

“Swimming Against the Tide”

Message by DD Adams

Providence United Methodist Church

PACK 369 SUNDAY

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Today’s lesson is taken from the book of Romans, chapter 12, verses 1 and 2. I’ll be reading from Eugene Peterson’s translation, *The Message*. So here’s what I want you to do, God helping you: Take your everyday, ordinary life—your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around life—and place it before God as an offering. Embracing what God does for you is the best thing you can do for him.

Don’t become so well-adjusted to your culture that you fit into it without even thinking. Instead, fix your attention on God. You’ll be changed from the inside out. Readily recognize what he wants from you, and quickly respond to it. Unlike the culture around you, always dragging you down to its level of immaturity, God brings the best out of you, develops well-formed maturity in you. This is God’s word for God’s people. Thanks be to God.

Let’s pray. God bless the reading, hearing, understanding, and doing of your word today. Give ears that hear and hearts to receive. Amen.

What would a tube of toothpaste look like if I squeezed all the paste out of it? Let’s try it. Okay, this is what we have left. What do you think? Do we still have the shape we started with? No way! The tube looks ALL messed up. That’s how we can feel when people are trying to squeeze us into a mold we don’t want to be. We want good influences and good character, but we feel pressured. We feel pushed around, and our conscience is saying “no” to us.

It might be someone who tries to convince others to do wrong or to sway their thinking and actions. You can feel like this tube of toothpaste—all squeezed into this messed up shape. You don't want to make wrong choices, and God and Scouting teaches you right thinking and actions.

When we follow God, do good things, and adopt scouting values, we find sometimes we're swimming against the tide. And it's hard swimming against the tide. You feel pressure to do what some of the other kids are doing. And everyone wants to feel as though they fit in, but not at the cost of hurting someone.

There will always be pressure to conform to what the majority wants you to do. But being a Scout and a follower of God, you're called to swim against the tide. You have to know what you believe and maintain who you want to be as a person. If you stand strong against those who pressure you, and when you resist that pressure and do what's right, you'll become a stronger person.

Take a look at the fish on the front cover. Oh my goodness. This fish is swimming against the tide! We all know it's a lot harder to swim against the tide than to swim in the direction of the current! You get a lot stronger because you're opposing the natural direction of the water. Take a look at this fish on the front cover; he's a fish of a different color. He feels like he's alone sometimes, but throughout his life's journey he will find others who are like himself. And if you look hard enough, you will find exactly what you're looking for in life! To be strong and have good character is worth it.

Let's call this fish on the front cover "Golden Boy." The great thing about Golden Boy is that he makes decisions that don't hurt himself and others. He creates a positive influence in the world. Others may judge and criticize him for being a goody two shoes—that'll always happen—so what.

When you choose to do your duty to God and your country and to obey the Scout Law; helping people at all times and keeping yourself physically strong, mentally awake and morally straight—this is when you're the happiest! When you follow God the best comes out of you, and you develop a well-formed maturity. Swimming against the tide, like Golden Boy is doing, comes from a strength that's inside of you; it comes from what you believe. They're the ones that become the strong leaders.

Most of us know God isn't interested in us just *looking* like a goody two shoes. External appearance means very little if your heart isn't where it needs to be. God is concerned with us having a good heart, and wants us to feel a sense of duty in our community and at home with our families.

Let me tell you a story. A flock of wild geese were flying south for the winter. One goose looked down and noticed some geese that stuck around a farm by a pond. He noticed they had plenty of grain to eat all the time. Life seemed relatively easy for them. So the goose flew down and hung out with these geese until spring. He enjoyed the free food, but he decided he'd rejoin his flight of geese when they went north again.

When spring came, the goose heard his friends overhead and flew up to join them, but he had grown a bit lazy and was a few pounds heavier from all of the seed he chowed down. Flying was difficult, so he decided to spend one more season on the farm and then rejoin the geese on their next winter migration.

When the geese flew south the following fall, the goose flapped his wings a little, but he just kept eating his grain. He'd simply lost interest. The moral of the story is that any kind of living that seems easy doesn't last. Eventually it'll catch up with you and probably hurt you. Life is meant to be challenging, so we need to stay prepared and work hard and not let go of the disciplines we've learned.

The goose that joined the farm lost his strength, his independence, and his disciplines. And it wasn't long before he was turned into soup. Hmmm, I guess all that easy living didn't pay off in the long run. It's important to continue in Scouting and nurturing your relationship with God. Allow yourself learn around a group that cares about others and leaders that are strong and provide support and accountability. We never want to lose a sense of the need to live out a shared mission for the world to improve it and make a positive difference.

Scouting and God give us strength to go beyond the walls of the church to meet the needs of others and to make the world a better place. There's something about being around positive people that makes a big difference in us. The positive influence builds up in us over time and makes us better people. And we tend to think more about the choices we make.

I guess my message to you Scouts today is this. Don't allow the lazy group of geese to influence your living and think there's an easy life out there. It doesn't exist. And don't let that school of fish that's swimming in the wrong direction drag you down. Swim with Golden Boy, swim against the current, and make choices in your life that show the strength and courage that God and Scouting are teaching you.

Let's pray. God of all creation, work in us a continual need to acknowledge that our strength to do right comes from you and what we've been taught. Help us to nurture that strength through Scouting and our continued faith in God. Help us lean on the leaders in our lives that hold us accountable for our behavior. Bless the leaders that are here and the ones that aren't, bless our guests, bless the Scouts, and bless this church that we might continue to move in the direction you want us to go. Amen.