

**Climb Ev'ry Mountain**  
**The Monroe Congregational Church, UCC**  
**Rev. Jennifer Gingras**  
**July 5, 2020**

Matthew 13:16-18, Isaiah 40:13

"The Sound of Music" opened on Broadway in November of 1959. It was an extraordinary success, running for 1,443 performances, and winning eight Tony awards. It was made into a movie starring Julie Andrews and Christopher Plummer, which opened in New York in March of 1965. The movie won 5 Academy Awards, including one for Best Picture.

The story centers on a young postulate named Maria, preparing to become a nun in the Abbey at Salzburg, Austria. Maria tries to follow the rules, but struggles. The mother abbess suspects that Maria is not ready to take her final vows, so she decides to send her out into the world to find herself, to determine the course her life should take.

And that is how she became governess to the seven Von Trapp children. You remember how quickly she won the children's trust – and later, their love and devotion? She even taught them how to sing like songbirds.

Their father, the captain, began to lower his grief-induced defenses around Maria. She helped him to begin getting to know his children, who he had emotionally shut out. Later, the family narrowly escaped arrest by the Gestapo.

So many good things happened in that family because of Maria and the love, joy and energy she shared.

In the process, Maria and Captain von Trapp began to fall in love. She didn't mean for it to happen, it just did. The problem, of course, was that the Captain was already engaged to another woman, who lashed out at Maria, shaming her into running back to the Abbey with embarrassment and fear.

Upon her return, Mother Abbess, (a wise woman), told Maria that the Abbey was never meant to be a place to hide. She said "*these walls were not built to shut out problems. You have to face them. You have to live the life you were born to live*"

So she sends Maria back to the von Trapp home to search for her dream, singing these words...

*"Climb every mountain, search high and low,  
follow every byway, every path you know.  
Climb every mountain, ford every stream,  
Follow every rainbow, 'til you find your dream.*

*A dream that will need, all the love you can give,  
Every day of your life, for as long as you live.  
Climb every mountain, ford every stream,  
follow every rainbow, 'til you find your dream."*

Did you let the lyrics sink in, just now? This song is about searching, something I think every human being has done, from time to time. We want to be happy, we want to be fulfilled. We want our lives to count for something. We don't want to come to the end and feel like we've missed an opportunity.

So what about those moments when we're not behaving in a way we were created to be? We travel down one dead end street after another, chasing what glitters and sparkles as if it will fulfill us. There is emptiness, loneliness, and anxious restlessness. Saint Augustine was known to say about these moments that *"our hearts are restless until they find their rest in God."*

It's not that most of us do so many wrong things. In fact, most of what we do is pretty good. In our search for the good life we labor, we spend time with our families, we study and pursue education, we engage in hobbies and recreation, we volunteer, we build houses and maintain them, we invest in community. We do many good things.

But in the midst of our busyness, where is the thread that pulls it all together and gives meaning to the whole? What is the core reality that gives a sense of direction and motivation and strength to pursue it?

I like to remember that the word "holy" and the word "whole" come from the same root. To be holy is to have a life made whole, where all the various parts are gathered and organized around a center. For Christians, that center is God, made known to us intimately in Jesus of Nazareth.

Mother Abbess sings that when we find our dream, that dream will need all the love we can give, every day of our life, for as long as we are alive. Once we recognize that our dream for the good life is fulfilled in our relationship with God, following in the path of Jesus, emboldened by the Holy Spirit, we may find that dream which we seek.

Now hear me, that is not meant to be INSTEAD of our commitments to our families, our careers or our pursuit of recreation. God asks for our highest allegiance, and as a result of that loyalty, all other important things in life are enhanced. We become a more loving family member, a more effective worker, a more conscientious student, and we discover that we are enjoying life more than ever before!

Let me close this meditation with a short story... an art gallery was celebrating the first anniversary of its opening. As part of the festivities, the owner borrowed some of the world's great art from the museum down the block and put it on display. A woman walked through the gallery, glanced briefly at the art, then turned to the owner and said, with a dismissive wave of her hand, "I can't see what is so great about these paintings!" Immediately he replied with "No, Madam – you can't. But don't you wish you could?"

Listen, you can climb every mountain, you can ford every stream, you can follow every rainbow and search high and low for your dream. But, if love doesn't live where you live, you may miss out. Your dream, that on which you look for meaning in life, will demand all that you've got to give. Make it count, for goodness sake! Amen.