Prayer
Scripture: Matthew 5:33-48
Hymn: 18 "Be Not Dismayed Whate'er Betide"

THE GROWTH, PERSECUTION AND SPREAD OF THE ANABAPTISTS IN SWITZERLAND:

The early leaders in the Anabaptist movement were well educated men who could use Latin, Greek, and Hebrew. These leaders were able to convert a number of men of equally good training. There were converts among the rich and noble who put wealth and influence to the service of the cause. The early leaders worked with great success among the common people—especially among the peasant class, both in cities and in rural areas.

On January 22, 1525, the very next day after his expulsion from Zurich Brötzli baptized Friditi Schumacher at the well in Hirslanden. The week of January 22 to 29 Grebel, Blaurock, and Mantz held a "school" in Zollikon, a village five miles out of Zurich, and rebaptized thirty-five—mostly small farmers, their wives, and hired help. They went from house to house teaching and baptizing and conducting the Lord's Supper in the simplest of manners. On Sunday, January 29, Blaurock interrupted the pastor in the village church of Zollikon and took over his pulpit and preached to a receptive audience. The following day, Monday, January 30, Mantz, Blaurock, and twenty-five others were arrested and imprisoned. All but Mantz and Blaurock were released on February 8. Mantz and Blaurock boldly argued with the authorities from Scripture. They were released on February 18 on their promise that there would be no preaching or baptizing, only Bible studies of no more than three or four in a group, unless God constrained them to do otherwise. While they had been in prison, a farmer, George Schad, had been recruiting, and on one day baptized forth adults. Blaurock and Mantz returned to Zollikon and Blaurock persuaded the group they must obey God rather than men. They began preaching in private homes and baptizing all who expressed repentance, among them Hans Bruggbac and Rüedi Thomann and family.

During February Grebel baptized Gabriel Giger and Anna Mantz in the home of Felix Mantz. Near Schaffhausen he persuaded and baptized a monk from St. Gall, Wolfgang Ulmann, who requested that he not be baptized out of a platter but naked in the Rhine by immersion. Grebel, Reublin, and Brötzli worked with great success in Schaffhausen during February and March, before returning to Zurich.

On March 16 Mantz and Blaurock and a number of Zollikon followers were again imprisoned in Zurich. This was the time of Zwingli's Second Baptismal Disputation. After two weeks the followers were fined and released. Blaurock and his wife were banished with the threat of death if they ever returned to Zurich. Mantz escaped and hid in Grebel's house. He had to secretly leave when Grebel's wife threatened to expose him to the authorities. Mantz followed Blaurock to Grisons.

Ulimann returned to St. Gall where he preached to a large crowd in the weavers' guild hall that the Heavenly Father had revealed to him that he should avoid preaching in the church with its images, a place of lies, where the truth had never been proclaimed. Grebel came to St. Gall and labored with Ulmann for two weeks in April. On Palm Sunday, April 1525, they baptized a large throng in the Sitter River about two miles from St. Gall. About 500 were baptized during the two weeks, and since the town council had not interfered, Grebel departed, hoping Ulmann would win the entire town. After Grebel's departure Hippolytus Eberli of Schwyz, a follower of Zwingli, came to St. Gall and Ulmann baptized him. Eberli became one of the most eloquent of the field preachers of the Anabaptists. During the Easter holidays most of the citizens and farmers from the neighborhood gathered to hear this peasant preacher. The town council became disturbed at the success of the Anabaptists and summoned Ulmann and Eberli for a hearing. Ulmann skillfully defended the Anabaptist position on infant baptism declaring
that for two hundred years the early church baptized only adults and that infant
baptism began with Cyprian. The council ordered Ulimann to cease rebaptizing
or be expelled. Eberli was asked to leave St. Gall. The authorities of the
Catholic canton of Schwyz seized him and burned him at the stake on May 29, 1525,
the first known martyr of the Swiss Brethren.

When the town churches were drained of people and deprived of alms because
the people were going to the mountains, woods, and fields to hear the Anabaptists,
the town council demanded that all preaching and disputing must take place in
the churches—there would be no other gatherings in or around the town. Vadain
held a disputation in St. Gall on June 5, 1525, with Ulimann defending the Ana-
baptists. Ulimann in a sermon called the members of the council heathen and
stirred his followers to such a pitch of fervor the council feared a tumult.

Zwingli had published his work, Of Baptism, on May 28, and when he heard
of the disturbance in St. Gall he sent Vadain a copy. The pastor of the church
of St. Lawrence read the work in an evening service with Anabaptists forced to
attend. Ulimann interrupted the reading demanding that God's Word and not
Zwingli's should be read. In June, 1525, the Anabaptists were forbidden to
hold any more meetings and fines were imposed for rebaptizing. A special
militia of two hundred men were appointed to make sure there was no revolt.
Ulimann was banished on July 17 because he continued to preach in fields. He
led a group of Anabaptists to Moravia. One factor that helped incline the
people of St. Gall to uncompromising Anabaptism was the inconsistency of the
conservative authorities who forced priests to continuing saving masses until
the summer of 1525 even though both priests and authorities denounced the mass
as blasphemy. The mass was not abolished in St. Gall until 1528. St. Gall Ana-
baptism attracted unfavorable attention from outsiders by its fanatical excesses.
On hand the majority were characterized by a stubborn legalism that emphasized
simplicity in dress, carrying no weapons, no oaths and almost daily excom-
unication. On the other hand there appeared vagaries of Spiritualism that included
denunciation of those who followed the letter; there appeared extremes of
enthusiasm, seizures, comas, glossalalia, a woman who claimed to have given
birth to the Antichrist, and a man claimed the Holy Spirit ordered him to decapitate
his brother. Their opponents tended to charge all Anabaptists with such extrav-
agances. Most Anabaptists were simple, hard working, godly people who wanted to
restore true Christianity.

In the canton of Appenzoll the Anabaptists enjoyed great success. In Rheintal,
a district close to St. Gall, in some villages a majority of the people became
Anabaptists. The Zwinglian pastors held a synod at Rheineck and banned Anabaptists.
John Krussi, a preacher at Teufen, was seized by night and burned in Catholic
Lucerne in the late summer of 1525.

In April, 1525, Reublin went to Waldshut, and Austrian town near the Swiss
border. On Easter, April 16, he baptized Balthasar Hubmaier, the pastor of the
church, and sixty members of the congregation. Hubmaier was one of the ablest and
best educated of the Anabaptists. He had attended the Latin school in Augsburg
and the University of Friburg (1503 and later). He taught school in Schaffhausen
until 1507. He returned to Freiberg where he took his B.A., his baccalaureus
biblicus and his masters, studying under Dr. John Eck. He followed Eck to the
University of Ingolstadt where he received his doctorate in theology. Hubmaier was
ordained a Catholic priest. He became the university preacher in Ingolstadt. In
1515 he became the rector of the university. In January, 1516, he became the
preacher in the new cathedral of Regensburg. In 1521 he moved to Waldshut where he
was a typical medieval priest. He began an intensive study of Paul's epistles. He
visited Glaen and Erasmus in Basel. He began to take and interest in the Refor-
mation. He went back to Regensburg for a short pastorate and then returned to
Waldshut. In March, 1523 he met Zwingli and his associates. He took part in the
debate in Zurich in October, 1523. He prepared eighteen articles setting forth
Zwinglian ideals of reform and called on the clergy of the region to join him in
a disputation in Waldshut. He preached reform and removed images and pictures
from his church before the end of 1523. He married Elizabeth hugline, daughter of a citizen fo Reichenau, who proved a faithful and courageous wife.

Hubmaier's reforms attracted the attention of Ferdinand I of Austria. He sent commissioners who tried to get the town council to dismiss its preacher. The council bluntly refused. In April, 1524, Ferdinand sent a letter asking the city to dismiss its heretical preacher and to chose one who did not hold the doctrines of Luther. The bishop of Constance joined Ferdinand in demanding the dismissal of the heretical preacher. Hubmaier was summoned to Constance to stand trial but refused to go. In September, 1524, Hubmaier fled to Schaffhausen to save Waldshut from armed attack. The Austrian government demanded that Schaffhausen surrender Hubmaier as a heretic but Schaffhausen refused. Hubmaier wrote and published a pamphlet on "Concerning Heretics and Those Who Burn Them." Hubmaier challenged John Eck to a debate and prepared twenty-six articles to be discussed.

In October, 1524, Hubmaier returned to Waldshut, where he was welcomed as a hero. The city prepared to defend itself and its preacher against Austria. Hubmaier moved beyond Zwingli in reform ideas—he was moving in the same direction as Grebel and his party. He began to question infant baptism. He wrote Oecolampadius concerning infant baptism on January 16, 1525. On February 2, 1525 he published a tract, "The Open Appeal of Balthasar Hubmaier to All Christian Believers," in which he rejected infant baptism. He called for a public debate.

When Reublin was driven out of Zurich in April, 1525, he sought refuge in Waldshut. He baptized a few from Hubmaier's congregation. On Easter Sunday Reublin baptized Hubmaier and sixty additional members of the congregation. Hubmaier then baptized over three hundred more using a milk bucket filled with water from the fountain in the town square. On Easter Monday they observed the Lord's Supper, following literally the New Testament pattern. The Supper was followed by the washing of feet.

On July 10, 1525, Hubmaier wrote the town council of Zurich asking for a debate with Zwingli. When the council ignored his request, Hubmaier published a refutation of Zwingli's Of Baptism.

The Austrian government sent a military force against Waldshut and Hubmaier, on December 5, 1525, fled from Waldshut to Zurich. The Austrians captured Waldshut on December 6 and John Faber, the vicar-general of the bishop of Constance restored the mass, returning Waldshut to Catholicism.

In the meantime, Grebel, when he left St. Gall, went to Grisons (Gruningen), where his father, Jacob Grebel, lived. He met with great success in his preaching. Mantz and Blaurock joined him in a great revival. On Sunday, October 8, 1525, Blaurock went to the village, Minnwil, and mounted the pulpit before the pastor arrived. The bailiff was summoned and arrested Blaurock. As he was taking him by horseback to prison, Mantz and Grebel and a throng of peasants surrounded the bailiff and Blaurock and attempted to hold a preaching service. The Bailiff arrested Mantz and Grebel and the three leaders were turned over to the Zurich authorities.

The Zurich authorities arranged the Third Baptismal Disputation which was held in the Grossmunster on November 6-8, 1525. Zwingli, who had just published his answer to Hubmaier on November 5, Jud and Caspar Megander (Grossmann) represented the council. Delegations of Anabaptists from Gruningen, St. Gall, Chur, Zofingen with guarantees of safe-conduct attended the Disputation. Hubmaier wanted to attend but could not because of the Austrian army. Zwingli charged the Anabaptists with teaching: 1) no Christian can serve in the magistracy, 2) all possessions must be held in common, 3) saints are unable to sin after rebaptism, and 4) they would defend their doctrine with force.

The Disputation was really a judicial hearing and at its end a formal trial was held and Grebel, Mantz, and Blaurock were condemned to life imprisonment or to prison until they renounced their doctrine.

Hubmaier and his wife secretly slipped into Zurich on December 7 and spent the night with Henry Aberli. The next night they hid in an inn of the widow Bluntschli. When the council discovered that Hubmaier was hiding in the city he was arrested on December 11 and the widow and her daughter were fined for hiding an Anabaptist.
Hubmaier was brought before Zwingli, Jud, Hofmeister and Megander for a colloquium on December 12. Hubmaier later claimed he refuted Zwingli from Scripture and reminded him that he himself had privately confessed infant baptism was not in Scripture. Zwingli claimed Hubmaier was "as mute as a fish." Hubmaier, fearing Zurich was going to turn him over to the Austrians, finally agreed to sign a retraction. He was thrown into prison and tortured on the rack. Zwingli claimed that he recanted three times. Hubmaier requested a hearing before the tribunal of the Swiss Confederacy. Zwingli angrily declared that to appeal to a higher tribunal than Zurich was a capital offense. Hubmaier was forced to sign a retraction and to agree to make a public recantation. On Sunday, January 5, 1526, in the Fraumunster Zwingli delivered a sermon and presented Hubmaier for his recantation. Hubmaier delivered a defense of the Anabaptist position. Zwingli interrupted and Hubmaier was hurried back to prison. There were more hearings and torture. On March 5, 1526, Hubmaier, Mantz, Blaurock and Grebel were again tried. Mantz, Blaurock and Grebel remained steadfast. Hubmaier consented to recant publicly. In three churches on April 13 and 15 he publicly recanted and in disgrace was allowed to secretly leave Zurich, lest he be seized by the Austrians. He started out with his wife to Moravia.

After the Third Disputation the Zurich authorities issued a new mandate ordering death for anyone who rebaptized anybody. Fourteen others were imprisoned with Mantz, Blaurock and Grebel. Anna Mantz and five other women were sentenced on March 7, 1526, to the dungeon to live on bread and water until they recanted or died and rotted. Grebel had smuggled a candle and flint into the prison so they could read the Bible in the darkness of the dungeon. About two weeks later Grebel, Mantz, and Blaurock escaped and secretly went separate ways.

Mantz went to Embrach in the northern part of the canton of Zurich where he baptized a woman about two weeks later. This would be brought against him at his final trial. He went on to Basel where he preached in a field at night. An Anabaptism community had been growing in Basel. Oecolampadius held a disputation with the Anabaptist tailor, Michael Schurer (August, 1526). On October 10 he held another disputation in the Church of St. Martin. Karl Brennwald tried to arrange a debate with Oecolampadius but the council forbade it. On July 6, 1527, Basel ordered corporal punishment and confiscation for adult baptism, postponement of infant baptism, and for sheltering Anabaptists. When the government chased Mantz out of Basel he went to St. Gall where he was arrested. He was released on October 13 and banned forever from that territory. He went back to Grünigen in the canton of Zurich.

As early as July, 1524, the Catholic cantons wanted to expell Zurich from the Confederacy. In the Zurich council there was a party of patricians who favored the Catholics, wanted the mercenary service to continue, and were willing to support the Anabaptists in an effort to limit the power of Zwingli. Their spokesman was Jacob Grebel, father of Conrad. The Baden Disputation between Catholics and Protestants was held by the Confederation, May 18–June 8, 1526, in an effort to determine what should be the policy of the Confederation. Eck and Faber represented the Catholics. Oecolampadius of Basel and Berchtold Haller of Bern defended the Swiss Reformation. Despite the promise of safe-conduct Zwingli declined to attend. Eck defended his seven points of Catholic doctrine. At the end of the debate Eck received eighty-two votes that he had won and Oecolampadius received only ten. This shattered Zwingli's hope of winning the whole Confederation to his Reformation. Zurich faced strong criticism for tolerating Zwingli and the Anabaptist contagion.

Zwingli urged sterner measures declaring that the sword should be put to the necks of Anabaptists. He had Grebel's father beheaded at the fish market on October 30, 1526, for aiding Anabaptists. On November 19, 1526, the Zurich council issued a new law declaring death not only to those who rebaptized but also for any who attended Anabaptist preaching. In Grünigen the bailiff kept the new law secret hoping to catch the Anabaptist leaders. On December 3, 1526, he arrested Mantz and Blaurock and two others and delivered them to Zurich.

At his trial Mantz was accused of setting up a separate church, of teaching that its members could live sinless lives, of teaching that no Christian could bear
arms of hold public office, of teaching that possessions should be held in common, and of violating his oath of October 7, 1525 not to rebaptize by baptizing the lady at Embrach after escaping from prison. On January 5, 1527, Mantz was condemned to death by drowning. The same day he was tightly bound and thrown into the icy river while his mother and brother to the very end encouraged him to be steadfast. As he was thrown into the water he was singing, "Into Thy hands I commit my spirit."

When Grebel escaped from the prison he had fled to Mainenfield in the Oberland. There he caught the plague and died in August, 1526.

The day that Mantz was drowned, Blaurock was severely beaten and banished from Zurich. He shook off the dust of his feet against the city and made his way to Bern. The Anabaptist movement had started in Bern as early as 1525 but had grown slowly. Berchtold Haller of Bern corresponded with Zwingli, Oecolampadius, Bullinger and Henry Semler. Before 1526 the council had banished some Anabaptists from Aargau. The baker, John Pfistermeyer was exiled from Bern early in 1526. Jacob Gross who had come from Waldshut was also banished. Zwingli's Reformed preachers in Bern called Zwingli to come to Bern to meet Blaurock and his Anabaptists in a disputation. Blaurock and the Anabaptists were expelled. In the spring of 1527 Jacob Hochrutiner, John Hausmann and six other Anabaptists came to Bern from Basel. Blaurock went to Bial whether he gathered a large congregation of Anabaptists before he was driven out. He preached in Grisons and in Appenzell where he was arrested and later banished on April 21, 1527.

Blaurock went to Tyrol where he had his last and most fruitful ministry. An Anabaptist minister of a church in the Adige Valley had been burned at the stake on June 2, 1527. The church called Blaurock to take his place. Blaurock preached to great crowds from Klausen to Meumarkt. The numbers increased steadily. Innsbruck authorities arrested Blaurock and Hans Langerger on August 14, 1529. Two weeks later on September 6, 1529 Blaurock and Legger were burned at the stake near Klausen.

Ulimann returned from Moravia to Appenzell to lead a second group to Moravia in 1529. On the way Ulimann and his group were seized by Seneschal George of Waldburg and put to death.

The persecution against Anabaptists in Switzerland was so fierce that most Anabaptists were either killed or driven into exile. Only a very small remnant secretly survived. For about one hundred and fifty years when an Anabaptist was discovered he was executed. The example of the Swiss martyrs was treasured and carried by the fugitives across Europe.