

SERMON - THE 4<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY OF ADVENT - 21 DECEMBER 2008  
St. John's Anglican Church, Greensboro, North Carolina

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***Philip. 4:5-6 (KJV)***

*Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand. <sup>6</sup>Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.*

Or as a modern translation, the English Standard Version, would put it, Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; <sup>6</sup>do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.

Lilianne and I, as most of you know, feed birds. Part of our morning routine is to put some Nut and Fruit Mix and some raw peanuts on a section of our deck rail. As soon as our local feathered friends discover the feast, there is this feeding frenzy with the Jays streaking in to steal the peanuts from under the beaks of the other birds. This is followed by our two resident squirrels, Hoover and Oreck, who come and vacuum up what is left so it will not be wasted.

During the feeding frenzy it is every bird for itself. There is no thought in the slightest about sharing or moderation.

In this little story there are two morals, two points to consider and those two points are totally opposite but related.

The first is that the birds have no thought about tomorrow, the future; that there is no need to put some aside for any time there might not be enough. They have faith that whatever or whomever puts that food out there will do again on the next day. They have complete faith that there will be that food there for them again.

The other moral is that there is no moderation in their consumption of the feed. They

will eat until it is for all practical purposes, gone. They will run over each other in their greed to consume the most food. Fights break out. Smaller birds are driven off. It is bird eat bird.

We, as Christians, are told to be moderate in our behavior. We are told that God will provide for our needs and that we should not be anxious about what we will eat or what we will wear. We are told to ask God for our needs.

We are seeing today what has happening in the world when there is no moderation, no reasonableness, when the forces of rampant consumerism go unchecked.

We are seeing today the results of a global economy which was built on the sand of immoderation, instant gratification and greed rather than on the rock of Christian moderation.

Some of these effects are financial, resulting in the loss of life savings, resulting in the loss of employment, resulting in the loss of businesses. Other of these effects are in the agricultural sector resulting in hunger, famine and potential starvation for millions of people.

We of the industrialized nations are watching our money, our wealth, disappear. Those in subsistence nations are watching their ability to feed themselves disappear. All due to our insistence that they adopt a free market agricultural system rather than the proven and successful food security agricultural model they had been using.

Advent is a time of reflection, a time when and where we should be reflecting on how we as Christians, as followers of Jesus Christ should live and how our lives impact on others some who are half a world away, some of whom are a half a mile away.

In either case, Christians are called to higher standard than the world, God's standard, and our actions or lack thereof not only affect ourselves but all others.

Thomas Merton wrote in his book, Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander, “In losing touch with being and thus with God, we have fallen into a senseless idolatry of production and consumption for their own sakes. We have renounced the act of being and plunged ourselves into process for its own sake.”

Esther de Waal wrote in A Life Giving Way, “If we are foolish enough to let avarice into our hearts, it will be an insatiable tyrant.”

This is what has happened to our global, our national, our state and our local economies. We have let avarice into our collective commercial and personal hearts. We have let the drive to consume run unchecked when there was no basis for it other than credit, easy credit, to sustain it for far too many years.

As Christians, we have failed in our task in setting a moral tone in the marketplace. We have abdicated our place as those who should set the example of moderate living of living within our means. It is time for us to begin to have our say. Not the multi-national corporations.

Today, many people have had to reassess their priorities and their resources, a process that many people should have done years ago. We should never ever as a nation and as individuals allow those whose only God is Mammon, greed, to control our lives.

Even though the rest of the world can go mad, can spend themselves into economic slavery, we do not have to. We can live careful, moderate and sober life as we should do as Christians.

There is no one holding a gun to our heads to make us do otherwise.