

2015

## Easter 4 • 1 John 3:16–24 • April 26, 2015 Preliminary Considerations

Victor Raj

*Concordia Seminary, St. Louis*, [rajv@csl.edu](mailto:rajv@csl.edu)

Follow this and additional works at: <http://scholar.csl.edu/cj>

 Part of the [Practical Theology Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Raj, Victor (2015) "Easter 4 • 1 John 3:16–24 • April 26, 2015 Preliminary Considerations," *Concordia Journal*: Vol. 41: No. 1, Article 18.

Available at: <http://scholar.csl.edu/cj/vol41/iss1/18>

This Homiletical Help is brought to you for free and open access by Scholarly Resources from Concordia Seminary. It has been accepted for inclusion in Concordia Journal by an authorized administrator of Scholarly Resources from Concordia Seminary. For more information, please contact [seitzw@csl.edu](mailto:seitzw@csl.edu).

## Preliminary Considerations

Placed midway between Easter and Pentecost, the appointed lessons for the fourth Sunday of Easter cumulatively call for a resurrection living for the Christian faithful in this world. Together, they are an exhortation for the baptized toward the demonstration of God's righteousness in their daily living as they engage the world with the proclamation of Jesus's rising from the dead (Acts 4:2). Psalm 23 and the reading from John's gospel together speak of the Shepherd laying down his life for the sheep and leading them in paths of righteousness. For the believers, there is a life to live on earth *after* they die to this world in their baptism. Just as Jesus rose from the dead and lives, his faithful live their resurrection life in this world before they die.

## Notes on the Text

Refer to the exhaustive textual notes on this text in Bruce Schuchard's *1-3 John* in the Concordia Commentary Series.

## Lessons from the Text

In 1 John chapter 3, we see in many ways a merging of Paul and James. In a style typical of the apostle John, verse 16 of our text echoes what he stated already in the gospel (Jn 10:11, 15) that the good shepherd came to the world to lay down his life for the people. By his authority, on his own he will take up again the very life he gave up for others. Paul echoes the same message in his words that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us (Rom 5:7). Both for John and for Paul, Christ's death and resurrection are at the center of their proclamation and life of the Christian in this world.

For both John and Paul, the believers' resurrection life likewise is anchored in Jesus Christ and his resurrection (cf. 1 Jn 3:16; 10:11, 15; 1 Cor 15:14). As the Shepherd of his flock, Jesus laid down his life for the sheep. Love's epitome is laying down one's life for others. For his disciples therefore there is no greater way of validating love than giving their lives away for the sake of their friends and neighbors. Those who belong to Jesus have a new lifestyle to follow, emulating the master's life and distinguishing their lives from life of the ordinary people. Christians lead their lives in this world transformed by the reconciling love God lavished on them on account of Christ. For Paul, God's love is grounded on his Son laying down his life for sinners destined to die. In Christ's death God has reconciled to himself a people wrestling constantly with sin and its consequences in a broken world (Rom 5:8–10). In the radiance of Christ's resurrection, however, this reconciled community of God grows together every way in Christ, speaking the truth in love, distinguishing itself from all the rest. They bond together in Christ, and in Christian solidarity contribute to the growth of the whole body so that it builds itself in love (Eph 4:15–16).

For practical Christian living, what counts most for Paul is faith working through love (Gal 5:6). Paul's reasoning complements James's assertion that faith by itself, if it does not entail works, is dead (Jas 2:17). As a case in point, James too builds his case on Abraham's faith that was active along with his works (Jas 2:18–23). Living for the neighbor in need is a validation of God's love working out in our lives. As the people of God privileged to live resurrection lives, we ought not to close our eyes to the neighbor's needs. From the redeemed of God a Christ-like compassion flows down for the sake of their neighbors in need. With complete confidence in the resurrected Lord we with boldness live our resurrected lives in service to others.

## **Suggested Outline**

### **Resurrection Living**

1. Christians do not simply resign from this world of harassment, resentment, and sorrow, but endure hardship trusting in the reconciling love God has lavished for them in the Lord Christ. The followers of Christ rise above those who take morality at its face value. They show us how we fall short of doing anything right before God and human beings; but do right for the sake of God who set them up right with him in Christ Jesus.
2. Resurrection living has to it a worldly character. It encourages Christians to endeavor and support friends, neighbors and preserve their livelihood not as they ought but as they are able. While living and serving in this world, Christians think of the things above with the mind of Christ (cf. Col 3:1–3).
3. Resurrection living is built on Christian confidence. Christians are practitioners of God's righteousness (1 Jn 3:7, 10). Practicing righteousness for Christians is accomplishing God's will for them and through them for the neighbor. Resurrected living is living Christian discipleship in its fullness. While bereft of God's love the world is struggling to put the pieces of life together, Christians in faith demonstrate before the world God's reconciling love as the love of Christ constrains them.

Victor Raj