

“For Love and Money”

A sermon by Rev. Dr. Jan Carlsson-Bull
As shared by Rosie and Ralphie (two adorable pigs/stuffed but oh so credible)
Unitarian Universalist Church in Meriden
Meriden, CT
February 2, 2014

For the reader:

Earlier in the worship service the characters Rosie and Ralphie were introduced through song in the form of two pig puppets by these names. Rosie is the namesake of the sassy and dramatic little girl from the musical, “Really Rosie,” with a book and lyrics by Maurice Sendak and music by Carole King. Ralphie was invented by Jan as a contemporary, though porcine and candid, incarnation of Ralph Waldo Emerson.

Segue:

As we are called to its service, so we are called to sustain in love the shared ministry that is service through our time, our talents, and yes, our treasure. Our friends Rosie and Ralphie have more to say on the topic.

Rosie We do?

Ralphie We do, Rosie. Remember last week Rev. Jan looked us right in the eye and said, “Hey, wouldn’t you like to do a sermon together about a really hot topic?”

Rosie Oh yeah...love is certainly a hot topic, and here we are STARS on one of these “30 Days of Love” Sundays—another one of those love-soaked concoctions of UUs.

Ralphie What do you have against, love, Rosie?

Rosie I LOVE love—you know that. I’m a first-rate example of LOVable. I’m a hot number, ready to rip on a hot topic.

Ralphie Not just about love, but love AND money!

Rosie Sshhh! Don’t you know we don’t like to talk about money here? Maybe that’s why I’m just THINKING about being a UU, because some folks are sneaking it into a small corner of the sty—I mean sanctuary—and I for one will snort my head off if anybody wants to talk with ME about money or stewardship or whatever other sneaky names they give to it.

Ralphie Oh, for Pete’s sake [casts a sideward glance], Rosie. Get over it. Haven’t you heard that saying, “Where your treasure is, there will your heart be.”

Rosie Where my heart beats is MY business. Don’t get fresh!

Ralphie BE, Rosie, BE...there will your heart BE!

Rosie I know exactly where my heart is. Besides you're talking about some phony baloney saying that comes from the BIBLE. Anything with baloney attached to it, I'll have nothing to do with! I suppose just because you were named after that sad-sack looking preacher/poet/orator/who-knows-what-all from 200 years ago, that guy UUs still brag about, you think you have all the answers.

Ralphie You mean Ralph Waldo? That Ralph had more questions than answers.

Rosie Don't give me that sacred questions stuff, Ralphie.

Ralphie Ya know, Rosie, you're a genius at getting a pig off-topic.

Rosie And that sneaky Rev. Jan is a genius at putting wretched topics onto someone else.

Ralphie Wretched? What's wretched about LOVE and money?

Rosie Hmmph! I thought the original saying was for love OR money. I'll pick love any day.

Ralphie Fine, Rosie, just fine. I suppose you've never used money for anything.

Rosie As a matter of fact, when I tried to, it wasn't accepted.

Ralphie It would be in a UU congregation. We're inclusive!

Rosie Oh you're so cool it's disgusting.

Ralphie It doesn't take much to get your snout bent out of shape!

Rosie You needn't be rude, Ralphie.

Ralphie Just speaking truth to power.

Rosie YOUR truth, Ralphie, YOUR truth...but it's nice to hear you think I'm powerful.

Ralphie I do, Rosie. I really do. I think that deep in that round pink body of yours is a love with the power to transform...

Rosie [Interrupting]...What is this, a sermon?

Ralphie As a matter of fact....

Rosie Touché!

- Ralphie I had no idea you knew French, Rosie.
- Rosie I'm a pig of the world!
- Ralphie Are you sure you know what you're saying? The pigs of the world I know don't share very well.
- Rosie I'll have you know I'm VERY generous.
- Ralphie So why didn't you pledge when Mr. Steward called last year? I know you're not a member, but you do claim to be a friend.
- Rosie How do you know I didn't pledge? Nobody's supposed to know that but me.
- Ralphie A fine place we'd have as a church if nobody knew if I even pledged and for that matter, how much.
- Rosie I'm a private pig, Ralphie. Invade that privacy, and I might just waddle off and go somewhere ELSE!
- Ralphie Ah, threats. Very mature, Rosie! What if I said to you—which I won't—that I won't be your friend if you don't show some more largesse?
- Rosie I'm already large enough. In fact, I was thinking about trying that How Now Sow diet!
- Ralphie Largesse, not large. Largesse means generosity and openness. It's what anybody here needs to have if community isn't just something we talk about.
- Rosie I'm getting more and more PO-ed at that Rev. Jan for putting us up to even MENTIONING this topic.
- Ralphie Guess you've never heard about shared ministry, Rosie. This is what it feels like.
- Rosie [Makes pig sound.]
- Ralphie Ya know, Rosie, you sound more and more like that neighbor of yours, Pierre, that funny little guy who kept saying "I don't care!"
- Rosie Well that takes a lot of nerve! I thought you were my friend.
- Ralphie Friends speak the truth with love.
- Rosie I'm not sure I like the way you love, Ralphie.

- Ralphie Love is tough stuff. Why do you think people talk about pigskin in the same breath as that all-American sport, foot...?
- Rosie You go entirely too far, Ralphie! What a despicable thought. A bunch of beefed-up humans running into each other until they can't see straight, and then throwing an unmentionable all the way down this big pasture.
- Ralphie There's big money in play with that game. That's why it's so important to talk about LOVE and money today.
- Rosie There you go, sneaking something really good back into something that we really shouldn't be talking about. What's love got to do with it?
- Ralphie Let me tell you a pigable, Rosie.
- Rosie A what?
- Ralphie A pigable. It's a story that's about more than Once upon a time.
- Rosie You mean "Once upon a time there were three little pigs" isn't good enough?
- Ralphie Actually, that's a great example of a pigable. There's a lesson in it for how to live.
- Rosie Oh great, now you're going to preach to me.
- Ralphie We're both up here preaching, Rosie, so get over it! Do you want to hear this story or not?
- Rosie Okay, okay...
- Ralphie Once upon a time there was a little pig who was hungry. She came from a big litter where it was easy to go hungry if you didn't act like a pig!
- Rosie Wait a minute, Ralphie, why wouldn't a pig act like a pig?
- Ralphie Good point, Rosie. Okay, she came from a big litter where it was easy to go hungry if you didn't dive in and guzzle and slurp all you could get. She caught on right away and became the most aggressive pig in her family. Finally, her Mama noticed this behavior and saw that other members of the family weren't getting their fair share. So, a family meeting was called. Every little pig was invited to speak about what was working and what wasn't working in the family. Some complained about never getting enough and some boasted about giving more than their fair share. The one little pig just said, "I'm hungry. I never get enough!" (to which the rest of the family opened their mouths in shock).

That wise Mama reached behind the nearby shed and placed right in the middle of the sty the yummiest looking treat those piglets had ever seen or sniffed or hoped to scarf down. “STOP!” snorted their Mama. Nobody go near this until—and she pointed to the little pig who always claimed to be hungry and was the greediest of the lot. In a gentle voice, her Mama invited her to divide the treat into ten pieces, one piece for each member of the family, including their Mama. “Here’s the deal,” her Mama explained. You do the dividing, and your sisters and brothers and I take our share first. You get the last piece. Remember that saying, “Save the best until last.?” Well, the little pig thought and thought. Finally, she divided the treat into ten pieces. How big do you think her piece was, Rosie?

Rosie Hmmm.... I think it was exactly the same size as every other piece.

Ralphie Why was that?

Rosie You know exactly why, Ralphie. I think your pigable is almost despigable. But I get it. I just have one question.

Ralphie Only one?

Rosie One for now. What if one of the piglets had been sick and another had eaten a lot for breakfast and another had worked so hard that morning that he was famished. How would you then divvy up the pieces if you were the little pig?

Ralphie What do you think?

Rosie I think to each according to her need.

Ralphie Why? Why wouldn’t you just dive in and get all you could?

Rosie [Silence] I LOVE them, Ralphie. I LOVE my family.

Ralphie What’s love got to do with it?

Rosie Fair is fair.

Ralphie You mean love has something to do with being fair with what you have?

Rosie Of course! Are you so pig-headed that you don’t get your own pigable?

Ralphie And what’s the difference between the big treat offered to the family and the money that each of us make?

- Rosie Oh, you are sneaky, Ralphie, but there's not much difference. It's kind of like one of those potlucks that we have in this church, where everybody brings what they can and nobody goes hungry---UNLESS I suppose there are one or two who didn't hear your story.
- Ralphie And you know how everybody wants to know who brought what so they can thank them... well, what's the difference with money?
- Rosie Because money is private and love isn't.
- Ralphie Well, how about if a few people who have to plan for all that we do here get to know what you bring and what I bring? What's the big deal, Rosie?
- Rosie Love is going to make me break some of my favorite habits, Ralphie. I don't know if I like this one little bit.
- Ralphie It's an acquired skill. Sometimes we call it spiritual growth.
- Rosie Please, Ralphie. You're edging toward insufferable.
- Ralphie Want to join me for life on the edge?
- Rosie Why not? [and they walk off hoof in hoof]