

Let us pray,

Lord, remind us of our call to be disciples of you first and foremost. Help us to be radical in our love for you and your creation.

Amen.

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Dr. Drew Hart, a professor at Messiah University just published a new book.

It's called, "Making it Plain: Why We Need Anabaptism and the Black Church".

It is a very interesting read and I highly recommend it.

For those unfamiliar with anabaptism, they are most historically known as the ones who did not like infant baptism.

They believed that you had to first believe in Christ before you could make the promises that are required in baptism.

Us Lutherans baptize first and confirm second.

Hense Confirmation.

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Anabaptists can also be popularly known as the more Justice and pacifist focused denominations.

This includes the Amish, Mennonites, and many Baptists churches, and a variety of other denominations that share commonalities or similar ways of thought.

There isn't like a definitive Anabaptist church, like with the Methodists, Lutherans, Anglicans, etc.

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Anabaptism was unfortunately not very well liked by the Catholic Church or the other mainline reform movements in the middle ages, including Lutheranism.

There is also still a dislike towards anabaptist theological understandings today amongst those same groups.

But what Dr. Hart is trying to get us to realize, is that the Anabaptist tradition has more to teach us than we were lead to believe.

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In chapter three he quotes a popular Anabaptist saying;

“We don’t follow the donkey or an elephant, we follow the way of the Lamb.”

Its a cheeky way of saying that we don’t have allegiance to one political party, our allegiance is to Jesus.

Dr. Hart calls this the “Third Way.”

He defines the Third Way as

*“a call to discern the messiness of actually following Jesus, and the political priorities of God’s upside-down reign, in ways that don’t conflate Barabbas (a revolutionary) and Herod (an imperial puppet) as though they are just two sides of the same coin.”*

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Basically, Dr. Hart is trying to get us to realize that non-violent resistance and the radical love of Christ for the poor and our enemies, is the way we are called to live as disciples of Jesus Christ.

Not as violent revolutionaries or political puppets.

If we truly are following Jesus, there is a very good chance we will make both political parties mad.

Because the way of Christ is not a political party.

The way of Christ is a religious and spiritual way of living that focuses on the Kingdom of God and not the kingdoms of earth.

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Paul, in his jail cell, is writing to his friend Timothy in our New Testament reading today.

And he is reminding his fellow disciples;

“Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, a descendant of David-that is my gospel, for which I suffer hardship, even to the point of being chained like a criminal.”

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Paul isn't asking to be freed, Paul isn't asking his fellow disciples to revolt in a violent uprising.

Paul is asking his fellow disciples to revolt against the powers that be, by following Jesus.

By proclaiming the Gospel to all who will listen.

By lifting up the lowly, healing the sick, comforting the afflicted, and loving the enemy.

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For Paul, true revolution is not winning a war or overthrowing a government by force.

True revolution is the softening of hearts and the transformation of lives through the message and life style of Jesus Christ.

It is very important that we remember that Paul was in prison because he was actively present in spreading the Gospel and living counter to the political norms of the time.

Paul was nonviolent, but he was not passive.

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Jesus was non-violent, but you don't get the worst type of death penalty known to the Roman Empire for enemies of the State if you were passive.

Non-violent action is what we are called to do as Christians.

We are saved from our sins, but we are also saved so that we can participate in the salvific work that God is doing today.

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Being a Christian is a verb.

It requires action, it requires us to be the person God is calling us to be.

As Lutherans, this has no bearing on whether or not we go to heaven or not.

Your place in heaven is secured!

Don't worry about that.

But what the Gospel, what Jesus' words push us to do is to be the body of Christ in the world today.

Salvation is the starting point, it isn't the end goal.

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Remember;

“We don't follow the donkey or an elephant, we follow the way of the Lamb.”

The Lamb who lifted up the poor, healed the leper, ate with sinners and tax collectors, and died a painful excruciating death for loving the wrong types of people.

We were given a second chance, lets use it by following the only person worth our attention, Jesus Christ, the Lamb. Amen.