

May 30, 2021
Go With God's Flow
Proverbs 3:5
The Avowal

Today is Memorial Day Sunday, the traditional beginning of Summer. I don't know about you but I am ready for it! Even as we still need to practice caution when gathering together and moving about the country, there is an energy of spaciousness, possibility and hope that just didn't exist this time last year. It feels like we might actually get to have a summer with all the shenanigans that come with it, like swimming in the ocean, playing in the pool, or floating on the river with friends.

I am a water baby. From bath time as an infant to jumping off the diving board at the 2nd street community pool when I was just 3-years old - I have always loved being in the water. Growing up, my friends and I would spend hours in the ocean falling back into the waves and letting them carry us back to shore. Other times we would compete to see who could lay on their backs and float the longest on the calm waters of the Newport Bay. Up in the Sierra Nevada Mountains we enjoyed the challenge of crossing the fast moving current of the Stanislaus River in order to reach a giant boulder with perfectly formed spaces to lay out and warm ourselves in the sun after being in the frigid waters. That was one of my favorites! We had to start upstream a bit and then swim as hard and fast as we could to cross the current before it swept us past the boulder. When that happened - and it happened often, we would stop swimming and just let the river take us down a few yards to a shallow spot where we could stand in knee deep water before making our way back to try again.

Back at home we would try to recreate the feeling of floating in the current of a river in our pools. Two or more of us would run in a circle as fast as we could until the water began to move in the same direction creating a current. And then, on the count of three, we would all stop running, pick up our feet and enjoy floating in a circle together. You should try it this

summer. It's fun and good exercise too! Of course our parents must have known that. After a while of having fun creating a circular current from which to float, one of the parents would spontaneously shout out, "switch" and we would turn around and run in the opposite direction, pushing against the current we had just created until it changed course. It was exhausting pushing against the current (pro parenting tip!), but we could never resist the challenge to try and when we were too tired we'd just stop pushing and let ourselves float. Instinctively, we let ourselves go with the flow.

I have learned that "*go with the flow*" means many things, to many people. For some the phrase is a sign pointing toward being swept up into popular culture and pulled away from God. For others it is a state of complacency, participation in the status quo.

And for others-still this phrase describes an attitude of spiritual openness to something greater than themselves at work in the world. I want to talk to you today about going with the flow that falls in that realm. Here one leans into any given situation, open to the possibility that there might just be something to learn. Rather than fight the inevitable, one cooperates with it and discovers something about the flow and their place in it.

To clarify, the popular idiom, "go with the flow", is not a radical or new age concept. Go with the flow didn't come into our vernacular until the latter half of the twentieth century, but the idea is much older. William Shakespeare invokes the idea in his play, *Julius Caesar*, performed in 1599: "On such a full sea are we now afloat, and we must take the current when it serves, or lose our ventures." Others ascribe the imagery to Roman Emperor and stoic philosopher, Marcus Aurelius, who lived in the second century: "Time is a sort of river of passing events, and strong is its current; no sooner is a thing brought to sight than it is swept by and another takes its place, and this too will be swept away." It's no wonder Aurelius's name is attached to modern meditation practices!

Life is fleeting and ever changing. If we didn't know that before, the events of the last year certainly brought it into extraordinary emphasis. Just 18 months ago we were all going about our business, scheduling our days and planning for the future when the coronavirus pandemic stopped us in our tracks and brought with it unimaginable suffering and loss. Loss of life, loss of income, loss of contact with the people we love. The rhythm and flow of our way of being in the world was completely altered. We had to stop instead of shop. We had to Zoom instead of being in the same room and we had to isolate instead of congregate.

Sequestered at home, without the "normal" distractions of our daily busy-ness, we became more observant of the world around us. We came to see with a whole new perspective, the current in which we swam; one that maintained a social structure we knew to be unjust but felt incapable of changing. The COVID-19 pandemic has brought social and racial injustice and inequity to the forefront of public health, education and employment. The events around George Floyd's murder brought our complacency and places of privilege into sharp focus. We can no longer look away from the acts of violence perpetrated against people of color. We can no longer pretend the constitutional promise that all people are created equal means equality for all. This pandemic was like a cosmic parent shouting "switch" and telling us to change course.

We are all in the same river. Yet many of us have been in the current but not in God's flow. When Corlan's Dad wanted to teach her to trust the river and herself in it - he didn't just throw her in and wish her luck. He told her to strap herself into a life vest and invited her to jump into the very waters she was afraid of. Likewise, go with the flow does not mean we simply give up and allow ourselves to be swept away by the current of status quo. We too, have a life vest with which to strap ourselves into. Brenna read about it earlier:

It's about trust. About listening for God's voice in everything you do, everywhere you go;

Darnella Frazier was just a teenager on a routine trip to the corner store for snacks when she witnessed and captured Floyd's killing with her phone. She said this about that day, "I didn't know this man from a can of paint, but I knew his life mattered, I knew that he was in pain. I knew that he was another Black man in danger with no power." Frazier wasn't out to change the world. But somehow she knew she had to be present for this man, at that moment. In an act of love she stayed to bear witness. Instinctively, she did what was just and did it with love.

The fight for justice is more than mere human activism. If it is to be sustainable it will require spiritual activism. Justice, at its best, flows from a sense of love. And God's love always flows toward justice. So, I am inviting you to jump into God's flow. To immerse yourself in it. For the flow of God is within you, within me, within all of us. And when you come to this realization you will, as Julia prayed, carry God in the deepest parts of yourself. And that is what it is going to take to embrace humanity not through our human perspective of gender, class and race. But as God sees humanity, equally created and deeply loved.

When Corlan boldly jumped into the river she found her Dad right there in the raft floating alongside her. And so it goes for all of us. We do not do this work alone! We have each other and we are accompanied by God who bears us, sustains us and partners with us to bring transformative justice to the world through loving action.

May our actions today and everyday be an out-pouring of God's love and justice for ALL God's children.

Amen.