

Sermon / 17 May 2026 / 1 Peter 4:12-14, 5:6-11 / Climb Ev'ry Mountain

Climb ev'ry mountain.
Ford ev'ry stream.
Follow ev'ry rainbow.
Till you find your dream.

Climb ev'ry mountain.

Many of you know these lyrics. “Climb Ev'ry Mountain” is an inspirational song from the musical “The Sound of Music.” In the musical, a novice nun, Maria, can't seem to find the right path for her life. She is assigned to be a governess for the gaggle of rich, musically-gifted children of a captain in the Austrian military. When things start to fall apart, Maria returns to the convent to seek guidance. The Mother Abbess offers these words of wisdom.

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I can't speak for everyone, but I bet many of us would love to run to a convent where we could hide away from the world. And perhaps the Mother Abbess would offer us some advice to help us make it through these tough times.

Today, Peter is doing his best to help us out.

In the second lesson, we heard part of a letter the apostle Peter wrote during his time in Rome. The letter was sent to Christians in several Roman provinces. These new Christians were facing hostility, slander and suffering because of their faith.

Not unlike the Mother Abbess singing “Climb Ev'ry Mountain” to Maria, Peter is trying to comfort these believers in the resurrected Christ...to encourage them to believe...to hold on to their faith...give them hope...remind them of who they are in in whom they believe.

That is difficult to do when it seems the entire world is against you.

Peter writes: “Do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal that is taking place among you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. Like a roaring lion, your adversary the devil, prowls around looking for someone to devour.”

It will be different for all of us...or perhaps we'll have more in common than we think. What is your “fiery ordeal” today? What is testing you today? What strange things are going on in your life? Who or what is your lion...prowling around waiting to devour you?

Is it impatience and anxiety about our own faith community being uprooted in a gracious, yet unfamiliar space?

Is it an addiction?

Maybe it's a general dissatisfaction with your job or our family or your life. Perhaps that dream you've got is illusive and seems unattainable.

Maybe the news of states doing away with voting rights and attempting to return our country to the Jim Crow era scares the living daylights out of you.

Or are those prowling lions the blatant racists, misogynists, xenophobic, homophobic and transphobic politicians who think anyone who isn't a rich, straight, white male should have fewer rights than they have.

Peter's advice to these Christians experiencing fiery ordeals and fending off those prowling lions is to hold steadfast in your faith...know that what you believe is right and good and true...believe that...because your siblings in Christ all over the world are dealing with the same kind of problems.

And about those lions... Peter says “Resist them.”

Resist them.

You know, “The Sound of Music” isn't just a story about Maria singing her way through life and finding her place in the world. My friends, “The Sound of Music is a story of resistance! It takes place in 1938...right before Anschluss – when Nazi Germany annexed Austria right before the start of World War II.

Captain Von Trapp is ordered by the Nazis to be one of their commanding officers. He refuses. He resists. He resists the forces of dictatorship and tyranny.

We must do the same thing today.

In today's letter, Peter concludes that we must need humble ourselves to God. We need to do what we know is God's word and follow the teachings of Jesus. And when we are through this suffering...these fiery ordeals....or maybe even right smack dab in the middle of them.... Christ will restore, support, strengthen, and establish us.

Indeed, we do not have to fear because we know who we follow. We know who we believe. And we also know we have each other to restore, support, strengthen, and establish this community....to help each other.

And now I must return to my opening show tune.

"Climb Ev'ry Mountain" is usually sung by a soprano of a certain age. The Mother Abbess is most often portrayed as a stately, wise, lyric or operatic soprano who encourages Marias with this inspirational song.

But a few years ago, my husband and I saw a production of "The Sound of Music" that broke this mold. Mother Abbess was a little more – full bodied...a little more direct...a little more Gospel than opera.

The lyrics didn't change, but the attitude did...the song became directive. Maria, stop feeling sorry for yourself. Stop talking about the problems you encounter and DO something about them. Those kids need you. That captain needs you. The world needs you. So, get up, get out of these safe walls, and climb that darn mountain.

Ev'ry mountain! This belting nun made it clear there wasn't going to be one, single mountain to climb, only one stream to cross, only one rainbow to follow....there were going to be many obstacles. So you better get ready and get to it.

This Mother Abbess roared! A dream that will take all the love you can give. Every day of your life for as long as you live.

We feared that fake stained-glass window behind her would surely shatter as she bellowed instructions on not taking the easy way out.

Climb ev'ry mountain. Ford ev'ry stream. Follow ev'ry rainbow.
Till we find OUR dream.

Our dream of God's kingdom come....on earth as it is in heaven. Where everyone is valued, respected, and loved. Where all people are treated with dignity. Where all God's beloved children are equal.

With this new interpretation, "Climb Ev'ry Mountain" wasn't only an inspirational ballad to close out Act 1, it became a call to action. It was a challenge. It was a dare.

Our scripture....our prayers....our hymns are not only for comfort and encouragement. They are also a call to action...a challenge...a dare.

And in the musical, this advice becomes more than a metaphor of climbing every mountain at the end. Maria and the von Trapp family physically climb the Swiss Alps to resist....to escape the Nazis.

And this is what Peter tells us today. Take action. There will be trials and lions and difficult times. But God will restore, support, strengthen, and establish us. We are part of this faith community so that we can restore, support, strengthen, and establish each other.

Don't give up. Be alert. Be ready. God calls us to action. There is no time to hide. Get out there and get it done.

Let's climb together.