

SERMON - THE 4TH SUNDAY IN ADVENT - 18 DECEMBER 2011
St. John's Anglican Church, Greensboro, North Carolina
The Rt. Rev. Peter Brewer OSB/Cn

O LORD, raise up, we pray thee, thy power, and come among us, and with great might succour us; that whereas, through our sins and wickedness, we are sore let and hindered in running the race that is set before us, thy bountiful grace and mercy may speedily help and deliver us;

Over these last few Sundays, the Sundays of Advent we have heard along with the Collect of the Day, the Collect for Advent admonishing us *ALMIGHTY God, give us grace that we may cast away the works of darkness, and put upon us the armour of light.*

This theme of preparation, of preparing ourselves for the coming of Christ permeates the entire Advent Season and is the theme, the reason for Advent.

Today, we hear in the Collect that because of our sins and wickedness we are not able to accomplish the task of preparation and we pray to God to speedily help and deliver us.

Believe me, this has nothing to do with not having your Christmas shopping or cooking done already.

The question is. "Are you ready? Are you ready to meet God, face to face? Have we put off the works of darkness and put on the armour of light?"

We are so used to "doing it ourselves" that it seems almost incomprehensible that we cannot do enough on our own to be ready when our Lord comes back.

We are sore let and hindered in running the race that is set before us. Through our sins and wickedness, we are sore let and hindered in running the race that is set before us.

Do you remember three legged races, those foot races where the two contestants had their

common side legs tied together and competed with others likewise tied to each other.

If you remember, most of those races ended generally in a disaster.

Think about that for a minute. Isn't that what we are talking about this morning? Aren't we trying to run a race with one of our legs tied to our sins? There's no way we can win. There is no way we can win on our own.

But what did Jesus tell us about salvation when questioned about how a rich man could enter the Kingdom of Heaven? Matthew 19:26 (KJV) *But Jesus beheld them, and said unto them, With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible.*

But with God all things are possible.

There is a catch in all this, you realize. God will give us his *grace and mercy* and will *speedily help and deliver us*, but there is a catch. We have to let him.

We have to let Him take over, to run the show. We have to let Him direct our lives, not us.

We have to come to the realization that life is bigger than what we can control, that we need God to run it for us.

Without the light of Jesus Christ in our lives, we are in darkness. We don't need Judgment Day. If we do not have God running our lives, we are already damned, we are already in outer darkness.

If we are attempting to work out our own salvation without God directing us, we have already lost the race.

And that takes commitment, a commitment that even lies beyond our own ability to make

on our on.

God calls us out of the darkness of our own souls, God calls us out of the darkness into the Light, the Light as Saint John tells us John 1:1-5 (KJV) *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. [2] The same was in the beginning with God. [3] All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. [4] In him was life; and the life was the light of men. [5] And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.*

And again, John 8:12 (KJV) *Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.*

It is out of the Darkness of our own lives that Jesus calls us, calls us into the Light of Salvation.