

Sermon 25.05.11

Kate Heinzl, pastor UMC

Mark 1:14–15

After John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee announcing God's good news, saying, "Now is the time! Here comes God's kingdom! Repent, change your hearts and lives, and trust this good news!"

SERMON:

Pilgram Marpeck, is considered one of the most important of the early German Anabaptists¹. Born into a wealthy family from the Tyrol province in Austria, he was mayor of Rattenberg for a time, and a leader in the mining industry. Well educated, he was a brilliant engineer by all accounts.

When Marpeck became an Anabaptist isn't clear, but in January 1528 he was removed from his position as mine judge because he refused to aid in arresting Anabaptists as demanded by the authorities. Two Anabaptist missionaries were martyred in those weeks - causing Marpeck and his family to flee, leaving considerable wealth and all their possessions behind.

They settled in Strasbourg, Marpeck becoming a leader in the Anabaptist movement there. He worked as an engineer, building complex water systems used to transport water and lumber through the area. His work was considered vital to the flourishing of the broader region. He became known to the local government and Catholic church as a heretic, a thorn in their side - often publicly debating infant baptism - and ended up in prison. Eventually he was released without having given the required oaths to renounce Anabaptist doctrine, likely getting off with this less onerous sentence because of his engineering prowess and work.

The Anabaptists of this time were fractured - not at all a cohesive group - split into parties shunning and fighting one another. Marpeck consistently worked for a reunion of the separated groups. For the Marpeck circle the questions at stake were the [ban](#) and practicing a [community of goods](#). Marpeck advocated a less rigorous attitude with respect to both. In his view the radicalism of the Swiss Brethren and the Hutterites didn't align with the freedom of the gospel.

¹ [https://gameo.org/index.php?title=Marpeck,_Pilgram_\(d._1556\)](https://gameo.org/index.php?title=Marpeck,_Pilgram_(d._1556))

Pilgram Marpeck spoke not only of [original sin](#), but also of original grace being passed on to all from Adam. **Original Grace**, in his view, was seen as a creative act, showing people their sinfulness and need for Christ.²

It was from this place, not only a recognition of sin, but of grace, that transformation of body, mind and spirit could take place

He believed and wrote about the reception of the Spirit..as being sealed by baptism, saying that the "covenant of good conscience" leads to a progressively reordering of one's life - which in turn leads to a commitment to justice, not only internally before God, but also externally before humanity.

According to Marpeck, this justice we are called to live is enveloped in Christ's Spirit, and so is not brought about by either the sword or coercive legalism (as done by some of the more radical Anabaptists).

Baptism, for the early Anabaptists, was closely connected to repentance, being a public testimony to one's intention to live life in Christ. It was that "covenant of good conscience" Marpeck and others passionately preached - producing a real sense of remorse that then resulted in a change in one's inner and outer life.

Our gospel reading today reads:

After John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee announcing God's good news, saying, "Now is the time! Here comes God's kingdom! Repent, change your hearts and lives, and trust this good news!"

In Mark's gospel, Jesus' first words are proclaimed in the wake of John the Baptist's arrest. John - who preached repentance - arrested after calling out even the rich and powerful Herod to change his ways.

It's in that environment that Jesus says "Now is the time! Now - here it comes - God's kingdom - get ready! Repent, change hearts and lives. And do this all in the context of trusting this Good News.

Even in the midst of imprisonment, in the midst of uncertainty - *trust* this good news.

² [Grace - GAMEO](#)

That original grace that Marpeck spoke of - that creative act that's been with us since the beginning, that lays bare our brokenness and need for Christ's love - that's the starting place of repentance, of change.

The Anabaptist materials we're using for this series focus on services of renewal - renewal through storytelling, renewal through repentance, through trust, through gathering around the table.

This week we explore renewal through repentance.

Repentance was a crucial element for those early Anabaptists - essential to life of faith.

And so we are faced with a question: **what does responding to Jesus' call to repentance look like for us today?**

What does it mean to live into Jesus' words:

"Here comes God's kingdom! Repent, change"

A phrase repeated often in early Anabaptist spiritual writings is "Bend the knees of my heart." Being sorry for our sins, witting or unwitting, motivates a persistent curiosity about our failures to live what we profess, along with creative new ways to amend our lives in solidarity with the body of Christ.³

Marpeck, and those other early Anabaptists, even in their banning and splintering of community, found ways to love, repent, sacrifice their livelihoods and even lives. They, like us, were both broken and blessed. Marpeck worked throughout his life to reconcile the community in which he lived, and to boldly proclaim how his faith in Jesus called for a radical way of life. Repentance was a regular practice in this journey.

Living habits of repentance is what we are called to do as followers of Jesus – and so this morning let's practice this, by finding a way to embody repentance together, in song and prayer.

³ p. 27 of the Anabaptism at 500 toolkit found here:
https://anabaptismat500.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/Toolkit_txt_web.pdf

VT 615 - sign language Lord/Christ, have mercy (CALL JON and MOLLY FORWARD)

([teach signs](#), sing as call and response without looking at the text. For each time, except the last one, just sing “Lord, Have Mercy...Christ have mercy”)

PRAYER:

Christ Jesus, we gather this morning as a congregation of your disciples in a spirit of repentance, for we know that as your people we have personally and corporately done wrong and failed to live as Jesus calls us to live. As we bring to mind that which we are sorry for today, remind us of your grace and love.

For those times that we have harmed others, either by our words, our actions, or our inactions, forgive us.

Lord, Have Mercy...Christ have mercy

For those times we have overlooked the least of these: the poor, the outcast, and the stranger living among us, forgive us.

Lord, Have Mercy...Christ have mercy

For our insatiable desire to consume, and for the ways we have become addicted to storing up treasures on earth. For failing to care for the earth, forgive us.

Lord, Have Mercy...Christ have mercy

For our tendency to relate to others in the church and outside the church with prejudice, with stereotypes, and with an attitude of superiority, forgive us.

Lord, Have Mercy...Christ have mercy

O God, where we have become stubbornly set in our ways, change our minds, reveal to us a new direction for life, give us the creativity and resolve to live differently. Turn us around toward Jesus, to walk in his light.

Lord, Have Mercy...Christ have mercy... Lord, have mercy

TRANSITION TO SHARING TIME