

Faith and Understanding

April 13, 2021 Scott Gunn

The wind blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. —John 3:8

Jesus and Nicodemus are having a somewhat testy conversation. Jesus says, “You must be born from above,” and Nicodemus says he doesn’t quite get it. In fairness, if you heard a phrase like “you must be born from above” for the first time, you might be like Nicodemus, asking for a bit of clarification.

This is when Jesus says, “*The wind blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes.*” Now this is a good point. He’s saying we don’t need to understand every aspect of every single thing we encounter in order to believe it or to act.

To this day, even with some basic science education, I would be hard-pressed to explain wind beyond vague mutters about barometric pressure and wild gestures pointing to my weather app. I don’t fully understand how my car’s engine works. While I do know a bit of computer programming, I’m typing this on a laptop whose internal engineering is a bit of a mystery, if I’m honest.

Sometimes we let real or imagined questions get in the way. We ask “what if” or “what about” to create diversions from the matter at hand.

I meet a person on the street who asks me for food. “What if he spends the money foolishly?” “What if she really doesn’t need this?” These questions get in the way of me doing what is clearly expected in the gospels: sharing of what I have with those who have less.

We talk ourselves out of proclaiming the Good News of God in Christ because we tell ourselves we don’t fully understand some aspect or other of our faith. “If only I could fully explain the mystery of the Holy Trinity...” And while we make our excuses, people are deprived of hearing the liberating, life-changing news of salvation of Jesus Christ.

It’s funny though. I find myself packing an umbrella when it might rain even though I don’t fully understand the meteorological phenomena that cause me to get wet. Why is it mostly on matters of faith we become inert because we tell ourselves we don’t know enough?

Take Easter, for example. Can I “explain” the empty tomb? No. But I can hear the testimony of the apostles, and I can see its fruits in the lives of countless generations of Christians. That ought to be more than good enough for me and for you.