



One Page Sermon

By Pastor Robb McCoy

July 24, 2022

Worship Every Sunday at 9:30 AM

The Gospel According to Broadway: The Sound of Music (Philippians 4:4-14)

By any measure, Rodgers and Hammerstein's *The Sound of Music* is one of the most successful plays in American history. The Broadway musical won five Tony Awards in 1960, including Best Musical. The film adaptation from 1965 won five Oscars, including Best Picture. It became one of the highest grossing films of all time. Depending on the estimates, it is either the sixth or third highest grossing film of all-time when adjusting for inflation. Only *Star Wars* and *Gone With the Wind* are higher.

There might have been a secret behind all of that success. Mary Martin, the first woman who played Maria on stage, played a role in the creative process of the musical. She was a friend of Sister Gregory, a nun and drama teacher at what is now Dominican University in Chicago. Sister Gregory and Martin exchanged letters that helped shape the character of Maria. The contents of one of her letters even found their way into the script of the play and movie.

When reviewing the musical, Sr. Gregory told Martin in a letter, "The whole purpose of life, it seems to me," she wrote, "is pin-pointed in Maria's struggle to choose between two vocations. Like every adult human being, she must find the answer to the question: 'What does God want me to do with my life? How does He wish me to spend my love?'"

While Sister Gregory was right about Maria's choice, I think you can say that choices were at the heart of the entire musical. How does Captain choose to spend his love on his children? Does he spend it on strict discipline and order, or does he allow himself to spend it on music and joy as well?

Does the Captain report to duty with the Nazis and choose a life of comfort and status, or do they risk their lives in the name of integrity and freedom and try to find safety over the mountains?

Liesel, the oldest daughter, has to choose between love of Rolf and family. Rolf has to choose between love Liesl and duty to his commanders. All of these choices, and Sister Abbess sings about this choice in her amazing song, "Climb Every Mountain." Her answer: the choices you make must be shaped



Audra McDonald (left) and Carrie Underwood (right) as Mother Abbess and Maria, respectively, from The Sound of Music Live TV adaptation from 2015.

by love. And once you make that choice based on love, do everything in your power to pursue it. Love is the driving force behind all that is good in the world. Love guides the von Trapp family to joy, healing, music, and ultimately freedom.

In Paul's letter to the Philippians, he is giving them a similar choice. They had many disputes and struggles. There were many choices in front of them that were in fact, quite similar to the choices that confronted the von Trapps. Did they follow their convictions and faith in God, or would they follow the comfort of cultural status quo? There were also disputes among leaders in the community, and choices about who to follow.

Paul's answer to the Philippians was much like Mother Abbess's answer to Maria. "Rejoice always! Again I say rejoice" He tells the people to choose love. He tells them to choose gentleness and kindness. He tells them to focus on all that is true, all that is holy, all that is just, all that is pure, all that is lovely, and all that is worthy of praise.

As the world was full of turmoil and fractures, both for the von Trapps and the Philippians, the answer was simple: focus on love, joy, and the beautiful and courageous sound of music.