

Faith Seeking Understanding
John 1:35-43
First Presbyterian Church
May 1, 2022
Confirmation and Commissioning

John 1:35-43

³⁵The next day John again was standing with two of his disciples, ³⁶and as he watched Jesus walk by, he exclaimed, “Look, here is the Lamb of God!”

³⁷The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus. ³⁸When Jesus turned and saw them following, he said to them, “What are you looking for?” They said to him, “Rabbi” (which translated means Teacher), “where are you staying?” ³⁹He said to them, “Come and see.” They came and saw where he was staying, and they remained with him that day. It was about four o’clock in the afternoon. ⁴⁰One of the two who heard John speak and followed him was Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother. ⁴¹He first found his brother Simon and said to him, “We have found the Messiah” (which is translated Anointed). ⁴²He brought Simon to Jesus, who looked at him and said, “You are Simon son of John. You are to be called Cephas” (which is translated Peter).

⁴³The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, “Follow me.”

Sermon

So, which came first, the chicken or the egg? It is perhaps the classic expression of what is called a **causality dilemma**. I once read that a geneticist, a philosopher, and a chicken farmer put their heads together and found the answer. And according to this elite team it was the egg that came first... and the reason it was the egg is that genetic material does not change during an animal's life. Therefore, the first bird that evolved into what we call a chicken (probably in prehistoric times), must have first existed as an embryo inside an egg. So, it was the egg that came first.¹

Now, bending the causality dilemma in the direction of religious faith – which came first, your **belief about God...** or your **trust in God**? Did your **head follow your heart...** or did your **heart follow your head**? Well, if you’re having a hard time answering that question, it’s because faith involves both. Faith is like a coin that is minted on both sides. Head and heart... belief about God on one side; trust in God on the other... and both sides of the coin are needed for an integrated faith.²

¹ “Chicken and egg debate unscrambled: Egg came first, 'eggsperts' agree,” CNN.com, Friday, May 26, 2006; Posted: 7:33 a.m. EDT (11:33 GMT)

² Michael L. Lindvall, A Geography of God – Exploring the Christian Journey, W/JKP, 2007, p.15.

Just moments ago, fifteen of the finest young people you could ever want to know stood in this chancel. They claimed as their own the faith that has been passed on to them ... and they were commissioned as disciples of Jesus Christ. Of course, this doesn't mean there are no more questions. I'm sure they have many questions. What it DOES MEAN is that these fifteen young people are a lot like those disciples that Jesus called by the seashore that day. "Follow me," he said rather abruptly. And according to John, they made their decision about as abruptly as they were invited. No met the pastor... no new member classes... no confirmation... just, "Follow me."

The truth is there was probably a lot more said on these occasions and that making the decision to leave everything and follow took a bit more time. But there's a reason why this (And so many other "call stories") are told with such abruptness... such urgency. It's because the decision to follow Jesus is always made without all the facts. Or put another way, our **trust in God** usually walks a few steps in front of our **belief about God**.

The great medieval theologian, Anselm of Canterbury, expressed this in the well-known Latin motto: *fides quaerens intellectum*... faith seeking understanding. In other words, for these young people many questions remain... I dare say that is true for me and you as well. Yet they have chosen to follow... we have chosen to follow... having made what Blaise Pascal names "the wager" of faith. So, confirming our faith and officially joining the church does not mean we have all the answers; it simply means we have met someone whose call we can no longer ignore. We do not know everything about him; only that we trust him as Lord and Savior.³

Many years ago, Fred Buechner said this more eloquently than I: "A Christian is one who points at Christ and says, 'I can't prove a thing, but there is something about his eyes and his voice. There's something about the way he carries his head, his hands, the way he carries his cross – the way he carries me.'"⁴ Albert Schweitzer's genius revealed itself early in life and set him on a remarkable career that ranged from theology to arts and eventually to medicine. He was a towering theologian and Bible scholar... brilliant organist and expert on Bach... a successful parish pastor. Schweitzer could have settled into a tenured position on a theological faculty... or as the pastor of a comfortable congregation. Instead, he chose to go back to school, study medicine, and serve as a medical missionary in an obscure village in French Equatorial Africa. There he lived out his life offering free medical treatment to the people there.

Well, Schweitzer ended one of his many books by reflecting on this story of Jesus calling the disciples... and the very risky decision to follow the Jesus we come to know only in the act of following. He wrote: "He comes to us as One unknown, without a name, as of old, by the lakeside... He came to those men who knew him not.

³ Lindvall, p.88

⁴ Frederick Buechner in *Wishful Thinking*. See:

<https://www.facebook.com/Frederick.Buechner.Center/posts/1020654594651742>

He speaks to us the same word: "Follow thou me!" and sets us on the tasks which He has for us to fulfill in our time. He commands. And to those who obey, whether they be wise or simple, He will reveal Himself in the toils, the conflicts, the sufferings which they shall pass through in His fellowship.... and, as an ineffable mystery, they shall learn in their own experience who He is."

Henri Nouwen once said, "You can be an expert in many things, but you can never be an expert in God." And yet, God has given us a way to know him... by worshiping him even though you cannot fully comprehend him... by praying to him even when we are unsure about prayer... by trying to see things through his eyes even when we are not sure what we are seeing... by following him... because the road itself is the teacher.