

OT: Ezekiel 2:1-5

NT: 2 Corinthians 12:2-10

Gp: Mark 6:1-13

Imposter syndrome is a psychological pattern in which an individual doubts their skills, talents, or accomplishments and has a persistent internalised fear of being exposed as a fraud.

As we neared the end of our training for ordination, each one of us shared a similar feeling that someone had made a mistake in putting us forward and that we were about to be found out. At the retreat, I was waiting for a tap on the shoulder from the bishop and the words, “not you, sunshine!” And even as I waited at the altar rail for my turn to go forward to be ordained, I was contemplating how easy it might be to slip out the side entrance without being seen.

I don't think any of us ever truly believe we are worthy of such a calling, and certainly not that we are the answer to all God's and the Church's problems! But the words of St Paul in his first letter to the Corinthians were a source of hope and belief that God knows what he is about.

Consider your own call, brothers and sisters: not many of you were wise by human standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong;

My fellow ordinands and I were not unique in our experience of imposter syndrome. And for more evidence, look at the people that Jesus called directly to be his closest followers, to be the ones to continue to preach the Gospel and to establish Christ's church of earth. The Myers Briggs personality test would have thrown up a number of concerns from Peter's impetuous nature to the dominant certainty of James and John, the Sons of thunder and then all the shades in between. Any good recruitment advisor would have definitely warned against taking on Judas and most likely highlighted that Thomas would be a handful with his demands for proof.

But God's ways are not our ways and one phrase in today's reading from Paul to the Corinthians throws up a clue to the success of the apostles in their mission and why I am standing here this morning. When Paul was struggling with whatever thorn was in his side, when God had cut down his arrogance in his own beliefs and abilities, this was the response God gave to his plea for strength:

'My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness.'

This is our consolation. Each one of us has been called by God, created as unique with our own singular mission in this world, a purpose we may never know this side of heaven. But God has no expectations that we should accomplish this by our own strength and capabilities, for us to be successful. He expects the opposite. That we should fall or fail or realise that we can never even begin without his grace, his power, his direction. Whatever we achieve in this world, whatever our successes, material or spiritual, we must recognise that it is God at work in us. We are no less shambolic than the disciples sent out by Jesus in today's gospel reading. We are no more capable than any of the prophets from Isaiah onwards throughout the Old Testament who tried and suffered to make the word of God known. And how can we possibly be

more successful than Jesus himself who was rejected by his own people in the synagogue and deemed to be an offence.

But we go on. We step forward with our heart open to the will of the Father, strengthened by the Son and guided by the Holy Spirit. We don't know what waits for us but we live in hope and trust. (I'm sure not even Keir Starmer would have predicted what happened this week. But whatever people's political affiliations, we hope and pray that this will be for the good of our country and beyond.)

Shortly now, Harriet is going to be baptised. Her parents and Godparents will make vows on her behalf and accept her calling to follow Jesus. She will be called by name and marked with the Sign of the Cross, she will be washed in water in the name of the Trinity and she will be given the light of Christ to lead her through her journey in this world.

I don't know if you've met Harriet yet or know her big sister, Grace. But Harriet has an amazing Paddington glare which speaks volumes and indicates that she is not likely to readily tolerate fools! And if she is anything like Grace, she will be confident and determined in her ways. Harriet, you are already part of a loving family who will support and encourage you and today you join the wider family of God, you become a member of the Church which started with the calling of the apostles and continues today with your calling. No-one can predict what your life will be like or where this calling will lead you and I'm pretty sure you are going to grow into a strong woman with many gifts. But there will be times in your life, when you experience difficulties and challenges so please just remember God's words to Paul which were true for him for all of us and for you:

'My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness.'

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