

## Friday after the First Sunday in Lent, March 3, 2023

Recommended readings: p. 88, "March 5, 1770," pp. 89-90, "First to Rise," and pp. 102-111, "Fear" (excerpt)

In chapter four, Leslie Alexander and Michelle Alexander write, "From the founding of the original thirteen colonies, white people in the North and South lived in constant fear that the men and women they whipped, raped, and forced to work without pay would, if given the chance, rise up and take revenge on their white enslavers. This is why governmental surveillance and severe punishment of Black people began almost concurrently with the introduction of slavery itself. In 1669, the Carolina colony granted every free white man 'absolute Power and Authority over his Negro Slaves.' Within decades, Carolina law drastically bolstered white authority, mandating that all white people ought to be responsible for policing all Black people's activities. Any white person who failed to properly monitor suspicious Black activity would be fined forty shillings. This notion—that Black people were inherently devious and criminal, and that white people were required to monitor and police them—ultimately defined the nature of race relations in the United States."

*God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them. Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness on the day of judgment, because as he is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear; for fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not reached perfection in love. We love because he first loved us. Those who say, "I love God," and hate a brother or sister are liars, for those who do not love a brother or sister, whom they have seen, cannot love God, whom they have not seen. The commandment we have from him is this: those who love God must love their brothers and sisters also. (1 John 4:16-21)*

It is ironic that those who first enslaved people and then brutalized them lived in constant fear of those they oppressed, which led to even greater oppression and brutal treatment. Among many white people that fear still exists today and it is still used as a justification for countless expressions of discrimination and racial profiling in our policing. Why is it so much easier to fear than to love?

### Prayer

O God, your perfect love leads us to trust you and to love you. Help us to bring your love into our communities. Give us the insight to notice when fear is guiding our attitudes and actions; give us healing and freedom that we may choose love over fear. Amen.