

⁶For you are a holy people belonging to the LORD your God. The LORD your God has chosen you to be his own possession out of all the peoples on the face of the earth.

⁷“The LORD had his heart set on you and chose you, not because you were more numerous than all peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples. ⁸But because the LORD loved you and kept the oath he swore to your ancestors, he brought you out with a strong hand and redeemed you from the place of slavery, from the power of Pharaoh king of Egypt. ⁹Know that the LORD your God is God, the faithful God who keeps his gracious covenant loyalty for a thousand generations with those who love him and keep his commands.

My name is Nobody. That’s the title of an Old Spaghetti Western. It’s a good movie and there are three of them touting such big wig actors as Terrance Hill and Bud Spencer. I’ve watched them multiple times. The premise behind the movie is that the aging Jack Beauregard wants to retire from gun slinging, move to Europe, and live the rest of his years in peace. But everyone wants to take a shot at the greatest gunslinger out west. That’s when Nobody steps in. He wants to see his idol go out in a blaze of glory.

Jack on the other hand wants to be forgotten, to become a nobody. Nobody wants to see him immortalized forever, not forgotten. So he steps in and takes Jack’s place becoming somebody. It’s a great movie. It has some great one-liners and isn’t the typical garbage put out today. So why bring it up? Specifically because Somebody became a nobody in order to set Somebody free. Sound familiar yet? Maybe if we look at it from the other direction.

Israel really was a nobody. We were nobodies, when God stepped in for us and in our place and made us somebody. Moses reminds Israel and us who we were before God came to us and made us his own. This follows along with our confession on the third article, “I believe that I cannot by my own thinking or choosing believe in the Lord Jesus Christ or come to him, but he has called me by the gospel...” We weren’t pillars of moral piety. We weren’t anything to write home about. But God in his mercy calls us something. So that even when or if you feel like nobody, you can recall what God calls you and what he thinks you’re worth. You’re not a nobody. You’re not even a somebody. You are a precious soul for whom Christ died.

Moses says to Israel, “Once you were nothing, nobody special, but things have changed and now you are something special.” God called Israel to be special. Our lesson says, “*a Holy people belonging to the LORD your God.*” Holy means set apart for a specific purpose. But for what purpose? Moses continues, *The LORD your God has chosen you to be his own possession.* This is the valued property, a treasure the LORD has chosen, the object of his love.

The Lord loved his people. They were precious to him. He was jealous for them which is why he instructed them not to intermarry or follow after the gods of the surrounding nations. They were to have no other gods but the Lord. God doesn’t want them trapped in false religion. But what caused the Lord’s love and affection for these people?

Moses tells us what it wasn’t, “*It’s not because you were more numerous than all peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples.*” You were pathetic, enslaved and sold like cattle. They weren’t even gun slingers. Why would God choose them? They weren’t strong and mighty. They were enslaved in Egypt, subject to Pharaoh, unable to free themselves or do anything for themselves. They were goat herders, nothings, nobodies, but God has a habit of calling nobodies somebody, his people. His treasured possession.

Look at his history. God came to Abram and Sarah when they were nobodies. Sarah was barren and couldn't have children – in that society without children, you were nobody. Moses was called to free God's people when he was somebody at the age of forty. He had to wait until he was washed up nobody at the age of eighty when he didn't even want to go. Later when David was just a boy stinking up the fields with the sheep God called him to lead his people. God chose them precisely because they were nobody. And even after called they have a sad track record when it comes to being faithful. After seeing the Lord's mighty hand at work tearing apart Egypt they construct a golden calf and bow down to it. They provoked the Lord along the way. They refused to believe and take possession of the land and now that an entire generation has passed away – they're ready to enter but Moses can't go, not only because of the failure of the people but because of his own failure.

They were nobodies. Moses knows that.

But we want to be somebody. We want to be better than the next guy. We want there to be something different or unique about us that allows us to stand out. Christians are funny people going in search of something that sets us apart. Maybe it's something we've done, the good works we do, but then you'll see many philanthropists who do good outside of the church. Maybe it's a vision we've had, some sort of ecstatic speech but then you realize that those who do drugs do it better. Still more Christians will brag about accepting Jesus into their heart, giving their testimony, but it doesn't matter what you have to say about God, but what matter is what he says about you. We should go back to scripture and realize that what makes us unique, special, set apart is that God has called us.

What makes us unique from the world is also what binds us together. You'd think that such a gift would be worth protecting no matter what the cost. Anything that stands in the way of and or threatens this holy relationship must be avoided or eliminated. I'm not talking about going out and purging the land of Hethites, Gergashites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites as Moses instructed Israel in verse 1. We have not been called by God to do such a thing but we can remove that which hinders us. We can set apart a single day or even multiple days for time with the one who loves us. We can gladly hear and learn his Word. We can watch our life and our doctrine closely. We can respond in obedience. We can strive to be holy but we fall far short.

Our faithfulness often looks more like Israel complaining on the way to the Promised Land that the AC isn't working or we have to meet outdoors in the wind, the microphone doesn't work. Do we not realize the precious gift that God has given to us in calling us to be his own? And yet we're willing to throw that gift away, the truth away because we don't get along with the people in the car?!

We were enslaved to sin, unable to do good, when God came to us and set us free. He called us into a new life, an eternal life of hope. Like Israel previous to God's call we didn't have much going for us other than sin and death. We were nobodies, not pillars of piety. There was no hope but only the law. Moses reminds Israel and us in verse 10, God will repay, *“those who hate him.* Those who want nothing to do with him. Far too often we have not acted as those who are his treasured possession, set apart, or holy.

But God doesn't change nor is he one to break a promise even if he made it generations earlier to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The reason why Israel was God's chosen didn't have anything to do with Israel but rather because of his love and his promises.

Moses gets specific as to who this God is. He is a somebody specific. Moses writes, “*he brought you out with a strong hand and redeemed you from the place of slavery, from the power of Pharaoh king of Egypt.*” What other God has done such things? And he didn’t do it once. God did the Exodus over again when his people were disobedient and stubborn he sold them into the hands of the Babylonians and then brought them back.

Despite Israel’s rebellion, the Lord will not forget the covenant that he swore to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. This covenant is based on an unconditional promise. It rests in the LORD alone. This promise fulfilled in somebody: Christ. The crucified and risen Lord, he redeemed Israel, and with Israel all humanity, by becoming a curse for us. Having fulfilled the Old Covenant he brings a new covenant by giving his body and blood on the cross for the forgiveness of sins. This is an unconditional promise to humanity. God made a bunch of Nobodies, somebody.

In the movie Nobody became Jack Beauregard. And Nobody made sure that Jack was immortalized in a blaze of glory but he didn’t go down he became Nobody. Jack Beauregard becoming Nobody. He gave his reputation to another. He gave his life to Nobody. That’s the movie but that’s not Jesus. Jesus gave his reputation, his life to nobodies like you and me, but he didn’t head off to live a peaceful life on the Mediterranean. He got death itself. He died leaving us everything he deserved and taking everything we’ve earned. But he didn’t stay dead. He is the risen and ascended Lord who still guides this world for the good of his people, not just somebody, but those he describes as his body.

There was nothing special about Israel, nothing great, nothing good that cause the Lord to set his love on it. The same is true for us. You were a nobody. You weren’t anybody. But God chose you. God made you somebody. You weren’t an example of moral piety but a trophy of God’s grace. God has your picture on the wall, “I redeemed that one!” Jesus welcomes and accepts those who face massive rejection. He brought Matthew, a tax collector, into his inner circle of friends. He touched lepers and healed them. He found a pearl. He sold everything. He gave up his life for you. Jesus proves his love by the nails driven into his hands, the baptism through which we are made children of God and through which the Holy Spirit is poured out generously, and through the Lord’s Supper. Jesus says, “No one is an un noticed nobody.

Rather you are a treasured possession. Even Peter picks up these Words and applies them not just to the nation of Israel but to you and me as well. ⁹ *But you are a chosen race,^{[a][b]} a royal priesthood,^[c] a holy nation,^[d] a people for his possession,^[e] so that you may proclaim the praises^{[f][g]} of the one who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.* You are a people for his possession and God continues to show his faithful love to thousands of generations that love him.

Even in the worst of times when we don’t feel like somebody we have our God saying, “I’ve died for you. I gave my life for you.” You are the precious blood bought souls of Christ. And that, Paul says, can’t be changed or taken away from you. Whether you believe it or not won’t change the fact that Jesus died and rose for you. He is the one who gives us value, worth, and a proper self-esteem.

Because Jesus was somebody special: God. And yet he came down and became nobody significant or important so that he could save us nobodies. We might not retire in peace on the Mediterranean as our legacy is carried on as the best gun slinger out West but we will go down and rise again as somebody. We are God’s people not because of anything in us but only by grace alone. Amen.