

# Establishing Kingdom Communities, Part 1

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Brother Nathan gave me this intimidating title, and it's somewhat academic, I think. I'm so blessed to be here. Can anybody pull together people like the Overholt's? I'm just constantly amazed at what the Overholts can pull off, and this is a perfect example. Just the different varieties and the different types of questions that come out, I love the energy of that, I love being true Bereans and looking into the Word of God, and I'm just really excited to be here.

Okay, I've got some disclaimers about me. My name is Dean Taylor, and – this part's not a disclaimer – I'm married to my wife Tania for some 26 or 27 years. She has gone through a lot with me. We have six children. She's an incredible woman; she's followed me leaving the Army, going and living in radical churches down with David Bercot in Texas for 10 years, 12 years Lancaster County, and now in a Hutterite community for 2 1/2 years. And so she's an incredible woman. And if you're married to a visionary, ladies, then you can feel my wife's pain. It's not always easy journey, and she's been a tremendous blessing.

I live in the Altona community. Altona and Elmendorf are sister communities; we live about an hour and a half from each other. My job: I'm a nurse anesthetist, which means I put people to sleep, and that's why they call me the preacher that puts people to sleep. And I'm not sure why that is but I hope it's because of my job.

I love Jesus, I'm a born again believer in Christ, and I'm trying by the grace of God to be a real follower of Jesus, and to lead my family in that way. And that's who I am. And if I could say this in the disclaimer part, our communities are on a journey ourselves, we're trying to figure out life, and we're trying not to focus on community, but to focus on Jesus Christ and living out His way. We're on a journey ourselves, and it's not the fix of everything. There are certain things that are certainly much more challenging in community, than not in community. And there are also some blessings that are there. We ourselves have made several changes that are exciting, but they also come with a lot of caution, because as we've already heard, some people mentioned about a lot of sudden change and what that brings out, so I tremble over some of those changes, but I'm excited about those changes as well.

Again, a disclaimer, when we talk about the concept of community, I need to say, it's a scary word. I've noticed when you bring it up, people get sort of worried, and so I want to say some things of my view of community so I'm not misquoted. I believe that built into the essence of Anabaptism, or biblical Christianity of any kind, is community. It's built into the very way that we all are about. Now not all community of goods, but we all at least have a community of charity. I think that's a term that Harold S. Bender had a concept of.

And I will say this: coming from an evangelical background, into the Mennonite/Anabaptist/Amish/Hutterite world, the concept of community that you have is something incredible. And I want to give you pat on the back there. Just like you were talking about if something happened with the tractor and all this. And so there's something built into this thing of seeing yourself as a people, and it's my desire to encourage that today, and to even strengthen that. Not all live on the same property, like we do, but all joined together with the distinct calling and purpose to – there's the keyword – *collectively* glorify God and spread his kingdom as a people. And I think that that's something that is built into Anabaptism.

So now, "say it Dean." Does Dean think that you have to live with the common purse and community of goods to be real Christian? The answer is no. So as we get to different answers, or people think, "Dean are you saying this," I'm not saying this. It's not at all what I'm saying. Nevertheless, I will say this: Kingdom Christianity, by definition, must be lived out in a people, a community, a collective group of people on the same wavelength doing the things together.

Here's a beautiful quote. Other people groups have done this. I found this great quote by John Wesley. I love how he worded it. John Wesley, who didn't live in a community like many of us even have, but he had this burden to be a people, and he said this, "I continue to dream and pray about a revival of holiness in our day that moves forth in mission and creates authentic community in which each person can be unleashed through the empowerment of the Spirit to fulfill God's creational intentions." Great quote, John Wesley.

As I bring this idea of community, and want to strengthen your concept of community, I do want to say, I do have something to say. I didn't come here to say something; I do have something to say. And it's my desire that I don't want this to be the next fad. Okay, we tried revivalism, we tried this, I'm scared, I don't want the concept of community to be the next new fad that we try for a little bit and our children disregard. On the one hand, I believe that many of our Anabaptist communities are losing something very precious. You're losing it and you don't even hardly know it. You're losing it to a pseudo-community that goes around all of us. On the other hand, I'm excited as I talk to people and hear people, that many today are catching on to the kingdom vision like never before. And that excites me, and I'm glad to be a part of that.

So let's hear the title again: "Establishing Kingdom Communities." Tomorrow night I'm going to try to go through actual Anabaptist concepts and see how this concept of community is within all the Anabaptist groups, and I'm going to be talking about specifics. Today I would like to just go to the biblical theology of this concept. The kingdom community is something that I just want to try to lay the biblical foundation of that, because I want you to be careful. There is a paradigm shift here, in the concept – you've already heard it today – of a "save me" gospel, or a concept of salvation to glorify God as a people.

So what I'm talking about is representing the coming kingdom in today's reality, is the title I've given it. Here's the title I wanted; Nathan didn't like it. I like to try to come up with titles, I like little slogans so people can get a hold of it. So if I can give to you any slogan the concept of what I believe Jesus' plan for the kingdom on earth is, it's this: that we are, as a church, to **"Be – What is to Become"**. Can you imagine that? One day we know the kingdom will come and we worship Jesus for eternity. I want to you and your mind to imagine what that will look like. It is our job to be ambassadors of that – today. **"Be – What is to Become."**

Jesus said, "I want you to pray like this," he said, "have your existence here on earth, as it is in heaven." He told us to seek first the kingdom of God. And the writer of Hebrews gives us this concept of partaking in what is to come, in this passage that we quote a lot of times in this idea of losing our salvation, but we miss this little nugget here, in Hebrews 6. He says, "For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God," – watch this – "and the powers of the world to come." This explains what a born-again true Christian should be experiencing: the powers of heaven, that world to come. We're supposed to experience that today. In Romans 12 Paul tells us, "Do not be conformed to this world"– this age, this eon – "but be transformed by the renewing of your mind"– that we are to exist in a different place, we are citizens of heaven. And we are to be ambassadors of Christ. We are to be on earth like it is in heaven.

There is a sense of now and not yet; we know there will be a final day when Jesus will come, and from the rising of the sun to the going down of the same the name of Jesus will be praised. But now we're not quite there yet. In the beginning the kingdom was a garden. In the end it will be that everywhere, but for now it's these nuggets, these seeds, called "the church." And you are to be what it's supposed to be like. You are to be – what is to become. Allow yourself to dream, what will it be like, and then people will say, "Ah, so that's what they were talking about." And living that kingdom today, in reality.

Now people say (and John D gets this a lot), "Dean, you talk about the kingdom and money too much." I found this little illustration and it's interesting. What you see here is a graph, and up here is the amount of times Jesus talked about different subjects. 120 or more times is the kingdom, then the kingdom of heaven, the kingdom of God. And if you had another one with economics and money issues it would be right in there. And the different things that we typically think of are way down here. So I want to be about what Jesus is about. I want my heart to beat with what made Jesus' heart beat. I want to be part of his dream for the cure for humanity. And this is what he talked about.

So, this beautiful kingdom that Jesus came to establish on this earth was planted from the beginning. In Matthew 25:34, when he talks about those who come into his kingdom, because of the kingdom attitudes of helping the poor in these different things that he mentions in Matthew 25, he says, "Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom" – *watch this* – "prepared for you from the foundation of the world:..." God has a beautiful plan in this. Paul even continued this discussion of the kingdom, Acts 28:23, "And when they had appointed him a day, there came many to him in his lodging; to whom he expounded and testified the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus, both out of the law of Moses, and out of the prophets, from morning to evening." Hallelujah. The Kingdom.

I want to talk about the Anabaptists, and how they express this. This next excerpt from a letter by Conrad Grebel, is, in my opinion, the essence of Anabaptism. He's writing to his friend Vadian (who was his brother-in-law and a mentor all the time he was in college, and yet he didn't join the Anabaptist movement). Conrad Grebel is now a converted and zealous young man, and he's writing him this letter. And listen to the way he says it here. He says, *"Achieving financial advantage brings us, at best, a temporary happiness in this world, and it can often disguise the naked force which supports it. It is impossible to reconcile the love of money with God's truth."* – And here's the statement, and it's incredibly radical. – *"I believe the word of God without a complicated interpretation, and out of this belief I speak."* That's it; I love that! You know, we need to get a study Bible, an Anabaptist study Bible, and like when Jesus says, "Love your enemies," and down here we'll open it up and it says, what it really means is...Love your enemies. It's simple. The Bible is easy to understand.

He goes on to say, *"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 might hope. The way is narrow."* And then he says this, the letter ends: *"The teaching of the Lord has been given for the purpose of being put into practice."* That is what drove the new wine in the new wine skins of the early Anabaptist movement. The Bible was just coming out, and they were getting little copies of the New Testament, and young men were getting around and saying, "Listen to this." And they said, "Let's do it!" And they did it, and they changed the world.

Dream with me! Think about it today: What if Jesus really meant every word he said? If we let this kind of thing permeate our existence today, every generation, community after community, and allow those words to be put into practice, we cannot fail! It may differ from here to here, from century to century, but the point is: are we even there? What if Jesus meant every word he said? I think he did mean everything he said.

So now we're going to talk about community. When we consider community Acts 2 and Acts 4 come up, and we look at the biblical thing, and that comes up, and it should. But the "Why?" is a more important question. And I tell this to the Hutterites a lot: the examples in Acts 2 and Acts 4 are testimonies; they're not a command. There is no command to live in community like they did in Acts 2 and Acts 4, but it's a beautiful testimony.

We get lost in this debate on, should we live in community or should we not live in community; and the communitarians pat themselves on the back and say, "Well, they did in Acts 2 and Acts 4," and the non-communitarians say, "Well, Paul later on gave examples of this to the church in taking care of the widows, etc." and so both pat themselves on the back, and both are missing one very important thing. Behind all of that language is a kingdom teaching and a radical cure for humanity created by Jesus Christ, that they were trying, each of them, to put into practice. That's what drove it. So if we congratulate ourselves because we live in community, and we just share things and get worldly, or the other guy that doesn't live in community calls it stewardship, we aren't accomplishing what Jesus is telling us to do.

But let's look at those passages, because they are important. As Pentecost came... And say what you want – only one church in the Bible was completely started by God... It wasn't an apostle that was sent here at Pentecost... And here's what it looked like. And again, it's not a command. There is no command here; it's just a testimony of living a kingdom life.

Acts 2:43 "And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles. And all that believed were together; and had all things common; and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need. And they, continuing daily with one accord in the Temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God, and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved."

And then in Acts 4 it happened again. It's incredible that happened again. If it's a one-time thing, okay, but then they were praying. What were they praying for when it happened the second time? Boldness. "We need boldness." And the church got together and prayed, and, bam, it happened again.

Acts 4:32 "And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common. And with great power give the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus; and great grace was upon them all. Neither was there any among them that lacked; for as many as were possessors of land or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, and lay them down at the apostles feet; and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need."

Wow! Again, there's no command; you don't have to come under any kind of condemnation if you or your church doesn't practice community of goods just like this. But what we see here... don't miss the incredible kingdom testimony. Acts 2 and 4 are testimonies, not commands.

Behind these testimonies are the radical, world changing teachings of Jesus; radical, Kingdom Christianity. What teachings? Well, let's look at. Why did they do that? Where were they getting it? Why didn't they just worry about getting saved? We've talked about some of those doctrines here.

First of all, Jesus taught us about a real family of God. And I tell you that coming out of the world and leaving the Army, and all that type of thing, I have experienced that hundredfold here on earth, I genuinely have, and it's beautiful. And Jesus talked about this, and it's an important factor that I would don't want you to lose in your churches. You know the story in Matthew 12:

*"While he talked to the people, behold, his mother and his brethren stood without, desiring to speak with him. Then one said unto him, Behold, thy mother and thy brethren stand without, desiring to speak with me. But he answered and said unto him that told him, Who is my mother? And who are my brethren? And he stretched forth his hand toward his disciples, and said, Behold my mother and my brother! For whosoever shall do the will of my father which is in heaven, the same as my brother, and sister, and mother."*

That beautiful concept of being a true family... And when people come by, and you really trying to live this kind of life, the way we call it each other brother and sister, the way I can explain it to people who totally come from my background, from the outside, it's like you genuinely were suddenly brought into this really big family. It's genuinely like being a big family. And I've experienced that in many different settings in the Anabaptist world.

Radical sacrifice... I'll never forget the first time I was at Shippensburg Christian Fellowship. You asked me to speak there, brother John D. And I heard John D speaking on Luke chapter 12. And I'd talked about the rich young ruler but somehow it never completely gripped me. But then John D was talking about Luke 12, and the problem with Luke chapter 12 is, it's not the rich young ruler he's talking to, he's talking to his disciples. And he was requiring of his disciples some kind of a radical view of economics that in some way has to be lived out.

It doesn't have to be lived out as in Acts 2 and 4, as we saw Paul clearly gave different ways that could be lived out in a different way. But it does have to be lived out radically. Those are the commands of Jesus. I could take you to the spot, John D, when you are preaching, and I said, Oh! Because you see, when I was in college down in Texas I was really poor, but then when I got this really great job, suddenly I was really tempted to change those theologies. And as I wanted to walk in these teachings I found people saying to me the same type of reasoning that people were saying to me back when I was in the Army, and they were saying that I was taking the words of Jesus too far.

But listen to this radical teaching, which I think both Paul and the church at Pentecost were expressing. Luke says in 12:31, *"But rather seek ye the kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added unto you. Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."* He wants to give to us the kingdom. *"Sell that ye have, and give alms; provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."* That was to his disciples, not the rich young ruler. I never caught that before I heard you preaching. It affected me.

There's something also in the concept that you have in your Anabaptist churches (and I think this is one of the biggest concepts you're losing) of the expression of the community of the Trinity. The community of the Trinity, the brotherhood of the Trinity, however you want to word it. A.W. Tozer, I think it was, once said that every problem that we have in church can go back and stem to some kind of misunderstanding about an attribute or a character of God. And I believe it is this character of God that Jesus gave to us in that upper room right before his crucifixion, in John 17. It talks about why we go through all this trouble to live with each other, and dwell with each other, and to work out the hard things of a life together, and to go through all these brothers meetings and discussions. It's because we want to do something that Jesus let us know about an attribute of God.

Listen to the way he words it. In John 17:10 Jesus says, *"And all mine are thine, and thine are mine; and I am glorified in them. And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are."*

How many people here believe in the Trinity? A lot of you. Now, you believe that concept of that oneness is pretty tight, right? He's letting us know about the character of God. And he wants the church to show to the world this character of God. Get a hold of that. He goes on and he says, *"As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I sent them into the world."* - This community is not stagnant, it is active - *"And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth. That they all may be one; as now, Father, art in me, and I thee, that they also may be one in us;"* - Why? So *"that the world may believe that thou hast sent me."*

He's staking his entire testimony on this character of his nature with the Father, and his desiring for the church to represent this attribute the world! It's worth the trouble of all that you go through to be a tight brotherhood. *"And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one:"* - I hear in that verse like Psalm 133, how blessed it is for brethren to dwell together in unity; on such God commands the blessing - *"I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them as thou hast loved me."* You see, your salvation, as you heard by John D this morning, is not about you. It really isn't. And this was another revelation for me in my journey, realizing this concept that it's not about me.

In Ezekiel 36... This is one of those fundamental, "you get to see yourself in the character of God", type of passages. Ezekiel 36 verse 20 God is rebuking his people for the way they went out and made a mess of his name, and he says, *"And when they entered onto the heathen, whither they went, they profaned my holy name, when they said unto them, These are the people of the Lord, and are gone forth out of his land."* So in other words, everywhere the people go in the name of God, they are embarrassing me. *"But I had pity"* - not on them - *"I had pity for mine holy name, which the house of Israel had profaned among the heathen, whither they went. Therefore say unto the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord God;"* - now watch this now - *"I do not this for your sakes, O house of Israel, but for mine holy name's sake, which ye have profaned among the heathen wither ye went. And I will sanctify my great name, which was profaned among the heathen, which ye have profaned in the midst of them; and the heathen shall know that I am the Lord, saith the Lord God, when I shall be sanctified in you before their eyes. For I will take you from among the heathen, and gather you out of on countries, and will bring you into your own land."* And that's where he says, *"I will take that stony heart out of you, and put in a heart of flesh; I will put my Spirit within you, and I will cause you to walk in my statutes and judgments,"* to glorify God. It's an incredible concept! Yes, Jesus died for us, and God loves us, but at the very core, if you get down far enough, it's about the glory of God; everything we do, even our very salvation.

In this concept the Sermon on the Mount becomes alive. And instead of looking at the Sermon on the Mount as some sort of a... Well in my background we look at it like dispensationalism, the concept of living it out in the future. But let me ask you a personal question: How hard is it to love your enemies in heaven? I don't get it. And that kind of thing was my background. Finally I had to come to terms that the Sermon on the Mount was meant for us to live - today. It is the cure for humanity. It is how God wants the kingdom community church to be. Seven times Jesus said, "I know it has been said, but now I say..." Anger and murder were taken even to name-calling. Adultery taken even to lust. Marriage was made as it was in the beginning, Jesus said. Revenge was put away and now even the love of money. Not coveting was expanded surrendering everything we had. Judgmentalism was supposed to be put away. And then he says in Matthew 5:19 *"Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven; but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same should be called great in the kingdom of heaven."* I want to please God; I try. I fail all the time, but I want to please God.

This kingdom that he's talking about is a place of repentance, a place of renewal; a place of Saints redeemed by God and implanted by his spirit; a place where the rich would say "ouch", and the poor would rejoice; a place that would manifest God's cure and dream for humanity; a place that would act as a mighty army that would take this kingdom to the end of the earth. Jesus is the cure. Jesus offered the cure for humanity, and he created his church as a showcase for his way. He made it the instrument of blessing for the whole world. That's what we are to be. We are to *Be – What is to Become*. It's more than just facts – it's a blueprint. Do you see it? It's important that you do.

We talk a lot about being born again in these circles, and certainly the criticism of fundamentalism needs to be looked at, but let me ask you a deeper question. Jesus, in the whole born-again passage, said to Nicodemus, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." John 3:3 That means you don't understand it, you don't get it. Do you get it? Do you get the concept of the kingdom on earth? Because if you don't, you need to get with God, and get with the words of Jesus Christ; you may not be born again. He says if you're not born again you're not going to get it. "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." John 3:5 It is the biggest thing that Jesus talked about, the littlest thing that we ever talk about. Why? It is a problem.

I came upon this preaching story... It's hard, because when I give these preaching stories, particularly with the historical group like you, somebody's going to ruin it and come up and say, it didn't really happen, so bear with me on this one. So I found this newspaper article from the New York Times or something, from the 1800s, and it was talking about this musicologist that was over in Germany, and he was trying to dig up all the old Bach pieces while they were still scattered in different places, so the newspaper went. And as he got to one of the mansions, there was a gardener out there in the middle of the yard, and the gardener was wrapping his trees, you know, the way you do with paper. And it happened to catch his eye; the paper looked odd. So he went over there, and he said, "What are you using to wrap those trees in?" The gardener said, "Oh, this funny paper that's up in these chests up in the attic." And as he went to look at it, sure enough, it was one of the manuscripts from Bach that he was using.

And the reason I bring out this analogy is: it's kind of like the way we use the Bible. We use it for entirely wrong reasons. The Bach piece was meant to be a beautiful symphony, played and performed for the world, to make beautiful music, but it was being used for something odd. We use the Scriptures for something strange when Jesus wants it to be performed. He wants to be lived out in a beautiful symphony. That's why Jesus gave us these incredible teachings. Often times I'm afraid we get the right answers to the wrong questions, over and over again. When you read something the wrong way, you end up with the wrong questions. The problem is that with a little work we get the right answers to the wrong questions. You go from one thing to the next, and way back there the problem is, you've been asking the wrong question.

You see, our salvation, our church, and our life is not a theology, a book, a creed – it is a person: Jesus Christ. The right question is: How do we manifest his very presence on this earth? That is the question. I know sometimes we have to answer things. Even living in a community you have to answer basic things of life. I realize that. But we've always got to keep thinking and coming back to this: What did he say that this should look like? We have got to come back to the right questions.

So what is the central message of the Bible? Looking at Kingdom Christianity from the beginning: it began in the Garden. And we know what happened in the garden: there were two trees and it's interesting, Genesis 2 says, "...the Lord God made to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil." And we know the story, that from there man chose the wrong way. There were always two ways.

It is interesting, the Didache, the earliest nonbiblical Christian document, mentions these two ways. What I find even more fascinating is that the Schleithem confession (the men at Schleithem wouldn't have had access to the Didache) also very clearly articulates that there are two ways. When we look at the word of God we see that there are two ways and are two kingdoms. There are two ways to live life. We either live by the infilling of the power of God, or we live by the power of darkness. And these two cannot mix. In Genesis 3, it was so important that these two ways do not mix that *"the Lord God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now lest he put forth his hand, and take also the tree of life, and eat, and live forever: Therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken."*

And this idea then, that man had to be governed by different tree. A tree of civil law. Now don't get confused in a Lutheran sense of the law, but just civil law, fear of punishment, and fear of death, is the way then the world has to be governed.

One of my favorite Anabaptists is Peter Riedemann, who did much beautiful writing. It's usually ignored, it's called the Hutterite's Statement of Faith, it's his writings. I encourage you all to read it, it's one of the gems of the earliest Anabaptism. And he talks about several of these topics, and very little about community of goods. And he says this, talking about how these governments all are on this earth, he says, "... *Since people did not want to let themselves be led by the spirit of the Lord, God had to use a different rod to protect them from harm. This was done so that the land would not be completely polluted with blood guilty people, and so that he would not have to destroy the whole world on their account. The world could thus be preserved until the time of the promised offspring, in whom all things would be made right.*" (pp 215-222) He said that human governments are to us a constant reminder of the wrath of God.

We see that God then presents his kingdom in Noah, and wants it to be in a people. Later on he gives it to us in Abraham, and we see Abraham called to be a people. And even in Abraham, is called not only to be a people, but to bless the whole world with this people. Moses: 50 days after the Passover (Pentecost) he brings them the law in Exodus 19, and he says this:

*"Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bear you on eagles wings, and brought you unto myself. Now therefore, if you will obey my voice indeed, and keep my commandments, then you shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: and ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel."*

But they dropped it. And they didn't do those things. God still loved them and worked with them. He worked in different ways through the judges. He worked through David. He worked through different human governments; Hosea says "I gave you a king in my anger and took him away in my wrath." We know that Samuel finally gave them a king, and rebuked them for the whole concept of choosing a king rather than God.

But the prophets spoke of a different time. The prophets spoke of a day that would come, when they would beat their swords into plowshares. Not just beat their swords, but beat their swords into instruments that would do the world good, and take it and make a difference in this world. And they talked of a coming kingdom and a coming people. Isaiah prophesied and he talked about a people that walked in darkness who would someday see a great light. And he said:

*"For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace." – Now watch this – "Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even forever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this."*

Jesus came, and he said, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Be – what is to become. Dream with me today. What if Jesus really meant every word that he said? I want you to allow the words of Jesus to permeate you. In Matthew 13 he said if we allow it as a seed, as a mustard seed, to enter us, it will begin to grow. And if you let Jesus' words grow in you, and you look at the New Testament, and you say, "I believe it, and I want to see it actualized," it's going to do something, and I guarantee you will leave here changed. I guarantee you will. What if Jesus really meant every word he said?

Question and Answer time:

Lester Troyer, Stone Lake WI: I wonder if you would care to address the issue of protectionism and retirement security, as it relates to the church community, otherwise no one has insurance and Social Security.

Dean Taylor: There's something we always have to keep facing: that if we want to save our lives, we lose them. There's an interesting story in the Hutterian Chronicles, in the time of the 30 year war, and they kept being rated and rated and wiped out, and one of them actually said, you know, Jesus said to give to everyone who asks, let's just give it to them, it'll save us the trouble of being persecuted in this way. I think it's a lesson that we find difficult to learn. If we try to save our lives, we will lose them. I think though that careless protectionism can also be a problem of not putting the kingdom forward. We have a world that Jesus wants us to reach; he has a whole earth that he wants us to minister to. And that protectionism comes in more than just trying to be careful and have insurance, but also not taking the action that Jesus wants us to take. If we lose our life's for his sake, we will truly find them. But yeah, that is a deep subject.

Loren Schlabaugh, Nappanee IN: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John each ended their Gospels with the command of Jesus to go and preach, and also teaching, making disciples, and so on. From your perspective, what would be the strengths of a community in loving and obeying that command? What are some of the challenges that face communities in loving and obeying that command? From your perspective, what is the answer?

Dean Taylor: That's a great question. It's a passion of my heart, and I dream to see this in my life. I've studied that through the years and I've seen it, and I believe that when revival comes, that the intention of revival is to bring it out in the way that was experienced in Acts. Not to sit and congratulate ourselves that we live in community, but these communities would be put into practice the teachings of Jesus on a world scale. Historically it has happened. The Hutterites, in the early days of the Anabaptists, have proved this. They were a mission machine. They were the "Marine Corps" of the Anabaptists. And during the times of the greatest persecution they were prospering incredibly. Brother Leonard Gross back there wrote a beautiful book called *The Golden Years of the Hutterites*, which goes into that explanation, and it gives us a proof that, amongst our own people, it can be done. The Moravians, which were not Anabaptists, proved that this could be done. People always say, but people would flock in, and this would happen or that would happen, yes, there would be lots of terrible and awful things that would happen. But I believe that Jesus Christ... He gave us a little promise in that: If you do this, Lo, I will be with you, even to the ends of the earth. No Go, no Lo. So, good question. May I see it in my day.

Daniel Hershberger, Kinsman OH: I just appreciated your message on community of goods versus stewardship. You might be familiar with the episode of the Thessalonican brethren who came into the Anabaptists setting, and were looking at different things. And I think what you brought out, we could bring it out more clearly if we get the message of what these people were feeling, that righteousness cannot be legislated. And I think that's the bottom line of what you are saying, right?

Dean Taylor: Exactly. If we congratulate ourselves in either one of those... To the communities I am always arguing that we need to be church, and being a church comes with responsibilities that being just a family community does not. And to the church that does not live in community, I think we challenge the other way. But you're right. I actually wrote to John Roth when we were going to the community, there's some interesting facts about those Thessalonican brothers, one of them actually became a Hutterite later on, so it's an interesting thing. But the bottom line, besides all that polemic, I don't want any of us to leave focusing on community, or focusing on not having community, but I want all of us to focus on, how do we put into practice, collectively, the radical, world changing teachings of Jesus Christ, and that will make the difference.

Joshua Geiser, Caneyville KY: My question is, do you believe that Jesus will return to the earth in a future day, and live and reign with his saints on the earth in a physical way? And, if so, why does it seem to me that few Anabaptists today recognize that or believe that? And does that have something to do with... With the talks that we had earlier about our view of salvation, and getting saved just so we can go to heaven, rather than being a part of building God's kingdom, is losing that concept of God's kingdom on earth what has made us largely lose a vision for his kingdom now?

Dean Taylor: Very well said. There's a book written about the expectation of the early Anabaptists that lived in that, and I do think that it's fair to say that that expectation that we're on this winning team, that we're going, and Jesus is coming, and we're going to be part of that, and we're going to gather people to be with that so that we can worship God and praise him together, that was what motivated these people. And I want to be in that winning team. There's another interesting book by John Howard Yoder, *The Original Revolution*, that talks about some of that concept as well. It's a beautiful thought, and I think that that kind of thinking that you're talking about needs to permeate our thinking again, so we can get our minds off just silly theology on things.

John Higgins, Unity ME: Brother Dean, you've done something with your life that probably some people stand around and say, "Well there goes brother Dean again," but you're not alone. And as the time has gone by what I've been seeing here this weekend so far, that there's many just like you that are trying to find and go on to better understanding, a better life. So with this community, many of us have been searching for it for years, and desiring it, but coming up short. And now finding something, okay, now how do we fit in? We've been so independent for so long, how do we release that and become part of a community? So I'm just asking you if you could give us a nugget or something.

Dean Taylor: I will say again, that are definitely issues living in community that we have to face, that I didn't have to face living in a non-community world. It is not the panacea of all of our problems, let me just say that. As a matter of fact, I've been living in community for 2 1/2 years, there's some people that I would say probably shouldn't be living in community. But on the other hand I will say this, you know, I was in the Army, and I loved being a part of this group that was clear with their vision and was going forward with marching orders.

I will say that, coming among the Anabaptist people – and I don't say this in a mean way – it was hard for me to ever feel completely part. I know most of it's my own fault. The breaking into the Freundschaft, the concept, I just struggled with it. Even when I was a pastor, there would be times that I wouldn't even be invited to the weddings. There was something that was just lacking, something that I craved, of leaving those families and farms and things, that I expect to see on this earth. And I do want to testify that I believe I have experienced that living in community. There is a sense, sometimes too much, of family that you just feel a part of it, you can't help it, you're there and you're part of this big family that, sometimes dysfunctional and sometimes not, tries to follow God. So that's my personal testimony. Again, I do want to repeat, it has its own problems though, and I want to keep going, and I want our communities to be salted by your communities. And you do generally have communities. Compared to my background it's off the charts. So what I'm trying to do, is to encourage all of your senses of community, because it's something precious. And I think it's kingdom theology that Jesus was giving to us.

Nathan Overholt: But the world is pushing us into its mold to destroy that.

Dean Taylor: Yes, it is.