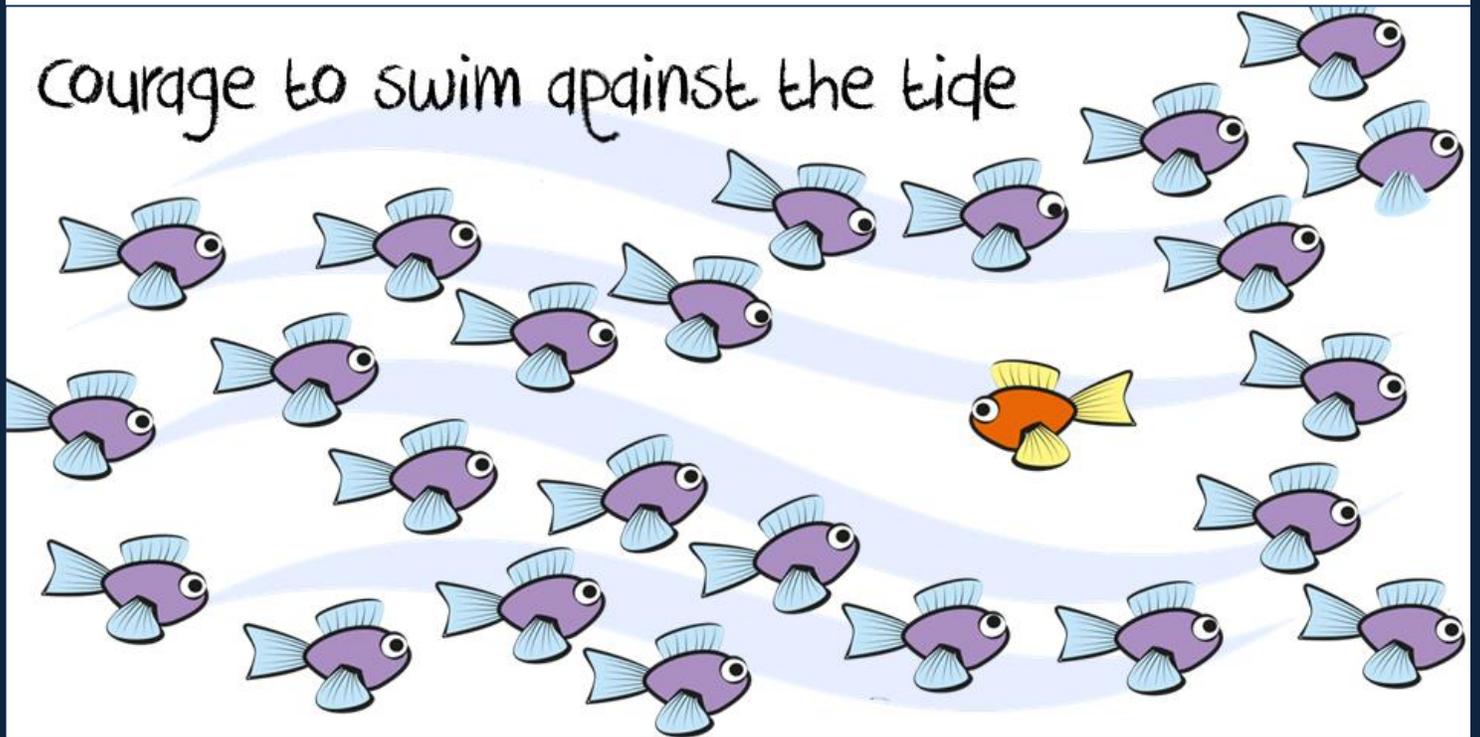


Courage to swim against the tide



The following document is a rough copy of Pastor Drost's sermon notes
of his message, preached August 6th, 2017

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I was having a lunch appointment at the downtown Abbey and a painting on display by Chrissie Park-MacNeil caught my attention called: "Against the current" (It's for sale!). It caught my attention because of my sermon title for today: "**Courage to swim against the tide**".



✚ We spent most of our vacation at the family cottage on Maquapit Lake. I have a small 12-foot aluminum boat with a 20 Hp Mercury motor.

- It's fairly light so it travels reasonably fast, especially with the wind at your back! It's easier to go with the wind!
- But sometimes at Maquapit Lake the wind can really pick up
- Going against the wind, you are beating against the waves and it get quite uncomfortable. It's easier to go in the direction of the waves!

If you are going to follow Jesus, at times (not always! But at times...), you are going to travel against the social currents, popular opinions, secular culture.

**Jesus invites us on a countercultural journey... a different way to live our life!
A different narrative. ARE YOU GOING TO FOLLOW JESUS?**

✚ **Matthew 5:1-16 (NKJV)** Please stand for the reading of the Gospel...

This is by far one of the most famous sermons of Jesus. Often called "*The Sermon on the Mount*". He is giving this sermon during a time of **huge political unrest** (those listening were living at a time when Israel had been taken against their will by the Roman empire. Frustrated and humiliated they wanted a hero, a strong leader that would rally the troops to fight and be victorious against these despicable Roman Gentile "dogs" (their word, not my word!) ...

"Seeing the multitudes, He went up on a mountain, and when He was seated His disciples came to Him. Then He opened His mouth and taught them, saying: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled. Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God. Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. "Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you. "You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men. "You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven." Matthew 5:1-16 (NKJV)



✚ My wife and I decided to do the Cabot trail for our 40th anniversary. We drove the first day to Port Hastings (Just as you cross into the Country of Cape Breton!) ...

- I called ahead and found this little motel (Said it was 3½ stars)
I should have clued in when in the advertisement it said, “toilet paper included”!
- “Betty come, I show you room”
- Two remotes... (Wait a minute, I’m the master of the remote!)

In many ways, for the first 100 years, Christianity held the remote controls of our Canadian society. The “church” dictated what was morally right and morally wrong, what was allowed in the schools, what was not.

☒ Prayer in the schools... click! ☒ Sunday shopping... click! ☒ Marriage only between one man and one woman... click! ☒ Nudity on TV... click! ☒ They even had clergy as part of the censorship and ratings of movies... certain movies were not permitted!

In 1918 **Woman's Christian Temperance Union of Canada** got a hold of the “Canadian moral remote control” and (click!) prohibited alcohol sales in Canada (with the strong support of the Baptists, Methodists, Presbyterians and Congregationalists.

Calling yourself a Christian, showing up to church on Sundays, quoting passages from the Bible was popular, politicians were bold about their Christian values, if, of course, you wanted to be elected!

When you swore in court, you did it with your hand on the Bible...

Christianity was the main stream of society...

Christians were swimming in the same direction as the rest of society

✚ But then, about 50 years ago, Christianity lost its remote-control rights! We no longer managed the channels... by the late 80s early 90s Canada became a secular society and Christianity became an optional channel you could pick in a very pluralistic and secular society.

Why did we lose the Christian remote control in Canada?

Probably the same reason you lose it at home:

(1) You abuse your power

...do you know any **remote-control bullies?**

...constantly “clicking” and changing channels

(2) You fall asleep

So why do you think we lost our remote-control rights in Canada?

1) It can't be that we abused our power. Christians would never do that!

- I often wonder what the Anglican Christian priest would have prayed over the British army just before they attacked the French
- On the other side of the battle line what would the Catholic Priest (also a Christian) have said in his prayer over French Army before they attacked the British



- I remember talking to a man from St. Mary's First Nation who remembers when he was a boy going to church and only the white people were allowed on the main floor of the church while all the (as they called them!) Indians had to go up to the balcony.

I wonder why so many people have rejected Christianity in Canada!

- 2) **Maybe we lost our remote-control rights in Canada as Christians because we fell asleep.** I do think that perhaps there's some truth in that. Many Christians and Christian Churches have become passive, lethargical, distracted, focused on selfish things.

But here is the thing, when Jesus spoke the sermon we just read, they did not have the "remote control" of society, the Romans did! They were under Roman Rule, pagan laws that permitted a level of sexual immorality that would be totally unimaginable to us today, human abuse, slavery, child prostitution, idolatry, injustice, bribery, abuse of power... you name it! **And it is in the middle of this social environment that Jesus preaches his message:**

"Seeing the multitudes, He went up on a mountain, and when He was seated His disciples came to Him. Then He opened His mouth and taught them..."

This is a teaching for His disciples not for the multitudes. You cannot expect our secular society to live by these principles. This is how the Church lives (Or should live).

We are part of a different narrative!

The principles he teaches in the next three chapters (5, 6, 7) are the principles of how we as disciples of Jesus are to live in a culture that does not follow Jesus.

How to behave in a society that has the remote control!

How to courageously be a countercultural follower of Jesus

How to courageously swim against the tide.

He said: "Blessed are the poor in spirit"

This word "blessed" (Gr. *makarios*) is a very interesting choice of word for Jesus to use. In the times of Jesus, the Greek language was used. In the Greek language, *makarios* referred to the gods.

The blessed ones were the gods who lived in some other world in a state of happiness and contentment beyond all cares, problems and worries of the ordinary person.

To be blessed, you had to be a god.

This word also was used to refer to the elite, the upper crust of society, the wealthy people. Those who had riches and power, people above the cares, problems and worries of the lesser folk -- the nobodies, who had to constantly struggle, worry and work in life.

So, to be blessed in the culture of the time Jesus spoke this, you had to be rich and powerful.

Jesus takes the word and flips it upside-down:

It is not the elite who are blessed.

It is not the rich and powerful who are blessed.

It is not the high and mighty who are blessed.

It is not the people living in expensive houses who are blessed.



Rather, Jesus says that God's blessings on the lowly: the poor, the hungry, the thirsty, the meek, the mourning.

He said: "Blessed are the poor in spirit" for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn... Blessed are the meek... Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness... Blessed are the merciful... Blessed are the pure in heart... Blessed are the peacemakers... Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake... Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you (when they mock you), and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake.
Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven...

What? Are you kidding? This is TOTALLY opposite of what the culture of the time was telling them AND is totally opposite to what our culture tells us today! **Countercultural!**

If your going to follow Jesus you are going to be heading in a different direction than popular thought and culture

AND, all those who follow Jesus will encounter hostility

Blessed are you **WHEN** they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake.

It's "when" not "if"!

"All who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution." 2 Timothy 3:12 (NKJV)

The message says it this way...

"Anyone who wants to live all out for Christ is in for a lot of trouble; there's no getting around it."
2 Timothy 3:12 (The Message)

Jesus is not trying to give you a sales pitch... "follow me and it's all going to be fantastic!"

Illustration: Lady at the store... "these pants will wrinkle a lot"

BUT, Jesus IS telling us that we will be blessed regardless...

Rejoice and be **exceedingly glad**, for great is your reward in heaven...

If you are going to follow Jesus you will have to swim against the secular tide... but you will find true **BLESSING!**

The way of Christ is countercultural!

– **the poor in spirit (those who are humble) get the kingdom**

Who wants to be a lowly person? Who wants to be stooped down? Most spend their lives trying to climb the ladder of importance. We want to be noticed, respected, recognised. But, lowly – humble...

This runs countercultural to the normal understanding of being blessed. (all through this message Jesus calls us to courageously follow Him countercultural to the popular tide) ... down farther in this same sermon:



“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you.” Matthew 5:43–44 (NKJV)

Remember the context, the Romans surrounding them and oppressing them!

It’s in this same sermon that Jesus gives us the **Golden Rule**...

“In everything, do to others what you would have them do to you.” Matthew 7:12a (NIV)

Do unto others as you would want them to do unto you! Treat others the way you would want to be treated. Quite different than the popular rule which is: “Treat others the way they treat you”

Again, Jesus is calling us to a very different way of living! That takes courage! Courage to swim against the tide in a culture that is more and more secular and less and less Christian!

ARE YOU GOING TO FOLLOW JESUS?

Jesus said...

“You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor (It becomes dull or loses its effect), how shall it (the earth) be seasoned? It is then good for nothing.”

- Salt was a preservative (decaying food – meat)
- If we are just like the decaying world around us...
 - ...acting the same
 - ...same selfishness (self centeredness)
 - ...same arrogance
 - ...same demand for our rights
 - ...same hostility towards our enemies
 - badmouthing those who speak bad of us
 - same gossip, same attitude

What good are we?

Jesus is calling us to a very different way of living! That takes courage!

Courage to swim against the tide in a culture that is not Christian! TO BE SALT AND LIGHT

ARE YOU GOING TO FOLLOW JESUS?

