

SERMON THOUGHTS ABRIDGED **Romans 1:1-7**  
 (text printed below in outline form for ease of tracing the thought )

**GLORIOUS PEACE FOR THE "NOBODY" !**

*I. Paul*

- A. a bondservant of Jesus Christ,*
- B. called to be an apostle,*
- C. separated to the Gospel of God,*

- 1. which He promised before through His prophets in the Holy Scriptures,*
- 2. concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord,*
  - a. who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh, and*
  - b. declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead;*
  - c. through Him*
    - i ) we have received grace and apostleship for obedience to the faith among all nations for His name;*
    - ii ) among whom you also are the called of Jesus Christ;*
      - (a) To all who are in Rome,*
      - (b) beloved of God,*
      - (c) called to be saints:*

*II. Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ !*

On the grand scale of things are you a somebody? or a nobody? Among your neighbors? among your classmates? among the groups in which you participate? among your own family?? Sure, everyone longs to be somebody, but the reality is that we often are nobodies, and are made to feel like nobodies. And at times rightly so! I am not especially fond of pointing this out to you again, but indeed I will, because it's what God's Word says, and you and I need to hear it. Just this: There is not a person in this room, in this church, in the CLC, in all of Christianity, or in all of this world, who is Somebody before God. *"The good that I would, I do not. And the evil that I would not, that I do. .... O wretched man that I am, who will deliver me from this body of death?!" (Romans 7:19, 24). "We are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags" (Isaiah 64:6). "Whoever keeps the whole law, and yet offends at one point, he is guilty of all" (James 2:10).* We're nobodies.

Maybe you came to church today feeling like a nobody. Because that's what others keep shoving down your throat, to their own glee. Or maybe it is because you failed at something this week, or you broke something valuable, you heedlessly wasted big money, or you made a poor decision which was costly not just in terms of dollars and cents but in terms of health and safety, or trustworthiness and responsibility. Maybe you broke a sure promise to your wife, or husband, or children, or parents. Maybe you just were bad, and here you stand—a Nobody. Or maybe you came to church this morning feeling happy and a Somebody, but as I keep talking you start to feel like a Nobody—thanks a lot, Pastor, I should have stayed home, I don't need this.

Ah, but there is peace and comfort for us all on Epiphany Sunday! Peace and comfort that surrounds you, grows, and glows within you and without. Not a peace and comfort from yourself, but in Christ. "Arise, shine, for your Light (Jesus) has come and the Glory of the Lord has risen upon you!" (Isaiah 60:1).

Paul tells us about that peace and comfort. He starts out in this text by identifying himself, "Paul" — or "Paulus" in Latin. His name was originally Saul. Sometime after he became a Christian, looking to the crucified and risen Jesus for righteousness before God instead of to himself, he changed his name to Paul. We don't know exactly why he chose "Paul." One possibility is that he did it as a remembrance of one of his early converts, a Roman official named Sergius Paulus. Another possibility is that "paulus" in Latin means "little, small." Indeed, Paul realized now that he was nothing before the Lord Jesus. He knew he was small. In I Corinthians he says, "I am the least of the apostles, who am not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God" (I Corinthians 15:9).

He identifies himself as a mere "bondservant," that is, a slave, a servant-by-birth. No glory there! He knows it and admits it. But, a slave of **Jesus Christ!** A slave, NOT to someone who enslaved him by force, but a slave, a willing slave, a joyful slave, to his Master who laid down His life to save Him. Even Nobody Saul could not find a better boss or master, than Jesus Christ. Jesus means "Savior." And Christ means one specially "anointed" and appointed by God to be our king, our message-giver from God, and our go-between to amend for all

our errors. Paul knew he was a nobody; but His master was Somebody, a Somebody who gave him the undeserved privilege of forgiveness! Talk about special! ---- The same is true for you. Forgiveness in Jesus is yours. Forgiveness for the shameful things you've done, and said, and thought. In the blood of Jesus, you are God's dear child.

Paul explains about this marvelous Jesus, who makes us who are Nothing, Everything! Jesus is God's promised Rescuer for sinners. Already in the Old Testament, through the prophets, God announced His plan and promise. God even accommodated Himself to "nobody sinners" like us who can't think very straight, or remember very well, and always yearn to come up with a better idea, an idea really from Satan. God accommodated Himself to us by putting His promise of the Savior into human writing. In writing! For us to read, go back to, memorize and relish. The Holy Scriptures. In those Holy Scriptures, He proclaimed the One who would come, the anointed Savior who would bring Good News for every "Nobody." No wonder the prophet Isaiah would write, *Arise, shine, for your Light has come and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you! (Isaiah 60:1).*

This Master, Jesus, was willing to be born of the "seed" of David? to enter our life through the bloodline of David, David the adulterer and murderer, David who himself couldn't beat death, but lay buried. Indeed the Son of God entered this life born through David's descendent Mary. Imagine someone who makes stick figures for play. But because the stick figures don't last, he, the man who makes them, is willing to become a stick figure himself so that he can fix them better! Why would a man be willing to become a stick figure? Stick figures can't be worth much—trash them! Why would God be willing to become man? But Jesus did—in love—for you. Comfort!

Yet Jesus as man was still God's Son. In spite of his humbled appearance, in spite of His manhood, He retained His God-ness! God will always be God. Similarly, man is always man. A man cannot be made into a dog, or a cow, or a baboon. Mankind remains mankind. Nor can anyone choose to become male or female, boy or girl. The genetics and gender of the cells remain the same. Gender is chosen by God, and cannot be chosen or changed—regardless of what the trans- movement tells you. Jesus stayed God. His "God-ness" was manifested, epiphanied, displayed, in His miracles and power, and in His resurrection after death. Jesus of the seed of David, and also the eternal the Son of God, came to live and to die as a Nobody to help all the Nobodies—you and me included. He rose for you. He's in your corner. *He has come to seek and to save the lost!* This is the comfort and peace of Epiphany—Jesus was manifested forth, displayed, as your Savior, so that you a Nobody and sinner are now Somebody through Him! An adopted child of God!

"Nobody Paul" was even given another privilege by his Master. He was an "apostle," one sent out with a glorious message to all the earth—reconciliation, atonement, and peace before the almighty Creator and Judge. Peace through Christ. Paul was *separated to the Gospel of God*. God put boundaries around him, and said Nope, Nope, Nope, **this** is not for you. But **this** is!

You and I also share this privilege, to live and to die as Somebodies of Jesus. Each of us are children of God, forgiven by God's grace through faith in Christ. Each of us also have specific gifts and privileges that others around us do not equally share—abilities, location for life, time of life, occupation in life, place in our family, place in our community. You are not an "apostle," but you are privileged to live as a member of God's Kingdom and be His ambassador. Imagine! if you were selected by the FDA or CDC to announce to people across the state, that you have for them the new vaccine—you the farmer, rancher, ranch-mom, student, laborer, grandpa or grandma—that you are sent out with such good news. What a position for a Nobody! Jesus also puts you in that same privileged position regarding the Good News. Live for Him before others in your actions and words.

This message is for every "Nobody" that there is. Paul was sent to all nations. He specifically writes here to those who *"are the called of Jesus Christ—to all who are in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints"* He says even you at Rome are included, not just the Jewish people, not just the people with certain bloodlines or connections. It's for every "Nobody." ---- Likewise you the people of St. Luke's in Lemmon, SD, Nobodies that you are by nature, are beloved of God, called from unbelief to be His saints, His holy ones, fully washed clean in the blood of Jesus. You are included! Take comfort in Jesus! Live for Him.

The very last words of this text sum up the whole concept very grandly. *Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ!* From the little Nobody Paul to each of the Nobodies at Rome and to each of Nobodies here, there is grace from God. A gift. A sorely needed gift. An expensive gift. A gift precious to God, yet given in love to you. Forgiveness and life for you, accomplished by His Son. Jesus took your execution and defeated it, returning from the grave alive! In Him you shall also. Take comfort in all the turbulence around you today, this winter, this year, all of which runs beyond your control. You are SOMEBODY and at peace before God, through Christ.

Indeed! Glorious Epiphany peace, even for nobodies---***Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ!***

So be it! Amen!

Pastor Kanzenbach ---