TITLE: Being a Nobody for God

TEXT: 1 Co. 1:26-29; Gal. 4:13-15; 2 Co. 12:9-10; Ephe. 3:20-21

LOST DOG with 3 legs, blind in left eye, missing right ear, tail broken and recently castrated. Answers to the name of "Lucky."

INTRODUCTION: How many highly capable, extremely intelligent, self motivated over achievers who have found that you have reached the heights of human perfection do we have here this morning?

 How many not all that capable, intelligent enough just to get along, hard to motivate under achievers who know darn well that you haven’t attained to the height of human perfection do we have here this morning?

 If you find yourself in the first group you can sit back and nap this morning because the message is not really for you. The message this morning is for those of us who find ourselves more closely identified with the second group or somewhere in-between the 1st & second group…

 One thing that can really affect us in a negative way as a Christian, is if we see ourselves in this second group—as not all that capable, not an intellectual, a hard to motivate under achiever at times that has a full and haunting understanding that we have not attained to the height of human perfection..

One thing that can really affect us in a positive way as a Christian, is if we see ourselves as not all that capable, not an intellectual, a hard to motivate under achiever at times that has a full and haunting understanding that we have not attained to the height of human perfection.

 You may ask how can this same kind of self-outlook have both a positive and negative effect on us as a Christian…It sounds like an oxymoron, a contradiction.

 Let me see if I can explain….

I remember watching a show on television one time that was about problems that beautiful women have.

 I am talking about those women who on a scale of 1-10 are rated at about 15! Women who were born with a physical beauty that is actually breathtaking.

 As they were interviewing these beautiful women one thing that seemed to be synonymous with all of them was that they looked at their God given beauty as both a blessing and a curse…

 It was a blessing in that it made people take notice of them and provided them with opportunities in life that they otherwise might not of had…and at the same time a curse because it also intimidated most people from getting too close to them..

 One real beauty said that she very rarely dated in high school because most of the boys didn’t think that they were good looking enough themselves for someone like her to ever want to go out with them.

 Many of these ladies said their relationships that they did have just seemed to be superficial or skin deep. Others were so focused upon their outward beauty that they never really got past that to see what they were really like on the inside.

 So, they found that their beauty had both an upside and a downside.

 As a Christian, if we see ourselves as not very capable, not an intellectual, a hard to motivate under achiever that has a full and haunting understanding that we have not attained to the height of human perfection, that self-portrayal can have either a negative or a positive effect upon us..

 It seems that most of the time we have a tendency to see it as a negative but what I want to tell you this morning is that Gods see it as a positive.

 **1 Corinthians 1:26 - 29 (NIV) 26Brothers, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth.**

**27But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong.**

**28He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are,****29so that no one may boast before him.**

 Someone once said: If you think you are too small to be effective, you have never been in bed with a mosquito.

**26Brothers** (sisters)**, think of what you were when you were called.** (Think of what you were when you first came to Christ, when you became a Christian).

**Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth.**

 **But God chose you anyway!**

 Reflect back a moment to when Jesus was on earth and it came time for Him to go into His public ministry…

 The first thing that we have recorded in Scripture is that Jesus went out and chose, went out and hand selected 12 men to be His disciples. These would be the men that He would personally disciple to lay as the first layer of stones upon which He would build His Church…

 And just who did Jesus choose?

 The highly capable, extremely intelligent, self-motivated over achievers who had reached the heights of human perfection?

 Let’s take a quick look…

Matthew was a tax collector when he was called. This was one of the most despised occupations in all of Judea. Tax collectors were looked upon as crooks, men of dishonest gain. Since they were collecting taxes for the occupier of the people, Rome, they were looked upon as traitors-- And dishonest ones at that. Often they would collect more than was due to pad their personal expense accounts.

 Two brothers, James and John. These were a couple guys from the other side of the tracks. They had a nickname in their youth. They were called: Sons of Thunder! Just what did these guys do to get that kind of handle?

 I picture them going out on Saturday night in their supped up chariot wearing their black leather jackets, with chains hanging off of their belts cruising from one party to the next looking for a rumble!

 Simon Peter, the guy that was always putting a size 12 foot in a size 9 mouth! Impulsive, a propensity to violence and who ended up disowning even knowing who Jesus was…

 Most of the rest were common fishermen and not very good ones at that. I don’t think they ever caught a fish unless Jesus would come along and tell them where to cast their nets.

 The only educated one in the whole lot who came along later was Luke the physician. But he evidently wasn’t much of a doctor!. He didn’t even have a practice.. Probably got his medical degree on the Island of Granada and might have been at the bottom of his class.

 Was this all that Jesus had to choose from? Couldn’t He have found some more naturally gifted and talented people?

Certainly He could have!

**27But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. 28He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are, 29so that no one may boast before him.**

The one thing that I really struggled with when I first felt God starting to call me into ministry was my past and all the human deficiencies that I had that I felt disqualified me from ever serving God in any kind of significant way.

 I had a lot of sin in my past. A lot of personal failures in my life. In my youth I was a very rebellious teenager, a true product of the 1960’s.

 I knew I was forgiven by God but I still knew what kind of a person I had been.

 I had a certain degree of street smarts, I had a good head for business coming up through the school of hard knocks but I was far from being an intellectual!

 I had dropped out of School just before my senior year. A couple years later I did get my GED but none the less I had never viewed myself as a good student. I certainly had doubts about going and doing college level study after I had been out of school for 20 years.

 Pastors are expected to get up in front of people and I was never comfortable with the thought of getting up in front of anyone and saying anything.

 Don’t get me wrong, I was thankful for my salvation but there was no way that I thought that I could do what I sensed God was calling me to do. I thought that I must be hearing Him wrong. I simply was not good enough or capable enough. There were certainly a lot of more capable and deserving people who would be a lot more effective than I.

 And I really struggled with this for a time…

 But as I was going through this struggle God spoke to me through this verse of Scripture..

 When I read it, it was as if God were speaking specifically and directly to me..

**26Terry, think of what you were when you were called. you were not wise by human standards; nor were you influential; or of noble birth. 27But I choose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; I choose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. 28I choose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are, 29so that no one may boast before Me.**

 Foolish things, weak things, lowly things, despised things, things that by the world’s standards amount to nothing. That sounds like me Lord..

 The fact is when God calls us to do anything He doesn’t call us because of our good looks and personal abilities.

 Oh, He can use those things if we happen to have them if we allow Him too, but that is more the exception than the rule.

 Most of the time He uses us in our inability, in our weaknesses and in our insecurities.

 Does it excite you to know that we serve a God who delights in doing the extraordinary through the ordinary?

 A God who actually takes pleasure in taking what the world looks at as not important, insignificant, foolish, weak, despised and lowly and then He does great and wondrous things through them..

 When Gods call for service comes, too often we give the excuse of weakness, inability, or lack of training. As Christians we simple fail to count on the omnipotence of God to take our small talents or our non-talents and use them for the accomplishment of His great purposes.

 D.L. Moody told the story of a passenger on an Atlantic steamer who lay in his bunk during a raging storm with a severe case of seasickness. The poor guy was even too sick to roll over in his bunk. Suddenly he heard the cry, "Man overboard!" "May God help that poor fellow," he prayed, "but there's nothing I can do." Then he thought, "I can at least put my lantern in my small window," and with a great effort he did so. The man was finally rescued. In recounting the story the next day, he said, "I was going down in the darkness for the last time when someone put a light in a porthole. It shone on my hand, and a sailor in the lifeboat grabbed it and pulled me in.

 Moody goes on to say: “Weakness is no excuse for not putting forth the little strength we have. Who can tell how God will work within us?

* Oswald Chambers,

*"God can achieve his purpose either through the absence of human power and resources, or the abandonment of reliance on them. All through history God has chosen and used nobodies, because their unusual dependence on him makes possible the unique display of his power and grace. He chooses and uses some bodies only when they renounce dependence on their natural abilities and resources."*

 It is not that God can’t or won’t or doesn’t want to use some-bodies, people who are special in their own eyes or special in the eyes of the world in which they live…

 He most often doesn’t use them because they are too full of themselves to ever recognize their need for God…

 Nobodies from the world’s eyes are useable by God because a Nobody knows that what they do is not possible apart from the grace and strength that God provides.

 So, God delights in using what the world looks at as unusable to shame the world…

**27But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. 28He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are, 29so that no one may boast before him.**

God takes great delight is using broken vessels to do holy and extraordinary things.

A while back at the jail I had three inmates in the Bible Study and each one accepted Jesus as the Lord and savior of their life that day…

 Every time I have the privilege of leading someone to Christ I have this overwhelming since of awe about God!

 Not that the person is accepting Christ or that God would reach out to this person but that God would use someone like me even in a small part of that process.

As the great old Hymn says….

*“Alas, and did my savior bleed? And did my sovereign die? Would he devote that sacred head for such a worm as I?”*

 God delights in using the weak and despised of this world.

 He takes a special joy in using the insignificant by the world’s standards, the world’s throw-a-ways, to do and fulfill His great purpose and plans.

 There is a story about a man you may have never have heard of by the name of Telemachus who was a 4th century Christian Monk.

 He lived in a remote village in Italy, tending his garden, and spending much time in prayer. One day he thought that he had heard the voice of God, or at least a strong impression that he should go to the city of Rome. He made his preparations and set out on foot. Some weary weeks later he arrived in the city at the time of one of the great festivals.

 Telemachus, not knowing what to do, followed the ever-increasing crowd surging down the streets and converging at the Coliseum. He watched as the gladiators stood before the Emperor saying, “we who are about to die salute you.” Then he realized these men were about to fight to the death for the entertainment of the crowd that day. Telemachus shouted, “In the name of Christ, Stop!”

 Nobody heard, nor did the ones near him respond. The games began and the gladiators were locked in battle. The monk pushed his way through the shouting crowd, climbed over the wall, and dropped to the dusty floor of the arena.

 The crowd watched in fascination as this tiny figure ran toward the gladiators, shouting, “In the name of Christ, Stop!”

 The little monk continued until he was right in the middle of the gladiators who had also stopped to watch this interruption. Suddenly the crowd realized that this wasn’t a part of the show and their laughter turned to anger and shouting. As Telemachus was pleading with the gladiators to stop, he turned to the emperor to plead for this carnage to end.

 At the signal from the Emperor one of the gladiators plunged his sword into the body of Telemachus. He dropped to the sand and as he lay there bleeding and dying, his last words were: In the name of Christ, STOP! The crowd was hushed; they all heard his dying plea.

 Then a strange thing happened. As the gladiators looked down at the tiny, bleeding figure in the sand, the crowd was gripped by the drama.

 Way up in the upper rows, one man stood and slowly began to make his way toward the exit. Others followed his lead. And soon, in hushed, deadly silence, everyone left the Coliseum.

 That year was A.D. 401 and that was the last battle to the death ever fought in the Roman Coliseum. What happened there that day changed the thinking of society.

 It happened because of one small voice…barely heard above the clamor and shouting of the crowd. Only one voice…one unknown, a No-body….one seemingly insignificant life who was willing to speak the truth in the name of God.

 Telemachus was a No-body from the vantage point of his world. He was but just one of the insignificant multitudes of people of his day. Yet God used him to put an end to the barbaric practice of Roman holiday where men would kill each other for sport, for the mere entertainment of a crowd.

 God delights in using what the world sees as unusable, as insignificant to accomplish great things.

During a Billy Sunday evangelistic campaign, a mentally impaired boy came faithfully each night to sing in the choir. Homer Rodeheaver, the well-known song leader said, "Joey was not very bright," "but he never missed any of our meetings and wouldn't leave until he shook my hand. Sometimes I was embarrassed by the way he constantly tailed me, and I secretly wished he'd go away."

 Then one evening a man came to Rodeheaver and said, "Thank you for being kind to my son Joey. He's not right mentally, but never has he enjoyed anything so much as singing in the choir.

 He worked hard doing simple chores for people so he could contribute to the collection.

 Through his pleadings my wife and five other children came to this evangelistic campaign and have now received Christ. Last night his 75-year-old grandfather, who has been an atheist all his life, was saved, and tonight his grandmother also came forward. Now our entire family is converted!"

**27But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. 28He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are!**

Here is the truth of the matter…

 Whatever the world in which we live looks at as a weakness God sees as strength! Whatever the world in which we live looks at as lowly or despised God sees as precious and of great value! Whatever the world looks at as nothing God sees as something special!

Whatever your deficiencies or weaknesses may be they are really your greatest strengths..

The apostle Paul one day came to God with a personal weakness. Paul had what he described as a torn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan that was sent to torment him.

 Many feel that this thorn in the flesh was a severe disease of the eye because of something that Paul had once said to the Church at Galatia..

**Galatians 4:13 - 15 (NIV) 13As you know, it was because of an illness that I first preached the gospel to you.****14Even though my illness was a trial to you, you did not treat me with contempt or scorn. Instead, you welcomed me as if I were an angel of God, as if I were Christ Jesus himself.****15What has happened to all your joy? I can testify that, if you could have done so, you would have torn out your eyes and given them to me.**

From this many believe that Paul’s thorn in the flesh had something to do with his eyes…

 Possibly a severe disease of the eye that left it mattered and oozing all kinds of ugly stuff that was offensive for others to look at!

 Paul said: **14Even though my illness was a trial to you, you did not treat me with contempt or scorn.**

He says that they had so much compassion for him that: **if they could have done so, they would have torn out their eyes and given them to him.**

Yet it was that specific weakness of Paul that God used to work His will and do great things.

 Paul said: **13As you know, it was because of an illness that I first preached the gospel to you.**

Paul had previously pleaded with God three times for Him to take this weakness, this thorn in the flesh away.

 How does God respond? He says no!

**2 Corinthians 12:9 (NIV)** **9But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.”**

 Gods’ power is made perfect in our weaknesses whatever those weaknesses may be!

Do you have a weakness this morning? Not as good looking as you would like to be? Not as smart or naturally talented or as rich or prosperous as others? Have some kind of physical deficiency that you feel is a limitation to your usefulness?

 Whatever weakness you feel that you have then rejoice that you have it for Gods power can be made perfect within that weakness!

**2 Corinthians 12:9 - 10 (NIV) Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me.****10That is why, for Christ’s sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.**

God delights: He takes pleasure in using weak and even broken people to reveal His strengths.

 Are we allowing God to use us in our weaknesses?

 Are we allowing Him to reveal His strength and His power and His Glory within all aspects of our life?

 God never calls just talented and gifted people to His service—He calls people who have simply made themselves available to Him for service.

 Have you made yourself available to God? Have you given Him your strengths, whatever they may be and have you availed to Him your weaknesses as well so that He can work His mighty strength through them?

In short, have you given Him your all this morning?

**Ephesians 3:20 - 21 (NIV)**

**20Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us,****21to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen**

 Have you given your all to Him who is able to do immeasurably more with your life than you can ever imagine or hope?