

SERMON FOR APRIL 25, 2021

TEXT: 1 JOHN 3: 13-24

THEME: THE FUTURE IS NOW

13 Do not be surprised, brothers, that the world hates you. **14** We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brothers. Whoever does not love abides in death. **15** Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him. **16** By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers. **17** But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him? **18** Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth. **19** By this we shall know that we are of the truth and reassure our heart before him; **20** for whenever our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and he knows everything. **21** Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God; **22** and whatever we ask we receive from him, because we keep his commandments and do what pleases him. **23** And this is his commandment, that we believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and love one another, just as he has commanded us. **24** Whoever keeps his commandments abides in God, and God in him. And by this we know that He abides in us by the Spirit that He has given us.

In the name of Jesus:

There was a short 15 minute documentary made back in 1955, that was titled: "The Future is Now." This short documentary reported on research laboratories that showcased some of the products that were to be used in the near future. There were some things such as computerized assembly lines, nuclear energy, solar powered batteries, and some industrial uses for

televisions. There were other things, consumer products, that included video telephones, cooking foods by radiation, and automated kitchens.

When one looks at some of the products that have popular usage today, it is easy to see how the future is now as we daily use smartphones with photo and video capabilities, microwavable meals, and computer voice assisting machines such as Alexa, and automated lawn mowers. Yes, it seems as if the future is now.

For the Christian, the FUTURE IS NOW, and it is all because of the fact that Jesus Christ has risen from the grave.

Over the past few weeks we have celebrated the Good News of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the grave. The Good News of the Resurrection takes on all of our fears for Christ has conquered sin, Satan, and death. The Good News of the Resurrection gives us certainty in all of our trials and tribulations, for Christ has overcome the world. The Good News of the Resurrection gives us the certainty that on the Last Day, we will be like Jesus, risen from the grave, with glorified bodies to live eternally.

Today the Apostle John tells us that our Christian faith is not some type of pie in the sky faith, but that it is real and has meaning for you and me and all people today.

Many today downplay and minimize the significance and the power of the Resurrection of Jesus in their lives for today. Some believe that the Resurrection means that the spirit of Jesus lives on, or that the Resurrection shows that the teachings of Jesus are timeless. Some think that the Resurrection is poetic, not to be taken literally, but that it points to the cycle of nature that after a cold winter the warmth of spring brings about rebirth, and with it comes joy and happiness. All of this, in a search and an attempt to make the Resurrection of Jesus relevant today. Because, sadly, many do not think that the Resurrection of Jesus is relevant today, that it has no purpose or meaning for us today. Which means, that we can live however we want to live, living for the self and for our own selfish desires, living for the moment to make ourselves happy in the here and now. Yet the Resurrection is a historical fact, Jesus Christ has indeed risen from the grave! Something very real took place on that first Easter, and it is the fact that Jesus Christ rose physically from the grave. Through faith in Christ, God will raise up all believers in Christ physically to live forever in the Kingdom of God. And it is because of the

Resurrection of Jesus that we as believers have been given the power to live our lives as Resurrected People. As Christians we are called to live our lives because the FUTURE IS NOW. This is not a mere cliché, but it is real and meaningful for the Resurrection gives us meaning and purpose in life today.

You and I are called to be Resurrection People. Here. Today. And now. We need to understand the radical alteration that Christ gives to His own because of His resurrection. To live as resurrection people is not something that is put off into the future, nor is it something that takes place in the eternity in the life to come. You Have been given the power and benefits of the Resurrection when you were baptized. In Baptism God personally forgives you for all of your sins, He has made you holy in His sight, for all who have been baptized into Christ have now put on Christ. You are a new creation, created by the Holy Spirit to live your life for God and for others.

This happens here and now, today, and everytime you hear the Good News of Jesus, it happens every time you remember your Baptism, it happens each and every time you come to receive the Lord's Supper, for whenever we hear God's Word and receive His gifts of forgiveness, life and salvation we receive Jesus and He bestows upon us His Holy Spirit so that we are empowered to live for Him today and forever.

You have been changed by the power of the Spirit so that you have a New Master, Jesus, the Good Shepherd, who laid down His life for His sheep. You now belong to Jesus and He gives you a new way of life. Your life isn't defined by popular opinion, by possessions or by income. Your life is now in Christ and Christ lives in and through you. The life you now live you live to the glory of God. Hate is replaced by love, vengeance gives way to forgiveness, light shines in the darkness, and death dies so that life lives forever.

This is why John writes that we should not be surprised that the world hates those who believe in Jesus, for our lives have died in Christ by virtue of our Baptism so that Christ might raise us to live new lives in love for Him and for one another.

John writes: "by this we know love, that Christ laid down His life for us and we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers. If anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in Him? Let us not love in word or talk but in deed and truth." (16-18).

Jesus died for all. Why? Because He loves everyone. Christ's love is not based on social status, it isn't based on how you vote, it isn't rooted in the color of your skin. Jesus doesn't pit one segment of society against another.

Christ died for all. He died for sinners. He died for you because He loves you. And He has brought you into His family through the waters of Baptism so that now you have His Spirit, to live in the love of Jesus. Not just in words, but in deeds and truth. For John writes: "This is His commandment, that we believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ and love one another, just as He has commanded us. Whoever keeps His commandments abides in God and God in Him. " (23-24).

One of the most remarkable things one can experience is the love of family. To hear the words of a child saying: "I love you" is heartwarming and profound. How does one even measure the love of a child? What does a child do for his or her parents? At the age that they might first speak those words, chances are that the children have done almost nothing. The child cannot change its diaper, cannot fix a meal for her parents, cannot go grocery shopping. The child can do nothing. But the child loves the parent. Why? Because the parent first loved him or her. The parent is the one who has done the loving actions for the child. The parent has changed those diapers, has fixed those meals, and has done the grocery shopping. It is the love of the parent for the child that creates a trust in the child and will, in time, create loving actions of respect and obedience.

So too with the Lord! We have nothing to offer to God, but He has offered everything to us and for us! For while we were still sinners, Christ died and rose for us. We love, because Jesus first loved us. In Baptism God has made you a member of His Family, you are a part of the Body of Christ. And as the Body of Christ, you live for Jesus, in love for Him, and in love for one another, just as Jesus has loved us. To the glory of God and in Jesus' name!

Amen