

The Reverend Marjo Anderson

**Reading for Revised Common Lectionary –Pentecost 13
Matthew 16:21-28**

**30 August 2020
Salem, Bridgeport**

“It’s Not So Hard When You’re in Love”

Pastor Marjo: ...The “good news” of the Lord! Thanks be to God!...

I don’t know about you but that doesn’t sound like good news to me. I’ve been thinking about it this week and denying myself? I have trouble denying myself chocolate! But denying myself more than that? Being willing to go to the cross, being willing to give up my life? I don’t know. Its not very sellable. It doesn’t sound like very good news. So I thought I would talk to my friend today and see what she thought.

There she is! Hey Jeanette, how are yuh? Jeanette? Jeanette? Are you there?

Jeanette: Hi, hi, hi, Pastor Marjo....

Pastor Marjo: Hi. Were you listening to the gospel? Jeanette?

Jeanette: Yeh! Yeh? Yeh? Yeh? Hello.

Pastor Marjo: You heard the gospel today?

Jeanette: The gospel today? Uh...no...no...

Pastor Marjo: It’s about denying oneself and taking up one’s cross... and I was really having difficulty with that... because it doesn’t sound like it’s very fun... and I was just wondering if... you know... we could maybe talk about it? Jeanette?

Jeanette: Yes, Pastor Marjo....

Pastor Marjo: Did you not get enough sleep last night?

Jeanette: No. No, I haven’t really been able to sleep. I haven’t been able to eat...

Pastor Marjo: Jeanette? You’re not acting like yourself. You do look happy...

Jeanette: I am!

Pastor Marjo: You actually look really, really happy!

Jeanette: I am!

Pastor Marjo: Is there like something to be happy about? I mean, I could use some good news today myself....

Jeanette: Yeh.... Kind of hard to explain though! *(laughs)* Ummm... I just can’t eat. I can’t sleep.... I’m... *(laughs)* oh, wait a minute! *(Notices she has on a sock over her shoe)* Oh, wait a minute!

Pastor Marjo: Oh, my goodness! You have a sock on one foot and a shoe on the other! What’s going on?!

Jeanette: I don’t know. Wait let me fix this. *(She puts another sock on top of the sock on her foot.)*

Pastor Marjo: Jeanette? I think you want the other foot....

Jeanette: What’s wrong with the other foot???

Pastor Marjo: Jeanette! I'm seriously worried about you! Are you okay?

Jeanette: Oh, wait.... wait.... hold it.... *(laughs)* I don't need any socks on! *(laughs)*

Pastor Marjo: No, no, you have shoes on.

Jeanette: Oh, boy....

Pastor Marjo: I don't know. Maybe I should call the parish nurse over here!

(She takes the socks off)

Pastor Marjo: Do you want to tell me what's going on?

Jeanette: I do, but I don't.... *(laughs again)*

Pastor Marjo: You do but you don't. Ok. you look really happy!

Jeanette: I am! OK. Ok So... OK...All right...All right... All right... But wait, give me a minute because I just need to check this recipe book.

Pastor Marjo: You need to check a recipe book?!

Jeanette: Yeh I've got to make a special A special something I don't know what But something special I Gotta make

Pastor Marjo: But Jeanette I wanted to talk to you about this gospel lesson because it really has me..

Jeanette: Wait! Wait! Wait! I'm tryin to find something... I have to make something special... sauted zucchini with garlic butter? No. Ah... gluten-free zucchini brownies! That might work!

Pastor Marjo: Are you going to make them for me?

Jeanette: No. Are you kidding? No! This is not for you!

Pastor Marjo: This is not for me? Ok.

Jeanette: this Is for somebody special,

Pastor Marjo: somebody specia?

Jeanette: Somebody special. Yeh, I Think I'm going to make those gluten free brownies

Pastor Marjo: Oh! Wait a minute... Somebody special, you haven't been able to eat, you haven't been able to sleep, you're not like... Jeanette?

Jeanette: (Sigh)

Pastor Marjo: OK! You got to tell me! You gotta tell me!

Jeanette: Ok, so wait, Do you know what this is? (Flapping a piece of paper)

Pastor Marjo: A piece of paper.

Jeanette: It's more than a piece of paper!

Pastor Marjo: Ok. There's writing on it?

Jeanette: Yes!

Pastor Marjo: It must be good!

Jeanette: It is!

Pastor Marjo: You look really, really, really happy!

Jeanette: I can't read it!

Pastor Marjo: Oh, come on! Come on! You're teasing me!

Jeanette: I think that's probably why I was up all last night, couldn't go to sleep, couldn't have any breakfast, I just haven't had any appetite. Okay, I'll read it.

Pastor Marjo: Okay.

Jeanette: But you have to promise not to tell!

Pastor Marjo: Cross my heart and hope to die. That was the gospel, I think!

Jeanette: It says, "My dear, sweet Snookums".... *(laughs)*

Pastor Marjo: "My dear, sweet Snookums"?

Jeanette: Yes!

Pastor Marjo: Okay....

Jeanette: "I love you..." *(she squeals with delight and bounces all over the place)*

Pastor Marjo: Oh my gosh! There's somebody special, and...oh my gosh!

Jeanette: I can't eat! And I can't sleep! I'm just thinking about him all the time! He calls me Snookums and I call him my "Purple Eggplant"!

(They both crack up)

Pastor Marjo: You call him your "Purple Eggplant"?!

Jeanette: Yes! Because we were at this carnival and he won this for me and... oh my goodness! I just call him my Purple Eggplant. And he calls me his Snookums. *(giggles)*

Pastor Marjo: I think... I think... I think... you're in love!

Jeanette: Oh, yes, it is so wonderful! It's absolutely wonderful! I don't even care if I eat. I don't care if I sleep. I don't care if I see anybody else as long as I've got this *(waves letter)*. And as long as I can hold onto this *(squeezes purple eggplant doll)*. And when he calls me, he plays music for me and right before I go to sleep he plays our favorite song, but I usually don't hear it, because I'm so tired I fell asleep, but he calls me first thing in the morning and let me know how he's doing And asks me how did I sleep and asks me what I'm gonna do for the day.

Pastor Marjo: Who is this guy? And how long have you known him?

Jeanette: I haven't known him that long.

Pastor Marjo: No?

Jeanette: No. But I know he loves me and I love him. We're not going to get married, though.

Pastor Marjo: No?

Jeanette: No! That's too much of a commitment.

Pastor Marjo: But if you love him...?

Jeanette: Well let's just say I love being "in love". Let's just say I love the dating, I love to going out to dinner, I love to talking on the phone, I love the little love notes, I just love being in love! But no commitment!

Pastor Marjo: No commitment?

Jeanette: Oh, no! That's asking too much!

Pastor Marjo: But is he committed to you?

Jeanette: I never asked him and I'm actually afraid to ask him because he might want to talk about getting married and I'm like, "that's not in my plan". Marriage is too much. Being married is like you have to try to please your spouse, do you things to make them happy, and that's...

Pastor Marjo: Well isn't that a good thing?

Jeanette: It might be, but I don't want to take that chance.

Pastor Marjo: But isn't being in love mean "for better for worse, for richer for poor, in sickness and in health?"

Jeanette: That's not for me though. I just love being in love. I love him when he calls and sings to me and plus I love the little love notes! It's like he cares about me. I love that and that's it. I don't want him to say, "Will you spend the rest of your life with me?" I'm like, "Are you crazy?" No, I don't want to have that.

Pastor Marjo: But don't you want to have this kind of relationship go on and on and on? Don't you want to feel like this forever?

Jeanette: I do. And just the dating part of it makes me feel so nice. It's exciting! You mean to tell me though that there could be something more?

Pastor Marjo: I think so... I mean, if you really, really, really love somebody, don't you want to spend the rest of your life with them?

Jeanette: You know, sometimes I think about that. I think about how happy I am with him just dating and just hearing his voice and sometimes I think what it would be like if maybe there was something more than just the dating, something more to the concept of just being in love. But sometimes when I think about that, it makes me sad. So I go back to being in love with dating.

Pastor Marjo: So what are you afraid of?

Jeanette: I think I'm afraid that I'll disappoint him, that he'll see all my faults, all my failures, and then he wouldn't love me anymore, and I don't know what I would do if that were to happen. And I'm not really sure if I can trust his love for me or if my love isn't enough for him.

Pastor Marjo: So you're kind of afraid that if you make this commitment, it's be the wrong thing and he won't be there for you in the end, so there's a risk?

Jeanette: Yes, there is. Even though I know life is filled with risk. So I'm wondering if maybe I should take one....

Pastor Marjo: Well, you seem to be really in love with him.

Jeanette: I am. I am. I think he really cares about me. I think he's interested. Do you know when I think about it, he IS interested in me. So how can I not trust him? He's showing me in so many ways how much he loves me and that he wants the best for me. And when he says that, I usually say, "I can't talk now! Got to go!" But it looks like he's preparing something just for me. He knows everything that I like. He knows what makes me happy. He knows what makes me sad. Why wouldn't I consider a commitment to him?

Pastor Marjo: You know, I wanted to talk about this Gospel, and then you got me so sidetracked by this, but then I just realized that – oh my gosh! – this is like the answer to my question! Because Jesus was saying he wanted a commitment! And I was kind of afraid because it's all this denying stuff, it's all this taking up your cross, it's all this really scary stuff. But I guess, I guess if he loves me, if he loves me enough to give his life for me, maybe I should trust him.

Jeanette: You know, as you're talking, about that, I think that's where a lot of people are. Just like me they like the aspect that Christ loves them. They enjoy singing the songs about him. They enjoy getting together with other people who do the same thing. But I wonder if there's a commitment on our part beyond that dating part. I wonder if sometimes we like the dating of Christ, so to speak, but aren't willing to deny ourselves, and commit to an actual marriage with him, which is a relationship with him. I wonder what that would be like? If everyone of us who says we love God really committed ourselves to him, what would change in our relationship to him?

Pastor Marjo: I wonder what would change in my relationship with him? Because there are times when I am really committed and I can take great leaps of faith, and then there are other times when I get scared and doubtful and back away. But the more I trust and the more I give myself...you know what? The more I trust! And the more I get myself!

Jeanette: The more I trust, the more I give myself. And the more I'm willing to give myself. I don't look at all the negatives but I look at all the positives. Just wait until I get in touch with my Snookums! Have I get some news for him! *(laughs)* Now as you have shared gospel truth, I think I'm falling in love with Christ all over again, and if Snookums fits in the picture, that's fine, that's okay. But I think I'd rather be committed to Jesus Christ as my Lord and Saviour and live according to that. Deny myself? Not so hard after all because I really love him and he loves me and he loves me enough to accept me just as I am! You know what? I think we could have a great partnership! I think we are GOOD!
Amen!

Pastor Marjo: Amen!