

DO YOU TRUST GOD TO GLORIFY HIMSELF?

BY MATTHEW CORDELLA

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Sermons in Rosedale Network of Churches

Continuing a multi-year theme of hearing how God is at work in our churches, the 2025 Feature Beacon articles focus on preaching within Rosedale Network of Churches. Each article features a recent sermon by a Rosedale Network pastor. May we all be encouraged by the faithful teaching of God's Word.

This morning, God's people stand on the cusp of the Promised Land, and Israel's wilderness wanderings could soon be at an end. But before God's people enter the land, God commands Moses to send spies ahead. Moses directs the spies to prepare a report on these topics:

"...see what the land is, and whether the people who dwell in it are strong and weak, whether they are few or many, and whether the land that they dwell in is good or bad, and whether the cities they dwell in are camps or strongholds, and whether the land is rich or poor, and whether there are trees in it or not" (Num. 13:18-20a ESV).

The interesting question is: *Why?* Why is Moses interested in these things?

Our answer will depend upon whether we have lost the plot of Israel's story. If we have lost the plot, then Moses' directions sound like the kind of information that any general might desire, as he forms a battle plan. It will sound like Moses is strategizing about how to take the Promised Land through ordinary human warfare.

But what if the song from the Red Sea crossing still rings in our ears? What if we are already declaring that "the LORD is a warrior" who fights for His people (Ex. 15)? What if we have witnessed God defeat Egypt so that Hebrew slaves could plunder their masters without ever picking up a sword? What if we are convinced that God is on a mission to glorify Himself by accomplishing victory on behalf of His people: victory that they could never win for themselves?

In that case, the spies could come back with a hopeless report, and the conquest of the land would move forward undisrupted. The spies could declare: "The people of Canaan are enormous, numerous, and well-supplied—and they all live in fortresses!" Such a report would be no cause for alarm if

Israel remembered God's wondrous works. None of that would matter if God's people trusted Him to glorify Himself according to His Word.

The God who led Israel into the Promised Land is none other than the God who leads us in Jesus Christ.

This is exactly the kind of report the spies deliver. But most of the spies have lost the plot. They despair, and the camp of Israel despairs with them. Among the spies, only Caleb and Joshua remember that Israel's victory does not depend upon human strategy and strength, but upon the God who leads them.

Consider, again, our guiding question: *Why?* Why is Moses interested in these things?

Maybe the spies' report never had anything to do with human military strategy. Maybe God wants His people to know exactly how big, strong, numerous, well-supplied, and secure their enemies are...because God is on a mission to reveal that He is greater, still. Maybe Moses intends for the spies to establish that, even when the enemy has every strategic advantage, if the enemy does not have God, his battle is already lost.

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Header image credit: Tissot, James. *The Grapes of Canaan*. Circa 1896-1902, The Jewish Museum, New York.



Matthew is the pastor of Pike Mennonite Church in Elida, Ohio, where he lives with his wife and four young children.



Greater Things

BY PRESTON YODER

“Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father. And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it” (John 14:12-14 NIV).

As Jesus neared the end of His earthly ministry, He told His disciples they would do “greater things than these.” This statement could easily be misunderstood, leading some to believe they can receive anything they desire simply by asking in Jesus’ name. But what did Jesus truly mean?

The context of this passage helps us understand. Jesus was responding to a question from Philip, one of His disciples who would soon flee in fear when Jesus was arrested. At this moment, Jesus was casting a vision for Philip, Peter, and the rest of the disciples—preparing them in advance for their coming failure. Though they would soon desert Him, God’s work would continue. The Son they abandoned would still glorify the Father. Jesus expressed confidence that the coming of the Holy Spirit, the Helper, would transform these fearful men into bold apostles of the gospel. Nearly 2,000 years later, history has proven Jesus right.

But praise God—Christ sent the Holy Spirit, and the light of the gospel continues to shine in many communities!

The Holy Spirit’s work through the Church has accomplished the same and even greater things. Consider Peter, who denied Christ, and Philip, who deserted Him. After being filled with the Holy Spirit in the book of Acts, these men boldly proclaimed the gospel. The work Jesus declared as “finished” on the cross, they preached in its fullness to the crowds. This must be the “greater things” Jesus spoke of! They could now declare, “...God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah!” (Acts 2:36b) alongside Jesus’ own words: “The time has come...The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!” (Mark 1:15).

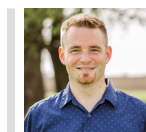
At times, God moved in power through these men, performing miracles of healing. Other times, He simply gave them the words to share the good news with others. In Jerusalem and Samaria, many believed and were baptized. The Holy Spirit worked in their lives, and the number of believers grew. The lame were healed and sinners were forgiven. Gatherings of believers formed in village after village, town after town, city after city.

During His earthly ministry, Jesus had a physical body, voluntarily confined to a single location. But when the Holy Spirit came, the movement of believers spread across the earth. They prayed in Jesus’ name and saw healing, the advancement of the gospel, and new believers putting their faith in Christ. History shows that wherever the gospel has gone and churches have been established, communities have flourished—healthcare, literacy, and economies have improved. Consider the names of hospitals around us—how many exist because of the influence of Jesus and His Church? If the gospel were erased from the world today along with the lives transformed by Christ, the world would be a dark and hopeless place. But praise God—Christ sent the Holy Spirit, and the light of the gospel continues to shine in many communities! I thank God for you, reader, as I trust and pray you seek to shine Christ’s light in your home, church, and neighborhood!

The church leaders in Rosedale Network of Churches found each other over the years because they desired to make the light of Christ shine even brighter together. This light shines through Rosedale International as it brings the good news of Jesus to villages still waiting for an established church.

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Photo credit: Ai generated



Preston is pastor of Shiloh Mennonite Church and moderator of Rosedale Network of Churches. He and Liz serve as pastoral marriage counselors. They have three young daughters and live in Plain City, Ohio.



Anabaptism and Southern Baptists

BY JON SHOWALTER



Anabaptism and Other Denominations

On this 500th anniversary of the beginnings of the Anabaptist movement, Rosedale Bible College's Beacon articles look at a wide variety of denominations within the household of faith. We hope to foster a humble, rooted, appreciation for how the gospel has come to us and to consider how Jesus might be calling us forward.

The Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) is the largest Protestant denomination in the United States, with a reported membership of just under 13 million. The SBC operates several of the largest seminaries in the country, runs an influential publishing arm—LifeWay—and counts among its members not only many large congregations, but also some widely-recognized individuals.

As a branch of the larger family of Baptist groups in the US, the SBC was formed in 1845 by Baptists in the South who opposed the abolition of slavery, arguing that slavery was ordained by God. In 1995 the SBC formally apologized for positions it formerly held regarding race (but that's another article!).

In contrast, Anabaptists in the United States number between 400,000 and 600,000, depending on which groups are included in the count. And yet, considered through the lens of an extended theological family, Anabaptists and Southern Baptists are close relatives.

Both of these streams—or rooms along the hallway of C.S. Lewis' *Mere Christianity*, to revisit the metaphor Jeremy Miller used in the January *Beacon* article introducing this series—emphasize the importance of adult baptism as the marker of new birth and entrance into the family of God. Both traditions reject the proposal that baptism is the New Testament counterpart to circumcision, a sign of inclusion in the covenant community of God's people, and hence appropriately administered to babies. Both traditions believe that Scripture must shape and, when needed, even correct established practices of the church.

Both traditions emphasize that governments have no right to coerce citizens in matters of faith and that the church should not use political power to advance the church's mission.

But just as relatives in an extended family can be quite different from each other, so too the Anabaptist story and the Southern Baptist story have their differences.

Perhaps the sharpest place of divergence is related to peace and nonresistance. Early in the 5th century, Augustine offered a theological rationale for Christians joining the military, and his

proposal was developed further over the following centuries in what we know today as “just war theory.” According to this theory, Christians are called to submit to God-ordained governments, even when those governments call on them to kill people that the state has decided are its enemies. In their annual meeting in June 2024, the SBC passed an official resolution reaffirming their view that “the historic Christian stance on war and peace has traditionally been defined by the just war tradition” (to their credit, they also reaffirmed that “those who for reasons of religious conviction are opposed to military service should be exempted from forced military conscription”).

Anabaptists, in contrast, from the earliest days of the movement in the 16th century, have stood out from the rest of Protestant reform groups by insisting that followers of Jesus could not participate in the state's wielding of the sword. They would not serve as soldiers. They would not serve as magistrates. Though there were exceptions even in the 16th century, the history of Anabaptists throughout the past five hundred years has been profoundly shaped by that conviction. From persecution and martyrdom to exile and migration, the Anabaptist story has often followed the search for a place where those convictions could be lived freely.

From an Anabaptist perspective, the SBC's suggestion that just war theory is the historic position of the church is both surprising and disappointing. It is indeed the case that

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Photo credit: *Jonathan Borba: “Low Angle Photo of Cross Under Cloudy Sky”*

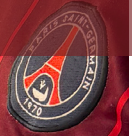


Jon is an adjunct professor at Rosedale Bible College, where he teaches history and theology courses. Jon and his wife, Dawn, have four married sons and two grandchildren. They attend Olentangy Community Church.



Chickens for Jesus

BY MIKE, AFRICA REGIONAL DIRECTOR AND DIRECTOR OF PARTNER DEVELOPMENT



When you think of missions, what comes to mind?

For me, it was always going somewhere far away and teaching the Bible in a new language to people who lived radically different lives than I did—or at least, that's what I thought as a kid. After living in West Africa with my family for over three years, I realized that my mission is to do life wherever God puts me and to form relationships through the opportunities He makes available.

This is precisely how Devin, Rosedale International worker in Côte d'Ivoire, has lived since moving to the country in 2021. Devin works among the Dioula people, a West African ethnic group with a deeply-rooted Muslim faith. He spent the beginning of his term in a local Dioula village, whose men make their living by hand-weaving intricate cloth. Each day, Devin sat with them, learning their language and returning their hospitality by whittling parts to fix their wooden looms.

Fast forward four years, and you will find Devin hard at work on a local chicken farm. This farm employs twelve local people, six of whom are Muslim and six who believe in Jesus. Each morning, these workers—regardless of faith—meet to pray over the day's activities and to ask that God's name would be lifted up through their work. It has become a natural rhythm of farm life to pray for God's blessing upon the flocks as a way to gain the attention of their Muslim neighbors.

Indeed, we find in the Bible that an abundance of flocks, herds, and crops are a clear indication of God's favor. While the Western world might credit success solely to wise planning and hard work, the Ivoirian worldview remains closer to that of the ancient Hebrews; they interpret such blessings as God's presence and approval.

Thus, the farm is a clear witness to God's glory. With over 6,000 chickens—4,000 of which are layers—the farm provides eggs for neighboring villages and cities within a 50-kilometer radius. They butcher their own broilers to sell at key points in the holiday calendar. They have built a new chicken house, installed a solar power system that keeps the farm self-sufficient, and raised their own feed mill. In the future, they hope to also farm the corn and other grains needed to make their own chicken feed.

Last year, the farm grossed 100 million West African CFA francs—roughly \$162,000 USD. After expenses, they netted 9

million CFA (\$15,000 USD). They were able to gift 2 million CFA to the local church and give their employees a 10 percent raise.

Thus, the farm is a clear witness to God's glory.

This farm is, by definition, a successful example of business-for-mission. What started in 2020 as a small project is now a growing farm that supports local families and the local church, pastors, and missionaries—all because some people who love Jesus saw chickens and eggs as a way into the homes of their Dioula cousins.

And their work is far from complete. The team's goals for 2025 are focused on two new projects: starting a pig farm in a nearby animistic village and another chicken farm in the Muslim village where Devin first studied the Dioula language. These projects will open doors for the local church to minister to these populations, provide an avenue to plant churches, and support the local pastors.

So—*what is missions?* It is being used by God, wherever you are, with whatever you have, to take the gospel to your neighbor...perhaps even with chickens.

Please pray with Devin and his team for the success of their future projects—particularly the ability to open doors for the local church to become established in these villages. 🙏

Photo credit: Rosedale International



Mike serves as Rosedale International's Director of Partner Development. He attends London Christian Fellowship and is active in youth ministry. He, his wife Karen, and their five children previously served in West Africa.

Maybe, against the backdrop of this discouraging report, God's people are supposed to recognize that God's presence is the decisive thing and rejoice that God will glorify Himself, even and especially when we have no reason at all to hope in our own resources.

The God who led Israel into the Promised Land is none other than the God who leads us in Jesus Christ, and who dwells in the Church through the Holy Spirit. He spies out and reveals the hopeless inadequacy of our own resources, only to glorify Himself in our weakness. He accomplishes victory on our behalf, which we could never win for ourselves.

As you follow Christ in life, remember that He is the same LORD who drowned Pharaoh's army in the sea, and who drove the Canaanites from the Promised Land. Remember His cross and resurrection. Follow boldly where He leads—even if it means a cross—because the God who leads you in Jesus Christ has defeated even death on your behalf. 🕊

Anabaptism and the Southern Baptists *cont'd from page 3*

Augustine proposed it in the early 400s. It's also true that medieval Catholics embraced it, as did Luther and Calvin in the 16th century. But what of the first three hundred years of Christian history? If Augustine's proposal regarding war qualifies as "the historic Christian stance," why not also his teaching on infant baptism, or on the government's right to coerce citizens in matters of faith?

Anabaptists and the SBC reject infant baptism because they look past Augustine and back to the New Testament. Anabaptists and the SBC reject the idea that governments should force citizens to be Christians because they look past Augustine and back to the New Testament. Anabaptists reject the use of lethal force for Christians because they look past Augustine and back to Christ. The SBC proposes that Augustine's view is the "historic Christian stance."

During peacetime, the differences between "nonresistant" Christians and "just war" Christians can nearly go unnoticed, but anytime the country engages in a military conflict, those differences lead to profoundly different behaviors.

Anabaptists and Southern Baptists are close relatives. They have much in common. But families are complicated, and these relatives, for all that they share, have taken some significantly different paths in discerning how to live as followers of Jesus.

There's no doubt that they share a common commitment to Lewis' Mere Christianity, but they occupy different rooms of the house. 🕊

It shines through Rosedale Bible College (RBC) as it equips kingdom workers who will lead homes, businesses, churches, and missions for years to come. It shines through the 30 new network pastors who recently committed to training in Principles of Biblical Interpretation provided by Rosedale Network and RBC. It shines through the promotion of Jesus' teaching and our distinct way of living in the world through the *Living Anabaptism* podcast, released by Rosedale Network's office. Our network's commission to *mature and multiply churches* is simply in obedience to Jesus' words to go, baptize, and make disciples of all nations.

The good news of Jesus shines brightest when we boldly trust and obey His teachings together. We shine bright when we live as Jesus taught, fearing not those who can destroy the body, but only the One who decides eternal destinies. We shine bright when we do not trust in horses, chariots, or any human leader, but in the name of the Lord our God. We shine bright as ambassadors of the kingdom of Heaven, living out the way of Jesus in our homes, workplaces, churches, and communities. We shine bright when we speak as image-bearers of the Creator, as beloved children of the Savior, and as loyal subjects of the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. We shine bright when we seek to do our daily, little tasks, in the name of Christ, with great love.

We trust that the Holy Spirit will take our small acts of faith and obedience and compound them into greater things so that many will glorify our Father in heaven for all of eternity! So may it be. 🕊