

Rev. Beth J. Costlow

1 John 3:16-24

April 25, 2021

Easter 4 Year B

Prepared for: Lutheran Church of our Saviour, Greenville, SC

- “Little children, let us love, not in word or speech, but in truth in action.”
 - Background on 1 John
 - Written to a community of early Christians in need of encouragement.
 - Some sort of split seems to have been happening in the community, although no details are given.
 - Some leaders have left the Christian community, seemingly over differing interpretations about Jesus’ identity and the Savior’s necessity for their connection to God.
 - It is to this conflict—disagreement about the nature of Jesus, and the embodiment of his love, that the writer of the letter speaks.
 - It is a letter that holds both reprimands and encourages Christians in loving one another, even as it addresses the question about Christian words vs. Christian deeds.
- “We know love by this, that [Jesus Christ] laid down his life for us....”
 - This is encouragement!
 - Jesus already died. For us. For you.
 - During the Easter season, we also remember that Jesus didn’t stay dead.
 - Three days after his burial, his tomb was found empty.
 - Connected to this: “And we ought to lay down our lives for one another.”
 - This is, of course, the Maundy Thursday commandment. “Love one another as I have loved you.”
- A story: Jamie, a coworker at my first job, McDonald’s.
 - She had been married at age 15, had her first child at 16, and was pregnant with her third when we met when both of us were 18.
 - Yep. Three children in three years. And still a teenager.
 - Making things harder? Her husband, only 21 years old himself, had been injured and was unable to work.
 - Insult to injury: Although his injury occurred on his job, his employer was refusing any financial support for the family.
 - Eighteen-year-old pregnant Jamie’s job at McDonald’s was the only income for their family of four.

- We became fast friends, and I suppose it could be said that I loved Jamie and her family in the active way that 1 John talks about it
 - “Not in word or speech, but in truth in action.”
 - Babysitting when she accompanied her husband to appointments.
 - Picking her up for work when she needed a ride.
- And then something happened with her pregnancy that put Jamie out of work, too.
- I was also immature enough that, although I knew her family needed help, I didn’t know where to begin.
- Virginia—50-something grandmother; mothered all of us
 - Devout Roman Catholic Christian
 - Talked to all of us about the family’s needs
 - Included things that most of the teenage workforce hadn’t considered
 - Many necessities not covered by the government programs that was assisting the family
 - Initiated a drive to help
 - Employees, managers, even some customers contributed
 - Diapers, formula, wipes
 - Toddler food and snack items
 - Baby and toddler clothes (Dollar General owners), car seat for newborn
 - Toilet paper, paper towels, tissues and, for post-baby, feminine products
 - Cash—for whatever else the family needed, including medical bills
 - All collected from minimum-wage workers, just because a faithful Christian made us aware of the need.
- We don’t always agree with one another.
 - You may not always agree with your pastors. (Your pastors don’t always agree with one another!)
 - You do the same kind of ministry every day.
 - Our Saviour Lutheran Preschool
 - Food Pantry
 - Daily ministries you provide to friends, neighbors, and strangers.
 - Your support of this congregation.
 - Jesus is using you to show his love through your actions.
 - Amen.