

July 24, 2011
Deuteronomy 7:6-9

Pentecost 6 (Proper 12a)
From a Nobody to a Somebody

Grace, mercy, and peace be yours from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

A nobody, a nothing. His family was forced out of his home, his mother died two years later, he failed as a business man, defeated for legislature, lost his job and couldn't get into Law School, his fiancée died two years after he declared bankruptcy, lost in many more political races over the course of many many years. He was a nobody. He couldn't do a thing. Tragedy and others kept pushing him back. This man was an absolute nobody. He was nothing. This man was so downtrodden and so empty inside that he had a nervous breakdown at the age of 27. However, we don't remember this man as a nobody, a nothing, but he was. His name is Abraham Lincoln, the 16th President of the United States.

Israel – a nothing

A nobody, a nothing. That's what Israel is, for Moses calls them "the fewest of all peoples". In other translations it is translated as "the least of all the peoples". You see no one thought much of Israel, except Yahweh. Think about where they came from. They cried out to Yahweh, and Yahweh heard their cries and saw the affliction, saw their nothingness (Duet. 26:7), but they were still slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt. They wondered in the desert for forty years, they were a nobody. And Guess who God chose to lead these nobodies. He chose a nobody, he chose Moses, one that thought, who me, a nobody like me. You see Moses was a lot like Israel, a lot like Lincoln, he was never popular, even though he grew up in Pharaoh's house. Moses killed a guy and then left Egypt to be a shepherd. Moses was a nobody. He to us would be worse than a nobody. However He was commanded to get those lowlife's of Israel out of the land of Egypt.

Israel as Segulah

For Israel it all changed in a flash, with a river of blood, through darkness and an angel of death. For God chose them out of all the nations...all the nations of the earth and they weren't like Lincoln anymore, or were they? They were a somebody and as Moses calls them here in the Hebrew a *segulah*. This *segulah* is a precious treasure. It is by far worth your time to hear about this *segulah*. The *segulah* denotes being chosen, being holy to the Lord, being Loved by Yahweh.

Our Segulah's

Israel is Yahweh's *segulah*, a prized possession, not to others, but to himself. He loves them. What does that look like? We all have *segulah's* in our life as well. Think about, what are the one or two things you would go back into a burning building for. Is it your grandfather's confirmation bible or pocket watch? Is it that signed jersey of Reggie White? Is it your letter jacket from high school or maybe your IPOD or laptop computer? Whatever it is, it isn't anything special to the rest of us, but to you it is a priceless prize.

Israel's loss of "segulah"

Israel was chosen because Yahweh loves them. They were chosen because they were Yahweh's segulah. They were chosen because of a promise - A promise given to their forefathers. But now here they stand looking into the Promised Land and they are about to go up against a bunch of Ite type people, like the Jebusites, Amorites, Canaanites, etc. These people will provide them temptations of all sorts. These people who well its worth a shot are nothing, are nobodies, but they still are there to tempt them with sex, with idol worship, with denying their Lord. We know Israel's history...they fell away from Yahweh, many times. They forgot that they were Yahweh's Segulah and became like the nobodies they were.

Our Loss of Segulah

We have that promise as well. The promise of our Promised Land is that we stand minutes, hours, years, decades, from our entrance into the Promised Land, but we have the Ite types in front of us as well. These ites come from Satan himself the Father of all Ites - The Father of nothingness. These ites might be that pop-up that comes up on your computer, the picture of the beautiful babe with a beer in her hand, it's those few minutes that you leave work early every day, it's the secret that you promised to keep, it's all of these and more. For these are all temptations to fall into. And guess what, just like Israel, we do, we click on the pop up and wham we are addicted. We think sex and alcohol go together because a lot of times they do. We leave work early to beat the traffic but yet are getting paid for possibly hours of missed work every year. We tell the secret that our best friend told us not to share about her. These ites get us and we fall and we are left again at our nothingness being a nobody. We are left with nowhere to go. For we are nothing-a nobody.

Lincoln's change.

A nobody, a nothing, one that was depressed, saddened, a failure, but we know him as a somebody. We met him earlier, his name is Abraham Lincoln, and it all changed for him on May 18, 1860 when his party nominated him for the presidency and on November 6, 1860...guess what he had more red states than blue. He won the Presidency, he was no longer a nobody, for now he is a somebody seated in the highest office of the land and that is how we know him today.

Reassurance of the Segulah to Israel

Even when they chose to be a nobody Yahweh still loved them. Even when they chose to be low-life's Yahweh still rescued them. For Yahweh sent them prophets, he sent them messengers of destruction, but also of hope and a promise. Yahweh would again and again rescue them because he loves them, he called them *Segulah*. Yahweh would continually pay the ransom for Israel, here from the prophet Isaiah: "For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior. I give Egypt as your ransom, Cush and Seba in exchange for you. Yahweh pays a price for Israel, because they are his *Segulah*."

Our Reassurance

That is that, for with the call up of Moses and the exodus of the children of Israel was the first part of this redemptive history. For even for them there was a bigger picture of redemption. For we know this person as a Somebody, like we know Lincoln as a Somebody today, but this Somebody we know his own hometown treated him terrible. We hear in Luke 4 that this Somebody was driven out of town by his own people. This Somebody came to be nobody...came to be humiliated. It all started with a kiss, well it started long before that. But it continued with an all-night trial where those in authority called in fake witnesses to try and condemn him. These worked. We know that a nobody called Barabbas was chosen over him to be released which pushed him even further. He was there, fulfilling his duty of being a nobody. His friends left him and even denied knowing him. It continued with three large spikes through his hands and feet and a crown forced upon his head. It continued with a cry "Eloi, eloi lama sabachthani" which means "My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?" It continues with one last gasp for air and then NOTHING. Dead on a cross, a nobody named Jesus dead. It continued with him being put into a tomb and a stone rolled in front of it...SLAM and then nothing. Three days of nothingness of so we think.

But then something absolutely amazing happens...for Nothing isn't nothing anymore...Mr. Nobody has burst forth in beautiful radiance and he is a Something FOR YOU. He speaks words of love, words of Segulah to his people on earth. The ones that he saw before he went into heaven. His words of Segulah... "I love you; I want you to be with me forever." He spoke these words to a nobody on the cross next to him... "Today, you will be with me in paradise." This love, the segulah love is there for you, it is there when you hear the pastor pronounce absolution, you were sealed in it at your baptisms, and you are reminded of it every time you take in his body and his blood at His table.

Conclusion

This is all for you, not a nobody, but a somebody. It means that you are all chosen, you are all a somebody, no one here is left behind, no one here is a nobody. For we read in 1 Peter, "But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a people belonging to God." So you see you aren't like Abe anymore you aren't a nobody. You are a Somebody, because God Chose You. You are his Segulah. Amen.

Now may the peace of God which passes all human understanding guard your hearts and your minds and keep them focused in Christ Jesus our Lord and Savior. Amen.