

Sermon for New Years Eve

Date: December 31 2021

Location: St. John's Lutheran Church, Austin, MN

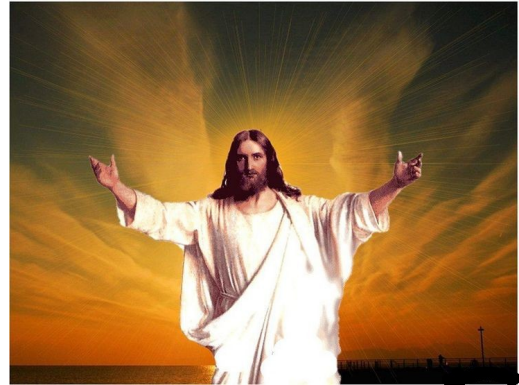
Old Testament: Isaiah 30:8–17

Epistle Reading: Romans 8:31b–39

Gospel Reading: Luke 12:35–40

Sermon Text: Romans 8:31b–39

Sermon Title: New Confidence in Christ



Hymns:

LSB 516 – Wake, Awake, for Night Is Flying

LSB 733 – O God, Our Help in Ages Past

LSB 947 – All Glory Be to God on High

LSB 933 – My Soul Rejoices

LSB 379 – O Come, All Ye Faithful

LSB 434 – Lamb of God, Pure and Holy

Liturgy:

Creative Worship



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Text: Romans 8:31b–39

If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? Who shall bring any charge against God’s elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? As it is written,

“For your sake we are being killed all the day long;
we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.”

No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

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Grace to you, and peace, in Jesus' holy name. Amen.

The Christmas season is a time to celebrate peace. The angels brought the announcement of “peace on earth¹” to the shepherds in the fields. This message has been repeated in countless Christmas songs, carols and greetings ever since, as we continue to celebrate the birth of the One whom the prophet Isaiah called “the Prince of Peace.²” The One who grew up to say, “blessed are the peacemakers.³” Cultivating peace should be a major part of our work with those around us. That is part of the true Christian faith. Those who deliver division, disorder, conflict and stress are not Christians no matter how loudly they make their claims.⁴

The Bible does, however, tell us that there is a place where followers of Jesus are called to arms. There is a spiritual warfare that Christians must wage. The apostle Paul says it is not a “wrestling match against a human opponent.” It is not against fellow human beings, but against what he calls the “spiritual forces that control evil⁵” that cannot be seen with the human eye, but are nevertheless very real. All the more reason for us to purposefully share, provide and offer peace to each other within the family of this congregation.

Given the real power of our spiritual enemies, we need more than our mortal flesh can muster to defeat these foes. We need God to step in and to fight for us. That is why it is such an incredible Christmas gift that God,

didn't spare His own Son,
but handed Him over to death for all of us.⁶

It is truly remarkable that the Son of God, our Lord and Savior, walked onto our field of battle, and stepped into our struggle.

Shortly after Jesus' baptism, and just before He began His earthly ministry, the Spirit of God led Jesus into the desert. There He was assaulted by the devil. So often people think that after those 40 days the devil just gave up; that Jesus' tangling with temptation terminated there, but that is not what the Bible says.

The Bible says that Jesus has been tempted in every way just like us, but without giving in to temptation and committing sin.⁷ After Jesus' victory over the devil in the desert, the Bible says that Satan left Jesus “until a more opportune

1 Luke 2:14
2 Isaiah 9:6
3 Matthew 5:9
4 James 2
5 Ephesians 6:12
6 Romans 8:31
7 Hebrews 4:15; 1 Peter 2:22

time.⁸” Certainly in the garden of Gethsemane Satan’s sick seductions were shouted at the Savior. Seeing what was in store for Him, Jesus was no doubt tempted to skip the cross. Thankfully for us, with selfless love, Jesus chose the abuse and abandonment as He stood in our place.⁹”

The Holy Christians Church has always taken comfort in the Bible's assurance that Jesus did in fact become like one of us. He suffered the same way we do. The difference is He never allowed it to overcome Him. Not even once. Jesus successfully withstood all the attacks, and in the end defeated sin, death and Satan by His own death on the cross, and His victorious resurrection on the third day. He did all of that to win the victory over all things that try to attack and defeat us with their lies and contempt for Christian peace.

Jesus successfully fought our battle for us, and then amazingly Jesus shared His victory with us. Now we can rejoice knowing, as St. Paul teaches us:

“The one who loves us gives us an overwhelming victory in all these difficulties.” Through Him “we are “more than conquerors!”¹⁰”

As the old year passes and we find ourselves at a new beginning, we should reflect on where we have been while looking ahead at what tomorrow might bring. We do this with probably a little guilt over some of our past failures, but also with a New Year's resolve to do better in the future. The important thing to remember is no amount of resolve will be enough on our own. Our only hope for true success is in Jesus’ victory. In Him alone we can face the things that St. Paul lists in Romans 8 that threaten to separate us from God's love. They are all potentially serious contenders, but because of Jesus they are pretenders.

The first one is the worst. It is called condemnation. Throughout the Bible God warns us of this potential and terrible future which is ours because of our failure to measure up to His standards of perfection. The Bible actually uses a legal term, like being on trial, and we have countless charges against us, and each one of them carries the death penalty. That is what Satan does, he accuses us. In fact that is what his name means. ‘Satan’ is a Hebrew word that means, ‘accuser.’

If we take into consideration the true spirit of the Law, and not just the letter Law, we begin to see that God has every right to “throw the book at us, and throw away the key.” Yet in spite of all the sin that earns us God’s wrath, St. Paul asks the question, “Who will condemn us?” The obvious answer would appear to be God.

8 Luke 4:13

9 Matthew 27:46

10 Romans 8:37 – In all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.

After all, He is the one who would and should condemn us because of our sin. Yet Paul says something very surprising. He says, “It is God who justifies” you. He does not say, “it is God who condemns you.” Why? Because it is:

Christ Jesus, who died, more than that, who was raised to life, [who] is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us.¹¹

Jesus shed His innocent blood in our place. Jesus was separated from His Father's love for a time, so that we will never be separated from God's love forever. He intercedes, meaning Jesus prays for us, to the Father, on our behalf and assigns His victory to our sin and His righteousness to our account to justify us; to sanctify us; to make us holy. So, now because of His Son, the Father sees us as perfect in His sight.

The list of threats against us goes on, and seems insurmountable. We might ask: Can Jesus really handle all these threats against us? You bet He can. In fact Jesus has already defeated them all. The Bible says:

You know about the kindness of our Lord Jesus Christ. He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor in order to make you rich through His poverty.¹²

Of course the riches that we are promised are not just material but the spiritual riches of knowing that God loves us and is on our side, and we can have confidence that He knows our needs and will provide for them.

Do dangerous and deadly things, both physical and spiritual, try separate us from God's love? They do, and they have for some time. The Bible teaches:

Sin came into the world through one man [Adam], and death came through sin. So death spread to everyone, because everyone sinned.¹³

This is why we have death in the world. Death is not a part of life. It is the result of sin and the Fall. So what hope is there? What's the point of starting yet another new year? Is there any hope for us? St. Paul asks, “Who can rescue us from this body of death?¹⁴” The Bible gives the answer:

Thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!¹⁵

11 Romans 8:33-34

12 2 Corinthians 8:9

13 Romans 5:12

14 Romans 7:24 (*Paraphrased*)

15 I Corinthians 15:57

The one who loves us gives us an overwhelming victory
in all these difficulties.¹⁶

Jesus defeated sin and death for us with His sinless life, and with His innocent suffering and death. Then, to prove it for all Creation to see He rose from the dead on the third day, walked out of that tomb, and once and for all defeated “the last enemy¹⁷” death.

Unfortunately there is no shortage of challenges to come for you in this world. Challenges that might appear to separate you from God's love. Things like we heard in our Epistle readings. Things like:

death or life, angels or rulers, anything in the present or
anything in the future, forces or powers in the world
above or in the world below, or anything else in
creation.¹⁸

There are plenty of places where the attack rages on, but in this New Year's Eve, I want to direct your attention to one final would-be-threat that Paul mentions and that is: time. Paul assures us that we need not fear things present nor things to come. Remember all of time is in the Lord's hands. He holds the future in His hands so that we who trust in our Savior can face the days ahead with confidence knowing that from everlasting to everlasting God is God.¹⁹ Jesus Christ is “the same, yesterday, today, and forever.”²⁰ With this promise, from our Lord, you can be confident that:

Nothing will be able to separate you
from the love of God,
that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.²¹

Nothing!

Not lies, hate, nor contempt for all things holy. Not a hatred for you or a hatred for God. Our God reigns!²²

May this sure promise, from God Himself, encourage you to venture into this New Year with courage. May you be fully persuaded that nothing can keep God from loving you. May God's unquenchable love, which is ours in Jesus Christ, give

16 Romans 8:37

17 I Corinthians 15:26

18 Romans 8:38-39 (*Paraphrased*)

19 Psalm 90:2

20 Hebrews 13:8

21 Romans 8:38-39

22 Psalm 97

you confidence to face this new year with peace. Peace that is found in Jesus Christ alone.

Amen.

**Proclaim God's Word,
Encourage one another in faith,
Witness to God's love and
Serve all people**

