

First Sunday in Advent –December 1, 2013  
Text: Romans 13:11-14  
Theme: "We're Burnin' Daylight!"

**Many of you know that Dänya and I are big fans of John Wayne. The fact that there is a life size cut out of him in our house is a dead give-away. Anyway, one of my favorite movies is the "Cowboys." If you have not seen that movie, it is about a cattle rancher who has to move his herd in a time when there are no men to hire for the job, so he has to hire a bunch of school age boys to be his cowboys. Dawn comes early for a kid who has never had to wake up that early and John Wayne is always waking up the young boys when the sky is just barely light with the phrase, "Let's go, we're burning daylight!"**

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**That idea of "burning daylight" does not mean as much to us these days. We live in a world that never sleeps – especially we who live in a large metropolitan area. But go to a small rural town and decide you want some food past 9:00 pm and see how far you get. Rural America operates on a daylight clock far more than we do. And in the days of St. Paul, when there was no electricity, life was completely geared to daylight. Light was not a commodity of which people were in control in those days and yet it was something they desperately needed in order to see to work. Daylight was precious and could not be wasted by sleeping.**

**You and I likewise are dependent on the light in order to work, but we are dependent on a different kind of light, not daylight, but the light of Christ. Paul reminds us in Romans,**

**“Besides this you know the time, that the hour has come for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed. The night is far gone; the day is at hand. So then let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light.”**

**Just prior to saying this, St. Paul has brought up the commandments that the Romans are not following.**

**“For the commandments, ‘You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet,’ and any other commandment, are summed up in this word: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.” Here is one of St. Paul’s famous lists from which Christians love to pick and choose. Go ahead, check them off. Have you committed adultery? That is, have you participated in any way whatsoever in any kind of sexual sin? Thought, word or deed? No? Are you sure? Never objectified another human being by making some kind of lewd remark about his or her sexuality? Never withheld affection in the marriage to punish the other party for some offense? How about murder? Have you**

**ever verbally attacked another out of anger or revenge? Have you ever had evil, hurtful thoughts about another person? Paul tries to stop us from self-righteousness by saying it is all summed up with love. Love is fulfilling the law. If you're not loving someone, you are breaking the law. And if you live under the law, even one infraction means damnation.**

**Paul's point is never to provide a checklist of sins to make you feel better about yourself. His point is to provide a towering wall of perfection to which you can never measure up so that you will see that daylight is burning and you better get moving. Remember your Baptisms, eat and drink of the body and blood of Christ and get moving. He did not want the Romans or us to sit passively, stupidly happy with ourselves while people who did not know the love of Christ went to Hell. He does not want us burning daylight! He wants us to rely completely on Christ for salvation and never ourselves and to invite others to do likewise.**

**He has just given the Roman Christians a whole list of impossible tasks summarized by LOVE PERFECTLY! You can imagine what they were thinking. Some no doubt were driven to despair knowing that they had not kept these laws. Some were probably angry knowing that they could not keep these laws. And some, no doubt the most religious of the group, were most satisfied being**

**certain that they had indeed kept all these laws since their youth and in fact deserved salvation. Paul and then says,**

**“WAKE UP! You bunch of ninnies!” Well okay, I added the part about ninnies but I’m pretty sure he was thinking it!” How dare we waste daylight either bemoaning what we cannot do or straining our arms patting ourselves on the back? We have work to do while it is daylight! The light of Christ shines through us and the time is coming when he will return and it will all be over. If people are going to see his light we better get to work now while there is still time because when the day is over night will come for all who do not know Christ.**