

## The Necessary Ingredients

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Sterling UMC

May 22, 2011

Confirmation Message in Three parts based on Mark 1:14-20

Part 1 8:15 AM– Ingredient #1 - Trust

This is confirmation Sunday and my message today is in three parts. I will share a different part at each of our three services. At each service I will be sharing with our confirmands a different aspect of what I believe it means to follow Christ. As I speak to them and share with them these thoughts I hope that each of you here this morning will also consider them as well.

I want to use as the basis of this three part message the story that you just heard from Mark 1. I believe this passage of Scripture is very appropriate for you today. In this dramatic story Jesus calls his first disciples. And what is his call? He says, "Come, follow me." And this morning that is exactly what each of you are doing. You are answering the call to follow Jesus. As you make your statements of faith and as you present yourself for confirmation, you like first disciples are saying, "Yes, Jesus, I will follow you."

But what does that mean? What does it mean to follow Jesus? What is involved? What is required? Well I believe in order to follow Jesus it takes three key ingredients. And we see those three necessary ingredients dramatically illustrated here in Mark 1, as Jesus comes to the seashore and calls those first disciples.

What does it mean to follow Christ? Ingredient number one is trust.

About a hundred or so years ago, an elderly gentleman was traveling alone on a train in France. A much younger man, sitting next to him, watched the older man take out his Bible and begin to read. After a while, the younger man decided to strike up a conversation, and he asked, "What are you reading?"

The older man replied, "I am reading from the sixth chapter of John in the New Testament."

"What does it say?" the younger man asked.

"Oh, it's the story of the miracle of the loaves and fishes. The Gospel writer tells us about a vast crowd that had followed Jesus because of the signs he was performing for the sick, and how Jesus preached to the crowd until it was dark. They were hungry, and with only five barley loaves and a couple of dried fish, Jesus fed the entire crowd of 5,000. And the leftovers filled twelve baskets."

Scornfully and cynically, the younger man said, "Surely you don't believe that!"

But the older man answered, "Oh, yes I do."

To which the younger man said, "Well, I can see that you have been brainwashed by ancient superstitions. Not me! That could never happen to me because, you see, I am a scientist. The only thing I trust and believe in is what can be proven scientifically. The story you have read defies the laws of science, and therefore I can't accept it. Give me facts, provable facts. As a man of science, I have no faith in miracles. But, of course, I can't expect you to understand that."

At that point, the train began to slow down. "Here is my station," said the young man as he rose from his seat. "It was nice talking to you, Mr. Oh, I'm sorry, I didn't get your name." With that, the older man reached into his pocket and pulled out his business card. He handed it to the younger man. The younger man looked at it. Imagine his surprise; the name on the card was Louis Pasteur! Louis Pasteur, of course, was one of the great scientists of all time, but he knew that the scientific method (valuable as it is) is not the only road to truth.

The real truth is that the best things in life cannot be proved in a scientific laboratory - love, courage, integrity, honesty, morality, perseverance, compassion, kindness, commitment, faith you can't put those great things into a test tube, but we know how incredibly important they are. And we know how dramatically they were proclaimed in the life and death and resurrection of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Following Christ is, first of all, the capacity to trust, to trust beyond what we can see and touch, to trust the message, to trust the call, to trust the church, to trust our God.

That is exactly what we see in this story from Mark's Gospel. Jesus comes along and he sees first of all Simon Peter and his brother Andrew. They are casting their nets into the sea for they were fishermen. Jesus says, "Come follow me." And what do they do? It says immediately they left their nets and they followed him. No hesitation. No reservation. And it says he went a little farther and he saw James and his brother John, the Sons of Zebedee. They too are fishing. And they too when Jesus calls leave their father and their nets and follow Jesus. Talk about trust! They gave up their lively hood, they left their homes and families and they followed Jesus. They didn't know exactly where they were going or what they were going to do, but that didn't matter because they had trust. They had faith in Jesus.

Let me ask you. Do you have that kind of faith? Is your faith that strong? Can you trust in God like that? Jesus says, "Come follow me." What does it take to do that? The first ingredient is trust.

## Part 2 9:30 AM –Ingredient #2 – Risk

On this confirmation Sunday my message is in three parts. I am calling this message The Necessary Ingredients. I am using story of Jesus calling his first disciples from Mark chapter 1 as the basis of this message. In this dramatic story Jesus calls out to four fishermen and he says, "Come follow me." Immediately, they leave their nets and they follow him. In a real sense that is exactly what these confirmands are doing today. They are answering the call to follow Jesus. But what does that mean? What is required? I believe there are three key ingredients. At 8:15 we looked at the first ingredient. In order to follow Jesus it requires trust.

In this service I will look at ingredient #2. Following Jesus requires trust, but secondly, it requires risk.

A Middle Eastern chieftain tells the story about a spy who was captured and then sentenced to death by a general in the Persian army. This Persian general had a strange custom. He would give condemned criminals a choice between the firing squad and the big, black door. As the moment for execution drew near, the spy was brought before the Persian general, who asked, "What will it be: the firing squad or the big, black door?" The condemned spy hesitated for a long time. It was a difficult decision, but eventually he chose the firing squad. Moments later, shots rang out, confirming the execution.

The general turned to his assistant and said, "Isn't that something? They always prefer the known way to the unknown. It is so characteristic of people to be afraid of the undefined. Yet, we gave him a choice."

"What lies beyond the big, black door?" asked the assistant.

"Freedom," the general replied, "but over the years, only a very few have been brave enough to take it."

This story graphically reminds us of how difficult it is to take a risk, to make the leap of faith. There is always the temptation to stay with the familiar to stay with the known, to stay with the comfortable. When Jesus came to the seashore and said to Simon and Andrew and James and John, "Follow me," it would have been a lot easier for those four fishermen to stay with their boats. But look what they would have missed! They made the leap of faith, they took the risk, they dropped their familiar nets and followed him. And with him, they turned the world upside down.

All through the Bible, we see it: The great people of faith wise people who trusted God and took a risk. They went out into the unknown, confident that God would go with them and see them through. Noah, Abraham, Joseph, Moses, Ruth, David, Mary, Paul, and many, many others like them trusted God and took the risk.

Young people, congregation, it's risky to follow Jesus. Sometimes it's not the easy thing

to do. Often times it's not the most popular thing to do. It often times requires you to take the road less traveled. It may require you to take a stand. It will require courage. But let me tell you this, the reward is worth the risk. At every critical turn in your life, I trust you will ask yourself: "Does the fact that I am a follower of Jesus Christ have anything to say to me here?" Because I think it does. And if it doesn't, I think it should. So let me ask you: Will you take a risk? Will you really step out and follow Christ? Will you give your life to him, heart and soul and mind and strength?

Jesus says, "Come follow me." What does it take to do that? The first two ingredients are trust and risk.

### Part 3 11:00 AM– Ingredient #3 – Work

On this confirmation Sunday I have had the wonderful opportunity to address these 13 confirmands. My message to them today has been in three parts, and it is based on the scriptural account that you just heard from Mark 1, where Jesus calls his first disciples to come and follow him. In a real way that is exactly what is happening to each of these 13 young people. The Lord is calling, and his call is to, "Follow me." In this powerful story we see the three necessary ingredients of what is required to follow Christ; three ingredients that all of us would do well to consider and to incorporate in our own lives.

Ingredient 1 was trust. It requires trust to follow Jesus. Ingredient 2 was risk. It is risky to follow Jesus.

Now for ingredient #3. In order to follow Jesus it requires work.

The first thing Jesus did was to put those four fishermen to work. "Follow me and I will make you fish for people," he said. In other words, a call to follow Jesus is a call to service, to work, to action.

Are you kidding Jesus? You want us to be fishers of men and women? Do we really have to do something about our faith? Isn't it that the preacher's job? You mean we have some responsibility too? Absolutely!!

Homer and Emmy Lou were courting on the front porch swing. Now, Homer was very much in love with his beautiful Emmy Lou. However, he was shy and often had difficulty mustering up the courage to express his love. Aware of this inability, he tried to express his affection with flowery words:

"Emmy Lou, if I had a thousand eyes, they would all be looking at you." "Emmy Lou, if I had a thousand arms, they would all be hugging you." "Emmy Lou, if I had a thousand lips, they would all be kissing you."

Emmy Lou looked at Homer and replied, "Homer, stop complaining about what you don't have and start using what you do have."

The point is clear: Talking a good game is not enough. Just going through the rituals, just saying the creeds, just singing the hymns, just preaching the sermon, is not enough. We are called to practice what we preach. We are called to live our faith daily. We are called to be servants. We are called to be fishers of people. Only when our creeds become deeds are they worth anything. Only when our faith becomes active and goes to work is it worth much.

That means that you will occasionally find yourself doing some "lowly" work. You will remember that, on the night before he died, Jesus washed the disciples' feet. Which was lowly work. Dirty work. Smelly work. But as he went from friend to friend with basin and towel, he said: "Love does things like this." Which it does. Love sometimes stoops

down in order to do the simplest things for the neediest people. He said, "I have given you an example. Go and do likewise." "As the Father has sent me, so I am sending you."

If you follow Jesus Christ, you will never again be able to look at somebody else's need and say: "I don't care. It's not my problem. No sweat off my back. It's not my job. I have no responsibility. Let someone else do it." To be a follower of Jesus Christ means looking out for people. It also means looking to find Jesus in the presence of other people. It means work.

What does it mean to follow Jesus? It means to trust, to risk, and to work; to trust the message of Christ; to risk our lives for the cause of Christ; and to work to reach and to help others in the Spirit of Christ.

Are you willing to do that today? To stop trusting in yourself and trust in God? To stop being afraid to take a little risk? And to try God. To stop sitting on the sidelines? And to get to work serving God. Look what Jesus did with four ordinary fishermen who were willing to have faith and to follow him. He used their faith to turn this world upside down, or should I say right side up. How about you today? Jesus is here this morning and he is calling to you and me, "Come follow me." Are you willing to step out of the boat? Are you willing to trust, to risk, and to work for Jesus Christ? You see today is not the end. Yes your experience with confirmation is coming to a close, but your journey of faith is just beginning. So I hope that you know what you are going to do now. That you will hold fast to the faith that you have professed. My prayer for each one of you confirmands, and every one of you who are here this morning is that you will say, "yes!" I will follow you. I will trust in you. I will risk for you. I will work for you.