anabaptism.

Every man and woman was an evangelist and a prophet. They spoke forth the mind and will of God and the power of the Spirit of God and people were touched and challenged and stirred and converted everywhere. And I mean, think about it.

You know, in the hardest circumstances that you could imagine, people were getting born again everywhere. They couldn't keep up with them. Think about it.

Maybe you're one of those seekers, you know. And you're hiding in the shadows at a baptism. An early anabaptism baptism.

And you're hiding in the shadows and you're watching and you see the baptism and that's beautiful and all that's great. And you heard the sermon and you saw the people getting baptized and right in the middle of the baptism, the authorities bust into the middle of the place and grab the one who was just baptized and beat him over the head until their head swells up and drag him off into a wagon and throw him in prison.

Now, that's quite an invitation to Christianity when you think about it.

You would think they would have a hard time finding a convert after that. But the Spirit of God was so mighty upon those people, the Spirit of God was moving in such a mighty way that it didn't matter if he saw that. In fact, that just made him real clearly know it's all or nothing.

Oh, we could use some of that again, brethren. All or nothing. The commitment was clear, praise the Lord.

They went everywhere proclaiming the Kingdom of God is at hand. The persecutors called them Anabaptists. Rebaptizers.

Because they baptized again upon true confession of faith in Christ. That's where they got their name. Rebaptizers.

What's wrong with your other baptism? The authorities said. And, of course, they were offended that these fiery Anabaptists were not satisfied with the other baptism. But said, we believe in believer's baptism.

And infant baptism was the issue in that day. Other issues in our day. This righteous root.

Consider their theology. Their theology was very simple. In the first 30 years of Anabaptism, they hardly had time to sit down and figure out what is theology.

Their theology was simple. You live for Christ. You suffer for Christ.

You die for Christ. No matter what. That's the kind of theology they had.

Oh, how different the Protestant reformers had in those days. They could sit in the comfort of their homes, on a nice padded chair, with a light shining over their Bible, and sit around and discuss and hash theologies. And what do you think it means? And what do you say it means? And back and forth they went.

But the Anabaptists were running like dogs in the forest. No time to sit down and figure out their theology. But yet they had such a beautiful, simple theology.

Their theology was survival. Their theology was lambs in the midst of wolves. Be wise as serpents and harmless as doves.

Very simple theology. Obey the Word and the Christ of the Word at any cost. That was their theology.

They took an uncompromising stand for truth. The issues of the day was infant baptism, church and state. But I want to suggest to you this morning, no, there were deeper issues than that.

Those just happened to be the issues of that day. You see, God didn't just raise up somebody to take a stand against infant baptism. God raised up a people who were willing to stand for Christ and whatever the issues were in their day.

And brothers and sisters, the issues are different in our day. Just because the issue is not infant baptism anymore, that doesn't mean there are no issues. The issues have changed.

It's 2004. Will we be that kind of a people who will be uncompromising in the midst of a compromising world? That's a question. Their commitment was to Christ.

And that caused them to face the issues of their day, no matter what. They believed in aggressive evangelism. They were not the quiet in the land.

Amen? They were not the quiet in the land. They were not baking pies in 1525 to 1555. They were aggressive evangelists.

This brought great persecution upon them. Many were told, and the devil's methods have never changed, but many of them were told by the smiling face of a persecutor, Oh, my friend, I'm sorry that you're here in this prison. I don't want you to stay here.

You can go home if you'll just be the quiet in the land. We'll let you go home with your family. Just go home and bake pies and plant corn and you can do your thing as long as you want.

Well, his methods sure haven't changed, have they? But they were aggressive evangelists. They knew why, the purpose that God had them upon the earth. They knew what it was.

We are here to preach the gospel of the kingdom. We are here to win a lost soul to Christ. We are here to live for the Lord Jesus in an uncompromising way.

That's why we're here. And so, all the other appeals to a better life, a nicer home, a little bit better place to sleep, a soft pillow underneath your head, were all looked at with disdain. All they knew was that Jesus said, go and make disciples, radical followers of Jesus Christ, everywhere you can.

And they did, didn't they? This righteous route of anabaptism. They were anointed with the power of God. The Spirit of God attended their labors, inspired their hearts, inflamed their message, comforted them in prison, filled them with zeal as they sang in the fires of their martyrdom.

The Spirit of God was upon them. But it's very interesting to me again, they had no theology about the Spirit of God. They didn't need a theology about the Spirit of God.

They had Him. So there was no big long discussions about the Spirit and how He comes and who He is and whether He's come and what it would be like when He comes. They didn't need to have conversations like that.

He was there. They were anointed with the Holy Ghost. The combination of evangelism, their commitment to Christ, and the persecution that came because of their evangelism kept the Holy Ghost fresh and lively in every one of their hearts.

This is the Anabaptists. Consider their views on materialism and poverty this morning. They had a high view of poverty.

I mean, it was honorable if you chose to be poor. Not so anymore, is it? But it was honorable if you chose to be poor. And they had a guarded view of materialism.

They looked at it like this. To be rich was to be worldly. To those early Anabaptists, 1525 to 1555, to be rich was to be worldly.

They cared for each other out of the necessity that demanded it in their day. Yes, some of them lived in community, but most of them, listen, they were in such straits. I mean, it would be a joke to try to figure out how to live in a community like we would think of a colony today.

Yeah, they lived in community. You live in this cave and I'll live in this cave. And we'll break our bread together in humility in the night when nobody else is around.

And worship God together. Yeah, they lived in community. Number six, they were fearless.

They were fearless. You know, like it says there in Revelation chapter 12, they loved not their lives unto the death. That means they didn't care about dying.

When you don't care about dying, nobody can stop you. Nothing can stop you if you don't care about dying. And they were fearless because they were not afraid to die.

No fear of death. And because of that, no fear of man. There was no fear of man in the midst of them.

They faced their persecutors. They faced the Sanhedrins. They faced the councils.

They faced the inquisitions. And they faced them with boldness. Kind of like these Chinese Christians are, you know.

They didn't just humbly hang their head. They looked right boldly into the face of their persecutors and said, thus saith the Lord, my friend, God is going to judge you for what you do to me when you cut off my head. And they smiled at him.

Can you imagine what that would do to a persecutor? Instead of him being in charge and you coming in there, you know, all beat down like this if you just look him right in the eye and say, let me tell you something, friend. Just like Jesus did to Pilate. Oh, Pilate squirmed when Jesus did that to him.

You don't have any power, Pilate. None at all. If you have any power, it's been given to you by God.

I can lay down my life and I can take it again. That kind of courage is what the Anabaptists had. They were not afraid to die.

We're afraid to die. We need to be honest. We don't want to die.

We're afraid to die. You know, I thought about it the last few days. I wonder what would happen if somebody walked in the back door of this place and pointed a gun up here.

I wonder what would happen to us. I wonder what we would do. I don't know.

I don't know what I'd do. I know what I want to do, but I don't know what I'd do. I'm trusting God for that.

One magistrate said it this way, the more I kill them, the more they multiply. I don't know what to do. I've got more dead bodies than I know what to do with.

And lastly, and there are many, many, many more points, but I just wanted to lift up a few of them to help us to realize where we are in relation to where they were. Lastly, they believed in suffering love. They would not.

They loved the souls of their persecutors so much. They suffered the spoiling of their goods. They suffered the loss of their property.

They suffered starvation and poverty. They suffered the loss of their families. And they suffered the loss of their lives because they loved their persecutors and wanted to see their souls saved.

They would not fight back. And the brokenness and the humility and the extremities fueled the fire of God in their hearts even more. See, they found the key to ministry.

Death worketh in us that life might work in others. They knew it. They tasted it.

This account of these righteous Anabaptists reminds me of the Chinese house churches. That's the way they are. That's the kind of commitment they have.

That's the kind of suffering they're going through. That's the kind of courage they have. To this day, right now, they're there going through all these things that we've been looking at and listening to this morning.

They're there today going through those very things. And it's 2004. Are we going to be prepared? That's a good question.

Beloved brothers and sisters, this righteous root is worth reviving. It's worth patterning our lives after. It must be revived.

And I believe it will be revived. But it may take persecution to do it. I don't know.

I'm not a prophet. But we must know that God will revive it in the last days. I believe that.

But must we wait for persecution? Must we stand and watch our babies' heads smashed with a sledgehammer to rise up then and revive? Must we do that? It can happen, brothers and sisters. Must we stand and watch our virgin daughters raped before our very eyes and then rise up and get desperate? I think we should rise up and get desperate now. Before that day comes.

Because it's coming. Why must we wait for that? God is calling us to better things this morning, brothers and sisters. You know, I think the devil looks at the Anabaptists like Napoleon looked at China.

Napoleon, 1800s, he said of China, China is a sleeping giant. Let her alone or she'll destroy us all. I wonder if the devil doesn't look at Anabaptists in the same way.

The devil watches her. Go to sleep. Go to sleep.

Go to sleep, oh, little children. Let her sleep, he says. If she ever wakes up to her heritage, look out, the kingdom of darkness shall be shaken once again.

He keeps lulling them to sleep, generation after generation. How many generations have they been sleeping? Have your own religion. Wear your clothes.

Live your simple life. Bake your pies. Be a tourist attraction, no problem.

Sleep on now, mighty giant of Anabaptism. Sleep on, sleep on. Don't wake up and win the world or shake my kingdom again, says the devil.

In closing, how do we revive it? Can we even do it? That's a good question. With our present circumstances, our present practices, and our present theology, can we even do it? Our view of suffering is very different than theirs. Our view of evangelism is very different than theirs.

And our view of materialism is very different than theirs. Can we even do it? How do we revive it? Number one, we must begin with an honest acknowledgement of where it really is. We must begin with an honest acknowledgement and acknowledge that we have sinned and our fathers have sinned and our fathers' fathers have sinned grievously before God.

An honest acknowledgement of where we are compared to where they were would be a good start. You know, I looked at some of those articles in the newspaper and they're rather embarrassing. Those articles about the plain people and all the problems they're having and the use and drugs and drinking and incest and all those kind of things.

They're embarrassing. You know, you just wish you could just get rid of those papers and don't let anybody read them. But you know what? It could draw some humility in those people called the plain people.

We could do it that way. We could let it do that in our hearts and cause some self-examination and maybe some desperation to rise up in the heart. That would be a right response to those embarrassing articles in the newspaper.

Wouldn't it? You know, I was in an Anabaptist church some years ago and the minister got up and in the middle of his sermon he said something that I never forgot. He said these words. We hear a lot of talk about revival these days.

We don't need revival. We are revival. We are revival.

Were the words that came out of his mouth. And it was toward the end of his sermon and toward the end of the service and I sat through the whole thing and it was a pretty dry piece of bread that evening. We are revival.

What was he saying? You know what he was saying? He was saying we believe the doctrines of the early Anabaptist church. We believe in non-resistance. We believe in separation from the world.

We don't vote. You know, and down the list he could go. And because we believe these things we are revival.

That's an utter deception. Those are good things and we believe them. But that is not the spirit of early Anabaptism.

They were a power for God. Let us be honest. We have the theology of Anabaptism but we don't have much of the reality of Anabaptism.

And let's be honest about it. Then let that honesty lead to some open dialogue. First it's got to take place in our hearts.

Just a good old fashioned honesty meeting just between me and God. Get on my knees and say, OK God, that's right. We have fallen.

That's the first step. But then let that honesty lead to open dialogue where we can begin to talk what is wrong. Dialogue back and forth.

What do you think is wrong? What do you think is wrong? I need help. We need help. Open dialogue.

That's next. And open our heart to the voice of His prophets instead of stoning them. Every time some guy comes along and says there's something wrong, if we pick up a stone and let him have it, we'll never find out how far we've fallen.

It just won't happen. So don't stone the prophets. Listen to them.

Despise not prophesying, Thessalonians says, but rather listen to it and prove it whether it be true or whether it be false. Number three. On how to revive this righteous root.

A cry for restoration. First, we get honest. Then we're willing to dialogue.

Now we're ready to cry. To cry for restoration. Persistent prayer.

Desperate prayer. Remember the judges? Brothers and sisters here locally? Emmanuel read us those accounts. He went through the book of Judges here the other evening and that message on compromise.

It wasn't until the people got honest enough to cry to God, then God came through and delivered them. Before then, no deliverance. Though they probably wanted it.

Though they were weary of the situation they were in. Though they were probably wringing their hands and saying, What shall we do? What shall we do? I tell you, there are Anabaptists today that are wringing their hands and saying, What shall we do? What shall we do? But it wasn't until they got to the place where their stewing became a desperate cry to God from a sincere, humble heart that God came through and delivered them. A persistent cry for restoration.

Number four. We must repent of our fear of man. The fearlessness of the early Anabaptists was the strength of their lives.

It was the strongest character in them. But today, we are afraid of man. We must repent of our fear of man.

And brothers and sisters, we also must repent of our fear of man. We won't talk to our neighbors because we're afraid of what they might think or we're afraid of what they might say. We must repent of our fear of man.

I believe there's a spirit of fear that has the plain people gripped and held in bondage. And every time somebody pops up their head a little bit and starts to think maybe there's something wrong, maybe we should change this or that, you know, some growling spirit chases them back down again and they sit down in their pew and be quiet for another generation. We need to repent of our fear of man.

And lastly, don't focus on the movement. Focus on the Christ of the movement. And I feel this is one place where things have gone away many times.

I mean we have garnished the sepulchres of those early Anabaptist leaders and we have lifted up that movement and made it so much more than it is. It's only one movement where the spirit of Christ was mightily moving. Don't focus on the movement.

Focus on the Christ of the movement. And yea, look and see how God worked in the lives of those men and women and say, God, make us like that through Jesus Christ our Lord. We must return further than 1525, brothers and sisters.

But we must return to the early church and the Acts and the Christ of the early church if God is ever going to revive the righteous root of Anabaptism. We must return to these things. This is the burden on my heart this morning.

Give the time back over to Brother Aaron. Thank you for listening. Thank you, Brother Denny.

This has been a burden on my heart as well for many years. That's my heritage. I learned many good things.

I'm very grateful for the love of the Word of God and the reverence for it. Many good teachings that were instilled into my life. But the question is now to us.

How far will we go? What will we do? I appreciate the message. Will we learn from history? Where will we go? How far will we go? I just really appreciate the emphasis to go all the way back. And I know as the Lord worked in my heart, that was things that I was just burdened about and sharing with my people.

We need to go back farther. We need to go back to Jesus Christ and the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets and the Lord Jesus Christ, the chief cornerstone. We must.

And it's the same for us here this morning too. How far have we fallen? Where are we at? Where am I at? Am I willing to pay the price like they did and many others did? I appreciated the counsel to take these things and get along with God and let God search our hearts and repent. And then to share together, open up and have some dialogue.

How effective will we be? Or are we willing to settle for baking pies and planting corn? Having a nice, quiet and peaceable life. Oh Lord, so God have mercy on us. Open our eyes.

I'd like to just open it up for a bit here this morning. You have something to share? Something to add? A testimony? Confession? Is there someone? Something to share? Raise your hand. We'll get a microphone to you.

Get your hands up quickly so we can get a microphone to you. There's one there in the back. Brother Andy.

Yeah, I don't know what to say this morning. My heart is just singing amen, amen to what we've heard. We've heard some very challenging things this morning.

I have too. And I'll just say this. I just want to encourage both Brother Denny and all of you elders here at Charity.

We love you. We're behind you. I just want to encourage you to continue on with that vision.

And we want to be solidly there with you. And that a few years from now, maybe several years down the line, maybe, I don't know, ten years down the line if Christ doesn't return in that time, that the people will also view us as the quote unquote weirdos of our day. That we were willing to rise up against the challenges that we face.

Some of the things that Brother Denny mentioned. Materialism. Affluence.

And that people would rise up and they would wonder, how were they able to do that? Just like we look at the Anabaptists and see how they gave their lives and had their children torn out of their hands. We shake our heads and we wonder how they were able to do that. May we have that set of us in relation to the issues of our day.

That's my heart and my prayer. Thank you, Brother. Yes, Twain.

Yes, I believe it was Tuesday night when Brother Emmanuel preached a message on openness and being open before the brethren. That really spoke to my heart. And I want to say to you all brethren right now that I want my life to be open before you all.

If you have any counsel in my life, I want to be free to accept that. To be able to be used in that way as well. And God bless you.

Thank you. God bless you, Twain. Thank you for sharing.

There's a hand up front here on the sister sign. As Brother Denny was preaching and I was taking notes, I wrote down 1525 to 1555. And I looked at that and I thought, that's pathetic.

And then I thought of, was it maybe 1982 that charity started here? And I added 30 years and I wrote 2012. And I looked at that and I thought, I looked at my children and I look at my grandchildren sitting here and I know that can't be. We can't lose the power by 2012.

That's way too soon. And in the light of the lofty challenges that Brother Denny shared today, what I have on my heart is pretty puny but the Lord prompted me to open my heart a bit to you young mothers. As a result of some conversations I've had this week, and I'm going to quote some of you and I'm not going to quote your names, but I know that many here would relate with you.

You're not alone. But as we talked I heard comments like, you know, I couldn't expect my children to come every evening. So I brought a few one evening and then some of the others the next.

Or, well, I knew we couldn't come on Saturday night because that's not fair to the children to get them up again Sunday morning. Or, you know, they've sat all through church. We have to let them run after church, you know, they've got energy.

And to expect them to just stand here quietly beside us while we fellowship is too much. And I was blessed with an Anabaptist background and so much of this kind of thing runs in my blood. And I realize that.

But my cry this morning to us is that it runs in our children's blood too. And if our children are going to be the generation that is persecuted, or our grandchildren, if they're going to have the grit and the determination and the self-denial and the self-discipline to go through that with their eye on Christ, it's going to be because it runs in their blood. And so I'm encouraging you young mothers.

Your children are capable of whatever you expect of them. And I just pray God bless you as you take a step to higher ground and a little more commitment to just expecting your children to discipline themselves. And I just pray you'll hear my heart.

I'm not being critical. I love you. I just want to encourage you that past 2012 that there's a powerful people.

Amen. Amen. Thank you, sister.

A hand over here on the brother's side. Yes, I'd like to say thank you for that challenge, Denny. I know that fear of man is something that I need to work against because it's just there.

And I was just thinking here at the beginning of your sermon you talked about still time to seek the Lord and about going all the way back. And our family devotions this morning we read in Psalms 119. There's several blessings and one of them is, Blessed are they that keep his testimonies and that seek him with the whole heart.

And then also in verse 10, With my whole heart have I sought thee. Oh, let me not wander from thy commandments. I was just blessed with that, that we can go the whole way for God.

Amen. You know, as I thought about what Brother Denny was sharing, I thought, it wasn't Conrad Grebel. It wasn't Felix Mons.

And it wasn't George Blorock that lost the vision. It was that next generation. Young people, what will we do with it? Yes.

A hand in the back on the brother's side. Amen. Just want to say, I believe that message this morning is God's message to our heart.

God bless you, brother, for sharing it. But you know, this isn't the first message we've heard like this. We've heard about China.

We've heard about Arabia. They've been spaced a bit. I think God's bringing these messages.

And he gives us another little chance. But we can't turn back. It's time we take heed to the warnings given us.

And you know, I was really blessed with the simple steps of what do we do with this message that Brother Denny broke out there. And I think we have an obligation. I think we have an obligation to God.

I think we have an obligation to at least those of us from the Anabaptist heritage. We have an obligation to our families, to our communities. And we even have an obligation to the elders here, especially Brother Denny.

You know, all the work he's put into bringing that. We can't just turn away. God's goal is responsible.

And you know, as I think about it, and I think about what Mickey shared, what will we do, especially the younger generation, the young men, what will we do with it, you know, in the next ten years? What will we do with it in the next year? Because I believe that, you know, God's brought us here. He keeps bringing us up here. And he doesn't want us to turn away.

And I believe we're at a crossroads. Like Brother Gerard shared during the week of meetings. He said, he told us that if we turn away from here, within I don't know how many years, he said, we'll be a cult.

We'll just be another group. Another one that has lost the anointing. Another one that has lost the vision.

And I just pray that somehow we don't go that way. That we break that cycle and that we go on to, you know, there's not many groups that have done that, that have come out, that have had an anointing, and then have had a fresh anointing and gone on to higher heights. There's very few.

But I believe if we'll do it, and if we'll see that happen in the Anabaptist groups, that it may be the bride that Jesus comes back for. Because it's more pure. It's something very few other bodies of Christ have done before.

So let's press in for that vision. I just say amen. It's just a challenge to my heart to hear that shared this morning.

Amen, Brother Merle. Another hand in the back on the brother's side. I would just like to say amen as well to the message this morning and the need to revive that root.

The comment that stands out in my mind is let's not stone the prophets. And I think it's important to recognize the prophets. Sometimes they're unlikely prophets.

I'd like to say thank you to my prophets, my wife and my children. I've given my wife permission to speak into my life. I've taken a sabbatical this year and said what does it take to be a part of the bride? And the theme that keeps coming back again and again to me and my house is return to your first love.

Jesus Christ in Ephesians 5 exhorts husbands to lay down their lives for their wives. To love them as Christ loved the church. As I too have been studying the Anabaptist movement and the movement of the Church of China, it's noble to see single men and single women at young ages laying down their lives as Brother Denny exhorted us through history.

It's noble to see men burning out in six months. It's noble to die for Jesus Christ. But I have been challenged that it is just as noble to live for Jesus Christ dying daily for my wife and children.

And that for me has meant laying down some very ambitious dreams as a pastor. But I'm hoping by faith someday as my children grow up, as my wife is solid, as our relationship is sound, that God may hand that torch back to me and to many others who have decided to be even more ambitious for their wives and children than their congregation. Because it's out of the overflow of a radiant wife and radiant children that men of God, that pastors and elders and missionaries have not only the power to speak to the heathen, but the affirmation of a radiant wife and well-behaved children standing right beside them, not neglected, but right beside them, saying, You're speaking, Papa.

You're speaking, husband, out of the overflow of what you've spoken to us. Thank you that you didn't leave us behind in your mission, but you took us with you. And that's my heart's cry.

I'm not there yet. I've got a lot to learn. But I'm so thankful for a place and an environment where we're open to revival, thorough revival.

I, too, look forward to what God's going to do in these next years before, I think, Sister Anne mentioned 2012, when we get a thorough revival, when we are ministering out of the overflow. I wonder how God's going to do that. I'm wondering in my own life and the lives of my brothers in this congregation, I'm wondering how God's going to do that.

But I believe it's His heart. It's all through Scripture. As Brother Mark shared, strong families build strong churches.

Thank you, Brother Jeff. Amen. We needed that.

It's a good balance to the message. Amen. How will God do it? You know, I think the Lord is just as far ahead of us as He can be.

You know, He's just encouraging us. Come on, my children. You know, will we follow? How far will we go? I just want to encourage us this morning.

You know, we just can't sit back and relax and say, well, God has done so many good things and now we just revel in it and coast along. It will not work. And we must go back to Jesus Christ.

Each one of us must have a personal encounter with Jesus Christ in salvation and then a personal relationship with Him and a filling of His Spirit continually. It's not good enough to just follow other revival movements and try to pattern after them. And I think that is a mistake that has been made over the years of history as I've observed it myself also.

We try to recreate or pattern after. Well, how did they do it in the study of theology when they were just fools for Christ, sold out to God and obedient in radical discipleship and obedience to the Lord Jesus Christ and to His Word. You know, that's what separated them from mainstream professed Christianity.

Radical obedience to the Scriptures and to the Lord Jesus. And they loved not their lives unto the death. So I encourage us, let us seek the Lord together.

Let's continue. Is there someone else yet before we close? I see another hand. OK, we'll hand up front here on the sister's side.

Yeah, I am always so afraid of men and at school and everywhere. And then one time the Lord gave me a verse and I was so blessed by it. Maybe you can read it because my Bible is in Dutch.

It's Jeremiah 1, verse 6 through 8. Jeremiah 1. And verse 6, did you say? Praise God. Jeremiah 1, 6 through 8. Then said I, Ah, Lord God, behold, I cannot speak, for I am a child. But the Lord said unto me, Say not, I am a child, for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee.

And whatsoever I command thee, thou shalt speak. Be not afraid of their faces, for I am with thee to deliver thee, sayeth the Lord. Hallelujah.

Amen. Thank you for sharing. Another hand? Somewhere else? In the back? Yes.

Jesus said, this is my work that you believe on, on me. And I was listening to the tape there of John and Acts this week when I was driving and the words just stuck out how through his name, through believing on his name, this man stands here. And we as a family memorized 1 Samuel 17 there where David went out and with nothing but the name of Jesus stood before the giant.

And we're fascinated with the faith of the men in the Old Testament. But Peter says, he says the Spirit of God testified beforehand of the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow. And the angels looked and searched diligently the time when Christ would come.

And they were all for this time. And here we are. And yet we stand before the giant and we're afraid.

We're afraid of failure. We 40 year olds, we're slow. The teenagers, they don't have failure.

They're strong. But we cringe because we're afraid of failure. But we must go forth and work.

We sing that song, give me the wings of faith to rise. And we look back to the Anabaptists. But we sing once they were here just like us.

But they prayed out, they poured out prayers and tears. But now they're standing there. Now they're among the sanctified.

But when they were here, they were afraid of failure. But there was a faith and there was a work that kept them sweet and strong. And God stood up for them because though they were weak, yet God through the preaching of the cross enabled them to save the lost.

I think of the verse that says, For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness, but unto us which are saved, it's the power of God. We must die and just be willing to lose everything knowing that Jesus, though we're ordained, I think of the verse in John that says, I have called you and ordained you that ye should go and bear fruit. And it says that we will die, but the fruit will remain.

And the Anabaptists died, but the fruit remains. But I'm afraid. I'm afraid of failure.

I'm afraid of death. But Jesus says, Just go. Just go and preach the cross.

Preach salvation. Preach My name. You'll die, sure, but the fruit will remain.

And I think how Abraham is held up as the man of faith. But where he failed and he sinned there, but I can identify with him because he was afraid he would die and wouldn't have had the child God promised. So he used himself.

And so often I'm like that. I'm afraid I'm going to be a failure. So I do things.

And God says, No, just believe on Me. Just trust Me. Don't be afraid.

Go forth. Carry the light. Hallelujah.

I can't tell you this morning how many times we find that principle in the scripture of fear not. Be not afraid. But it is many times.

And that's for us too this morning. Thank you for sharing. This time we'll have a song and then we'll have some more.

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