

# THE WORD OF GOD FOR THE PEOPLE OF GOD

BY MATT MULLEN

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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.

***"The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul; the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple; the precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes"*** (Psa. 19:7-8 ESV).

Theologians use the term "general revelation" to classify any type of communication that is available to all of humanity; we see it in the sky, sun, moon, stars, and throughout the cosmos. It is God's way of making Himself known through creation (Rom. 1:20) and showing that creation must have a Creator—God. Alternatively, theologians use the term "special revelation" to classify any type of direct communication between God and man that isn't always available to the rest of humanity—Scripture, dreams, angelic visitation, etc. Special revelation is a demonstration of the grace of God in the form of unique communication.

## When Spirit-filled believers embrace God's Word, we bear witness to the truth of the gospel.

It's clear that David structures Psalm 19 bearing in mind that both of these categories have their own benefits. Verses 1-6 magnify general revelation, "The heavens declare the glory of God" (v. 1), while verses 7-19 focus on the advantage of special revelation, "The law of the Lord is perfect" (v. 7). As followers of Jesus, we've been given the advantage of special revelation—God's Word—that leads us to salvation and right living. When Spirit-filled believers embrace God's Word, we bear witness to the truth of the gospel: God is restoring a people who are set apart for good works in His kingdom.

Psalm 19 challenges underlying assumptions we may harbor toward God's law, a form of special revelation. Is the law really

good? Is it not something that Jesus saved us from, so we can be free to eat shellfish and pork? Do we now have any obligation to the law as New Covenant believers?

We are freed from the law, we are not saved through the law, and we now operate according to grace (Rom. 6:14). However, the reason God provided salvation in Christ isn't because there is a defect in the law; it's because there is a defect in us.

David understands that obedience to the law—the word of the Lord—leads to loving God and loving his neighbor (Lev. 19:18). In fact, if David was going to be a good king, according to the law, then David was required to "write for himself on a scroll a copy of this law, taken from that of the Levitical priests. It is to be with him, and he is to read it all the days of his life so that he may learn to revere the Lord his God and follow carefully all the words of this law and these decrees" (Deut. 17:18b-19 NIV). If the law is this vital to the life of the king, it must also be no small matter for the average Israelite!

***"But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, and how from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus"*** (2 Tim. 3:14-15).

I want to reiterate: the law cannot save us. But the law can and does point us to our Savior. Paul's use of the word "Scriptures" refers to the Old Testament. Maybe you're like Timothy—

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Matt lives in Rosedale, Ohio, with his wife, Malia, and their daughter. He is the associate pastor at Lighthouse Fellowship, development officer at RBC, and an MDiv student.



# Sometimes I Forget

BY IVAN YODER

These past several months, I have had two recurring thoughts that have consistently returned to my mind. The first is, *what do I take for granted in my life?* Growing up in a Christian home, it has sometimes been easy for me to take for granted those things that have enabled me to be where I am in life. The second recurring idea has come more recently from a study of Colossians, where the verse “Christ in me, the hope of glory” has grabbed my heart. The implications of “Christ in me” can be difficult to fully grasp.

## What does it truly look like to have Christ in you?

Now let me come clean—I forgot to write this article and turn it in when it was due. I received an email reminder several weeks before the due date and thought, *I need to be careful or I will forget to do this.* Well, I still forgot. I often smile at the response of an older lady in our congregation who, when asked how she is, may respond, “I’m doing okay, but my forgetter is getting better all the time.” I can relate.

***“Praise the LORD, my soul, and forget not all his benefits—who forgives all your sins, and heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with love and compassion” (Psa. 103:2-4 NIV).***

We should respond with praise as we remember the things God has done. Our salvation through the finished work of Jesus is an incredible gift that should always be at the forefront of our praise. Christ came so that we can be forgiven, and while we rest in salvation through Jesus, we shouldn’t minimize the benefit of our lives being redeemed from the pit. Herein lies the challenge: sometimes, when growing up in a Christian home and environment, I don’t see my life as a pit, so this redeeming work is easily taken for granted.

This redeeming work was at the center of much of the apostle Paul’s teaching. In Galatians 2:20, he declares, “I no longer live, but Christ lives in me.” This is a bold statement for anyone, especially someone with a background in persecuting the church. Paul writes to all of us about this redeeming work.

***“...the mystery that has been kept hidden for ages and generations, but is now disclosed to the Lord’s people. To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory” (Col. 1:26-27).***

What does it truly look like to have Christ in you? I was recently having a conversation with an inmate in a state prison, trying to communicate what this may look like. I suggested he think about it this way—when Christ is in you, sooner or later, the light of Jesus will start showing through the cracks. I truly believe that the “hope of glory” is not just referencing some future time, but is for this life also, just as the psalmist writes, “he...crowns you with love and compassion” (Psa. 103:4b).

The great overarching theme through all of this is the assurance that, with Christ living in us, we have the confidence of living a victorious, free life today. Free from bondage, fear, and regret. Free from the strongholds and bondage of sin. Free to rest in the Spirit’s power and not our own. Free to truly live in all that Christ leads us into. One of the most ironic things about the Apostle Paul may be that while he wrote many of his letters from prison, there may have been no one else who felt as free as he did.

Let’s not forget the benefits of Christ in us through the Holy Spirit and the freedom and confidence that can bring into our lives every day. Can we invite the Father to use each of us to shine the light of Jesus into our world? Let’s not just allow His light to shine through the cracks, but let us truly reflect the image of Christ in all of His glory into our world. 🙏

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Ivan is moderator-elect of Rosedale Network of Churches and lead pastor at Locust Grove Mennonite Church. He and his wife, Pam (who serves part-time in women’s ministry), are the parents of two adult children.





# Anabaptism and Non-Denominational Churches

BY JEWEL 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.*

All kinds of polls and surveys note that the largest trend inside American Christianity today is the rise of non-denominational churches. Why? And why now?

At the same time, all American denominations that keep records, from the mainline to evangelical, report declines in membership.

Can we assume, anecdotally, that many who are serious about faith in America are sliding from historic denominations into generic, “non-denom” churches? Is this migration creating a stronger, united, basic-common-denominator church that is an answer to the prayer of Jesus in John 17?

Or is it a “cut-flower-church” severed from its historic roots?

For much of my life, I’ve sailed in non-denominational waters but always returned to an Anabaptist port.

As an adult, I participated in women’s Bible studies, prison fellowships, and church planting teams with coworkers from a wide variety of denominations. The small group I currently lead in Mechanicsburg, Ohio, includes women from Roman Catholic, Episcopal, Methodist, Baptist, and unchurched backgrounds.

My experience in interdenominational settings has been educational and enriching. I see non-denominational churches reaching people that Mennonite churches aren’t. So why am I a Mennonite? Why does rootedness in a specific tradition matter?

Non-denominational churches strive to remove as many barriers as possible and specialize in getting people through the door. They are welcoming and seeker-sensitive. But does the “one size fits all” approach to belief fail to take into account the “cost of discipleship?” One Mennonite church planter who noticed people drifting from a non-denom church to his, quipped, “They catch ‘em, we clean ‘em.”

I believe the simple, stoic Mennonite worship culture I grew up with has benefited from the fresh winds of charismatic renewal, the prayers and liturgies of high church traditions, and deeper biblical scholarship. Rigid forms of dress have become more varied. Largely agrarian lifestyles have diversified to include a

wide variety of trades and professions. Missional outreach has placed us in global fellowship with brothers and sisters on all continents.

But all this change has only increased my appreciation for historic Mennonite teaching on holiness, discipleship, nonconformity, and nonresistance.

I had an “Anabaptist grid” through which to run the various “sailing” practices I encountered. Being a Mennonite *meant* something. Something worth changing jobs for. Something worth living and dying for.

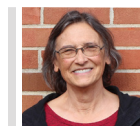
**As we seek to be faithful followers of Jesus in a world of “influencers” and AI, I believe we’ll need all the “roots” we can nurture.**

Early Christians and the Anabaptists who sought to renew the traditional churches of their day—recapturing the vigor and outreach of the early church—had rigorous periods of instruction and spiritual formation for new believers. Following Jesus and choosing believers’ baptism often meant death—literally.

On the other hand, modern evangelicals (non-denom groups) emphasize the “believe and be baptized” stories from Acts. It’s easy to hop from one non-denom church to another with almost no accountability.

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*Jewel works part-time for RBC in development and communications. She enjoys spending time with her family and is active in the life of her local church, Forty One (previously MCF), in Mechanicsburg, Ohio.*



# The Challenge Presented: A REACH Update

BY ROSEDALE INTERNATIONAL

*Our REACH teams returned from overseas outreach in mid-May and are back in their home communities, after completing two weeks of re-entry at the Rosedale International Center (RIC). The following reflections were published during re-entry; in some cases, names and locations have been changed or omitted for security.*

## **Olivia, Team Zambia**

As I look back over the last five months in Zambia, it's crazy to see all the changes that took place. When we first arrived, I felt awkward and out of place among so many people I didn't know. But now, as I walk from one village to another, it's fun to bump into those I've come to know. I used to dread going out for Bible study in the villages because I was uncertain of what to share and which houses to visit. But as I walked home from my last Bible study yesterday afternoon, I found myself already missing the walk and sharing a short encouragement from the Bible with the women I have come to love.

Five months ago, I was terrified. What would it be like to step off a plane in a strange new place to live with complete strangers? But I felt God guiding me, so I followed His urging. I am so grateful to my past self for courageously facing my giant of fear and coming to Zambia. There aren't enough words to express how life-changing the last five months have been. All I can say is that my life will not be the same because of my time in Zambia. God knows what He's doing; He sees everything perfectly.

What about you, my friend? Do you have a giant you don't feel prepared to face? Do you have a pull to go somewhere or do something, but feel paralyzed by the unknowns? Trust God. Take a step of faith. The Lord will supply all you need for the road He has called you to walk.

## **Noelle, Team Thailand**

One thing I learned, and want to keep learning, is the generosity that seems to come so naturally to Thai people. What impacted me even more than their generosity was that they expected nothing in return. Often, I catch myself wanting to give to others, but still expecting my act of generosity to be acknowledged.

I've realized that that's not what generosity looks like, and not what Jesus calls us to do. I want to find my value in God, not in others. I want to give my time, love, patience, grace, and belongings without seeking recognition, reward, or even a "thank you." I want to give sacrificially, freely, and gladly—knowing that God sees me, and that's all that matters.

## **Team Himalayas**

The importance of relationships here is astounding compared to how task-oriented our Western culture normally is. Personal plans and desires take a backseat to spending time with one another. The challenge presented to our team, and the challenge we now present to you, is to have a mindset that prioritizes the right kind of work and that cultivates a deeper relationship between the people we are with and our Father.

I've been learning how much of an impact someone can make without even knowing. Before we had to leave, Uncle was thanking us for things that we hadn't even realized we were doing. We weren't able to see a whole lot of fruit during our time here, but I know for certain that we planted enough seeds for an orchard. Please keep the Himalayan people in your prayers, asking that the Father would soften their hearts.

## **Team Mediterranean**

The thing I most want to bring home from this culture is a slow, relational lifestyle. I want to give my full attention to things that matter to my Father and His people. It won't be easy to be slow in a fast-paced culture, but I want to take time to truly appreciate the things He has created and put in my life.

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*RI is the mission arm of Rosedale Network of Churches, working to take Jesus to the ends of the earth by fully engaging Rosedale Network churches in maturing and multiplying disciples, especially among the least reached.*

you've grown up hearing Bible stories about the Exodus and Moses splitting the Red Sea and delivering God's law to the Israelites, or Samson's heroic stories thanks to the strength found in his hair, or maybe Jonah getting swallowed by a big fish and then preaching to Nineveh. From infancy, you've "known the Holy Scriptures" (v. 15).

Or maybe you're not like Timothy—you came to faith at a later age, and the Bible seems like a foreign concept, imported from another world that you've just really begun to explore. That's okay, too. In either case, the exhortation is the same: the Scriptures "are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus (v. 15).

How important is it to know our Bible? Eternity rests on it. Paul didn't want Timothy to be puffed up with Bible knowledge for the sake of being a good pastor. Rather, Paul wanted Timothy to love God through the Scriptures, commune with Him daily, and then point people to Jesus from an overflow of faith: "continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of" (v. 14). 📖

One Mennonite mother told me, "I just want my children to go to a Bible-believing church."

What does that even mean? "Even the demons believe—and shudder," wrote early church leader James, as he argued for faith expressing itself in concrete practices (James 2:19 ESV).

Could we paraphrase James to say, "A church without well-articulated beliefs and practices, with active accountability, is dead?"

A recovering addict stood in his Mennonite church and said, "I'm proud to be accepted as a member of this church, even though I don't have a 'Mennonite' name."

The pastor responded, "I hope we always have recovering addicts in this church—but not the same ones." The church is known as "welcoming *and* discipling." Its membership class includes the study of Anabaptist history and the Mennonite Confession of Faith.

As we seek to be faithful followers of Jesus in a world of "influencers" and AI, I believe we'll need all the "roots" we can nurture.

I was fascinated to hear Ross Douthat, a committed Roman Catholic, podcaster, and columnist for the New York Times, say recently, "It's really hard to imagine cultures getting through that [AI] and flourishing without some kind of religious attachment or connection. The 21st century is gonna be great for the Amish, the Mennonites...Religious communities that are good at managing their relationship with technology, bet on them long term."

Cut flowers are beautiful while they last, but God calls us to be like trees, planted by streams of water that yield fruit and do not wither in times of drought (Psa. 1). 📖

Slowing down also allows you to more easily listen to the Father's direction. We are meant to live and work with Him, which may mean that we need to cut some things out of our lives to leave more time to listen and talk to him. My challenge to you is to ask the Father in what areas of your life He wants you to slow down. Take time to listen to what He says and create action steps to create more time in your schedule.

Thank you all so much for your support and thoughts over these past months. It has made a huge difference to know we have people supporting us and caring about us back home. Please continue to pray for us as we process through our time and adjust to life back at home. 📖