

Eve of the Name of Jesus – December 31, 2016  
Text: Romans 8:31b-39  
Theme: We Got Friends in High Places

**By American standards, we are not very materially wealthy people here at Trinity. I was once approached by a man who represented a fund raising agency that had been secured by a pan Lutheran organization. They were hoping to build a 50 million dollar facility and this gentleman was sent to the Lutheran Churches in Chicagoland to see how much they could count on in gifts toward this endeavor. One of the first questions he asked me was how many of my people at Trinity did I think could consider making a gift of \$100,000 or more? I laughed out loud. He was offended. He was from Texas so I asked him if he had mistakenly come to Villa Park, thinking he was in Lincoln Park. His lowest gift category was \$10,000 or more and I told him, "Buddy, I am ecstatic over the handful of people we have who give \$5000 or more a year to this place for their regular offerings!" He left having clearly wasted his time at Trinity, Villa Park.**

**But, frankly, I thank God that we are not burdened with huge wealth. Most of us have enough. Some of us have a little more and some struggle a little bit to make ends meet, but none of us are without the basic necessities of life. It's a nice place to be and we are blessed. But that doesn't mean we can get sloppy.**

**The worst thing that can happen to God's people is to become complacent. If we get too comfortable in this life, we can be in danger very quickly. Of course none of us wants to be on the street, eating out of the dumpster behind the Jewel, but neither do we want to be so fat and happy that we forget to be on watch for the return of our king and our entry into our true kingdom.**

**In my work with Lutheran Child and Family Services, I have had the opportunity to speak with people who live on the edge of survival. Sometimes they are homeless. Usually they have no transportation and most have minimal medical insurance if they have any. And always, day to day survival is a struggle with which they contend. But here's the thing. They have amazing faith in God – not fluffy, happy, oh isn't life wonderful faith. No, these people have gone hungry for days at a time. They have seen loved ones shot in the street. They have had to take their children into the restroom of the McDonalds to get them ready for school. And yet, they speak of their certainty of Jesus's love for them and look for his return with great expectation.**

**Something I have noticed about such people is that they do not become so apathetic as we do. They do not assume that life will be easy tomorrow. They stay on watch! They are on guard, knowing that this world is dangerous and hostile towards God's people.**

**They know that the Lord will return for them but they do not know when and until he does, we are on watch.**

**Our comfort comes from St. Paul. He says, "if God is for us, who can be against us?" We are supposed to struggle in this life. God knows that we will struggle, but here's the good news. We got friends in high places! More precisely, we have a friend in the highest place. No matter what struggle we face, God is in control. But, if you are blessed, do not let your comfort cause you to forget that what matters is what is yet to come. Just as Satan can use want and need to distract us from God, he will also use our comfortable life to lure us into a stupor. In fact, he is more successful with those who have much. Think about how easy it becomes to forget about God when you have everything you need and then some. That's why Jesus warned us that the love of money was the root of all evil.**

**Everything you have can be taken from you in an instant. When we have more at risk, we can become distracted from God. Wealthy people worry about the stock market and the value of their rental properties. We worry about the 600 bucks we have hidden in the fake spam can at the back of the cabinet. We us can be on watch for the wrong things and we can get pretty sleepy about the things that matter.**

**As 2017 rolls in, stay awake. Stay watchful. Be thankful for the multitude of blessings the Lord has poured out upon you, but, at the same time, remember that it is only because he is for us that we can truly enjoy anything we have. Only because we have a friend in the highest place do we have our eternity secured and that is why we never have to despair when earthly blessings are sparse, nor do we get distracted when earthly blessings are plentiful. Our only goal is to enter paradise and be in paradise for eternity. So regardless of the level of blessings we are experiencing, we commit to hearing, reading and studying his word. We commit to remembering that we are the Baptized children of God and we commit to receiving his body and blood as frequently as possible as we stay awake and watch for him to return!**