

Imposter Syndrome: “Surely You’ve Got the Wrong Person”

1. Warm up: In Sunday’s sermon, Katie Teltow talked about three great Bible characters – Moses, Mary the mother of Jesus, and the Apostle Paul. If you could spend two hours talking to anyone in the Bible (other than Jesus), who would you choose – and why?
2. Katie began Sunday’s sermon by noting that, “A lot of us are walking around pretending we know what we’re doing. Adults are really just big, tired children with calendars. Some of us color-code the calendars so nobody notices. But underneath that, many of us are quietly asking: ‘Am I enough? Do I belong here? Did God really mean *me*?’” Moses experienced those same feelings in spades. Let’s read from Exodus 3-4, on p. 3.
 - a. Moses was 80 when his call to liberate his people came at the burning bush. He had fled Egypt after killing an Egyptian and spent the last 40 years tending his father-in-law’s sheep in the Saini wilderness. To top it off, Moses was “slow of speech and tongue.” So Moses’ replies to God’s call by saying, “Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?” Exodus 3:11. What thoughts and feelings would you guess were swirling in Moses in that moment?
 - b. Looking back over your past, when have you been thrust into a situation where you found yourself feeling woefully suited for what you were being asked to do? What thoughts and feelings did that evoke within you? How did you respond?
 - c. Katie notes that Moses’ reply to God wasn’t, “I don’t want to serve.” Instead, the essence of his reply was, “I don’t think I’m good enough.” That, she said, is the root cause of most imposter syndrome – not a lack of willingness, but a fear that we don’t measure up. She noted that God didn’t counter Moses’ by trying to persuade him that he was good enough. Instead, God countered by saying, “Who gave man his mouth . . . ? Now go; I will help you speak.” Exodus 4:11-12. In your view, what’s the point God is making? And how does it apply to us?
3. Katie said, “Church has always been one of the places I’ve felt like an imposter” because she wasn’t raised in church, plus she was gay and figured that meant she didn’t belong in church. But then she came to LifeJourney with her wife. As soon as worship started, Katie says, “Out of nowhere, I was crying. Not a cute, single-tear, but movie kind of crying. Ugly, could not stop, no idea why, crying.” Katie said, “That morning ended up being the beginning of my relationship with God.”
 - a. Why would you guess Katie found herself spontaneously crying in her first worship experience at LifeJourney?
 - b. Have you ever felt like an imposter in church – like you didn’t belong? If so, why? And what changed that?
4. Like Moses, Mary was also stunned that God called her into such a spiritually significant role. She was young, likely no more than a teenager. She was engaged, but not yet married, which in her world meant her entire reputation, her family’s honor, and her

future security. But then an angel shows up and says she's called to become the mother of God's Son. Luke 1:29 says, "Mary was greatly troubled at [the angel's] words." Not calm. Not ready. But troubled. And yet, she summoned the courage to say yes.

- a. When Katie first felt God calling her to apply to become our Children's Minister, her first impulse was to think, "Surely there has to be someone more qualified." In your life right now, what's something scary God's calling you to? What causes you to hesitate, doubt, or fear? Have you embraced the call?
 - b. Katie noted that God has always been comfortable working through imperfect people with unconventional, complicated, badly-timed stories. Why do you think that is? Why does God choose to work that way?
5. The workplace is another sphere where we often feel like we're not good enough.
 - a. Over the course of your career, have you ever felt like that? What happened?
 - b. Of course, there are times in life when we are, in fact, not the right person to do something. So how can we tell the difference between times when God is calling us to boldly step into something versus times when we're not?
6. Katie mentioned parenting as another part of life where we often feel like we're not good enough. That's also true of other caregiving roles we might be called into, such as caring for an ailing family member or an elderly parent with dementia, etc.
 - a. For those who are parents, have you ever found yourself feeling like you are/were an inadequate parent? Tell us about it. (If you're not a parent, you can apply this question to some other caregiving role you've been thrust into.)
 - b. Katie reminded us that God isn't asking us to be perfect. Instead, "God's asking you to keep showing up – tired, frustrated, second-guessing yourself, occasionally hiding in the bathroom. That not failing. . . . That's just what love actually looks like on the days it's hard. Maybe availability matters more than feeling like you're doing it perfectly." Your thoughts?
 - c. Insecurity about our body image can also hold us back and tie us in knots. Katie talked about how her weight as a child left her with deep sense that her worth depended on her number on the scale. Have insecurities about your body image adversely impacted you? If so, how? And how do we get beyond that?
7. When the Apostle Paul was feeling inadequate because of his "thorn in the flesh," *i.e.*, some kind of disability, God's reply was, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." II Corinthians 12:9. What do you think that means?
8. Has God spoken to you about something through Katie's message? If so, what is it that you hear God saying to you in this moment?

Exodus 3:10-12 and 4:10-16

The Lord said to Moses, "So now, go. I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt." ¹¹ But Moses said to God, "Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?"

¹² And God said, "I will be with you. And this will be the sign to you that it is I who have sent you: When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you will worship God on this mountain."

¹⁰ Moses said to the Lord, "Pardon your servant, Lord. I have never been eloquent, neither in the past nor since you have spoken to your servant. I am slow of speech and tongue." ¹¹ The Lord said to him, "Who gave human beings their mouths? Who makes them deaf or mute? Who gives them sight or makes them blind? Is it not I, the Lord? ¹² Now go; I will help you speak and will teach you what to say."

¹³ But Moses said, "Pardon your servant, Lord. Please send someone else."

¹⁴ Then the Lord's anger burned against Moses and God said, "What about your brother, Aaron the Levite? I know he can speak well. He is already on his way to meet you, and he will be glad to see you. ¹⁵ You shall speak to him and put words in his mouth; I will help both of you speak and will teach you what to do. ¹⁶ He will speak to the people for you, and it will be as if he were your mouth and as if you were his mouth."