

Sermon: How do we know love?
4 Easter, Year B
1 John 3:1-7, Luke 24:36b-48

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April 22, 2018

(From the aisle, dialogue format)

In today's gospel from John, we hear Jesus say, "I am the good shepherd." And then he says, "The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep."

With what you know about Jesus, what does that mean? (He gave his life for us, died on the cross...)

So we know that Jesus literally laid down his life for us sheep.

So, what does this tell us about God? (God loves us, is trustworthy, has our best interest at heart, has our back, loves us unconditionally)

Right! And what are we to make of this line in the passage, that "I have *other sheep* that do not belong to this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice?" (that all are included in God's love, that we need to be careful about who we think is "in" and "out" of God's reach, that we keep our doors literally and metaphorically open to the people God has created.)

If we look at the epistle from 1 John, we read, "We know love by this, that he (Jesus) laid down his life for us –and we ought to lay down our lives for one another."

So to follow Jesus, we do what Jesus does.

Think for a moment of how we see others lay their lives down for others. Can you give me some examples? (soldiers giving their lives for this country, firefighters going into a burning building to save people – this happened here in Staunton just the other day – police man in Trebes, France, who exchanged his life for a hostage in grocery store recently. He died and when his mother was asked if that was likely him, she said, "oh yes, very likely him, and he wouldn't have seen himself as a hero, just doing his job.") So those are some literal ways people lay their lives down for others.

I wonder what might be some other ways we lay our lives down for others? (Being an advocate for someone who has no voice, the poor, the destitute, the hungry,, the homeless, the oppressed. Speaking up when a racist comment is made. Helping someone who can't do for themselves)

What about simply listening? Being willing to STOP talking so that someone else can be heard. Several of our LLJG (Living Local Joining God) guiding team members have mentioned that one of their great learnings is that they are bad listeners! I don't think that is true; I think they are actually very good listeners and they are growing to be better listeners. Listening makes for a better marriage, better parent/child relationships. Probably all relationships. It is often so tempting to talk about oneself but to really

listen is to lay aside one's own agenda, one's own life, in a sense, so that someone else can be heard.

Jesus, our great good shepherd lays down his life for us sheep because he *loves* us. Today and in the coming week, may we all enjoy the Spirit at work within us as we lay down our lives for others. This is how we will know love.
Amen.