

New Year's Eve: December 31, 2011

Theme: Blessed be the new year?

Grace, mercy, and peace be unto you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen. On New Year's Eve, we take a moment to reflect upon the past year. What were the things that stand out in your year? Happy, sad, good, bad, and even ugly? It is perfect on this night of reflection that we reminded by St. Paul, "If God is for us, who can be against us?"¹

This past year has been filled with much tribulation, in the world, in our society, in our homes, and even in our own bodies. Sin and Satan have battered us day by day and there may have been times where we were just not sure if the year would end. Many of us couldn't wait for the end of the year to come and we could start a new year; next year has to be better, right? We get to start off 2012 with a clean slate, right?

This is not the first new year that you have had, and so it will come as no surprise to you that things do not magically change when the ball drops and 2012 begins. Next year will have its struggles, and pain, its losses and trials. We do right to wish everyone a happy new year, but we know that the entire year will not be completely happy.

But, "If God is for us, who can be against us?"³² 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?³³ Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies.³⁴ 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.³⁵ Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword?³⁶ As it is written, "For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered."³⁷ No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.³⁸ For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers,³⁹ 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."²

Isn't that wonderful? Yes, we will have struggles and troubles, but we are never alone. There is nothing that can separate us from the love of God, not even death. Jesus has died the death on the cross. We who have been baptized into Christ, have been buried with Him into death, in order that just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may walk in newness of life.

As we begin a new year, we do so knowing that if God is for us, who can be against us? The very God of heaven and earth, Jesus Christ has joined you to Himself. Jesus! Name of wondrous love, Name all other names above, Name decreed of old, Name of priceless worth, Name of mercy mild, is the very name which is given to you. Joined with water and sealed with Word, the name of Christ, the victory of the Lamb of God over sin and Satan is yours.

On the 8th day, Jesus was circumcised and given the name Jesus, which means "He saves." The name of Salvation belongs to you. You have been made a child of God and never to be forgotten. That name has been joined to bread and wine, you are given the very body and blood of Jesus.

¹ Romans 8:31b

² Romans 8:31b-39

What a fitting way to end the year. We close the year with forgiveness for all of our sins, and receive strength from that very body and blood of God's dear son, strength to live the new year in love and faith. Strength to live out our lives in Jesus' name! Strength to live as our hymn reminds us in love and mercy.

As we begin a new year, God reminds us again that He will never leave us nor forsake us. No matter what happens in the next year, God is God and we are His people. He is our Father who art in heaven, His is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, how long? Forever and ever. Then we end with "AMEN," which means, "yes, let it be so Lord."

If God is for us, who can be against us? No one! Thanks be to God! Amen. I would like to end our sermon tonight by praying again the gradual printed in your bulletin.

P: Teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom

C: Satisfy us in the morning with Your steadfast love, that we may rejoice and be glad all our days.

Amen. Now God our Father keep you in His grace and peace all year long and for many years to come until He calls us to our heavenly home. Amen.