



## Gospel of the Nobodies: Week 1 How to be a somebody

**Monday—Read [Luke 1:1-38](#)** in the New Testament.

The Gospel of Luke makes particular note of how Jesus paid special attention to people that were normally overlooked and forgotten, pushed down or pushed out—the nobodies of life. This long passage helps us

kick off the new sermon series, *The Gospel of the Nobodies*, which will lead us to our Easter celebration of the resurrection of Jesus. Most of the time, so far as we know, angels don't tell us in certain terms what God wants from us. In the Bible, we more often see encouragement and confirmation coming from angels. When you think a message or call may be from God, what ways have you learned to verify or confirm the message? What tough things do you sense God calling you to do, or not do, during the Lenten season?

**Tuesday—Read [Luke 1:39-66](#)** in the New Testament. Have you ever felt like a second-class citizen? If so, you can identify with Elizabeth and Mary from this passage. People like Elizabeth and Mary were to be shunned, since one was a barren older woman and the other was an unmarried pregnant teen. Nonetheless, Elizabeth entered into Mary's joy. Who enters into your joys? Who do you let into your joy? Who supports you when you encounter challenges? How well are you able to enter into others' joy and support them in return?

**Wednesday—Read [Luke 1:67-2:20](#)** in the New Testament. Another longer passage from Luke here but it includes the birth story. Imagine that if you were God, would you trust a poor family to parent and protect the Messiah? Would you first tell night-shift shepherds, among the lowliest outcasts of their society, of the child's birth? Now here's a harder question: do your personal priorities more closely match God's values or those of your culture?

**Thursday—Read [Luke 2:21-52](#)** in the New Testament. Paying special attention to Simeon's words in verses 34-35, ask yourself in what ways each phrase pointed to one aspect of what happened in Jesus' life and ministry. When you compare this to your own story, in what ways has your loyalty to Jesus brought challenges and adjustments into your life? Is there a pattern you can identify? Is it worth it to face those challenges?

**Friday—Read [Luke 3:1-22](#)** in the New Testament. When John the Baptist began preaching, forcefully and urgently calling people to change their lives, he drew crowds that were obviously hungry to hear such a word. John baptized people as a symbol of cleansing. John humbly pointed beyond himself, and he actually had the privilege of baptizing Jesus. Do you feel a sense of urgency in finding and pursuing God's path in your life? What steps help you keep your commitment to God's call strong and focused?



## Gospel of the Nobodies: Week 2 The Sick and Disabled

**Monday—Read [Luke 4:14-44](#)** in the New Testament. Here in Luke 4, Jesus has completed his time of temptation in the wilderness and he has been baptized. Jesus now returns to his home church, the

Synagogue in Nazareth. Notice how the people react differently to what Jesus says in verse 22 and how they react to verse 28? The people go very quickly from profound admiration to murderous anger! Jesus has returned to the “somebodies” of his life, only to be treated as a “nobody,” the mere son of a carpenter. The people were offended to hear the commoner Joseph’s son Jesus speaking with such authority. How do you react when you are met with rejection and anger? Are you swayed by a desire for popularity? Did Jesus seem to be swayed by anything?

**Tuesday—Read [Luke 5:11-32](#)** in the New Testament. A somebody is one who helps a nobody realize that they are a somebody. To be afflicted with leprosy in Jesus’ time was to be the lowest of the low—a person subject to complete banishment from society. Not just because leprosy was thought to be contagious, but because having the disease meant you had been cursed by God for some offense. Lepers lived in the shadows. Everyone would move away from a leper, but in this passage we see Jesus doing something very different. Jesus moves toward the leper! Jesus actually touches the leper! Why is this scene remembered to this day as one of the most powerful acts of Jesus? What must this experience have felt like to the leper? Imagine yourself in the leper’s shoes and reflect on the idea of healing.

**Wednesday—Read [Luke 7:1-35](#)** in the New Testament. Who are the lepers of today? Who is as untouchable today as the first century leper? Does anyone really look at the man in the wheelchair? In this passage we see a Roman commander—an officer in the ranks of a foreign occupying power—plead for help from Jesus. How did Jesus’ response point ahead to a church that would one day welcome both the Gentile and the Jew on equal terms? Why should we treat faithful people differently?

**Thursday—Read [Luke 7:3 through 8:21](#)** in the New Testament. Here a religious leader invited Jesus to eat at his house, but he seems to have treated Jesus rudely. Then a woman from the streets who was thought to be sinful person poured out her love and tears on Jesus in what must have seemed a scandalous way. Can anyone tell where the fertile ground is all the time? Which soil from the parable are you? How do you nurture the seeds cast your way, even though you might not be made of an “ideal” soil? What soil was the religious leader and what soil was the woman? Which was the most fertile?

**Friday—Read [Luke 5:13](#)** in the New Testament. This week we have looked at people who seem to be nobodies because of a disease and disability. Jesus is sometimes referred to as the Good Doctor because he moved with compassion toward all people, regardless of status. Look again at Luke 5:13 and consider that moment when Jesus reached out and touched the sore and wounded flesh of the leper. Are you called to emulate this healing behavior? Can you call out to others that you are willing and can make a difference? Is there a nobody nearby that you can make into a somebody?

## Gospel of the Nobodies: Week 3 The Immigrant



**Monday—Read Leviticus 19:33-34** in the Old Testament. This scripture is but one of the many (probably 13 or 14, in fact), admonitions to the ancient Hebrew people that foreigners found in their midst should be treated as well as “native-born” people, and not be treated as outcasts. God’s chosen people, the Hebrews, did not always do well in following these rules. The Bible contains many accounts of discrimination visited upon visitors from foreign lands. As we look at what Jesus would say about the highly visible immigration issue of today, do you have an automatic, knee-jerk, reaction to those who are different? Is this reaction something you were born with, or is it born of your culture? Finally, is your automatic reaction a Christ-like one?

**Tuesday—Read Deuteronomy 27:19** in the Old Testament. Even though the Hebrew people were not so good at following the rules about being kind and generous to foreigners, it was generally thought, and taught, that God wanted his people to remember that they themselves had once been strangers in a strange land. This verse points out how important being good to the foreigner was in God’s eyes, since failure would result in God’s curse on anyone who withholds justice from the foreigner. These are the roots of the faith in which Jesus was raised. Do you agree that God’s love extends to alien persons? Why is it so hard for us to actually live that agreement out?

**Wednesday—Read Luke 7:9** in the New Testament. The closest thing first century Jews would have had to illegal immigrants was the soldiers and the officials from the occupying Roman Empire. Observing the record of Jesus’ interactions with these Romans shows that he had high regard them, in keeping with the Old Testament rules. Whether Jesus was digging deep into his faith tradition or just speaking the truth of his heart, or both, he displayed an unusually positive regard for these foreigners. It was the same with the Samaritan people, with whom he had positive dealings, despite the fact that the Jews ordinarily wanted nothing to do with them. What does this tell us?

**Thursday—Read Matthew 28:19** in the New Testament. This passage is the Great Commission given by Christ to his followers. These are the marching orders of all those who call themselves Christians. Do these words of Jesus, taken in the context of the immigration issue, open you up to look at things differently? Can we follow this command without becoming virtual immigrants in the midst of other groups? Should we remember how we treated immigrants in our own lands?

**Friday—Read John 3:16** in the New Testament. This verse may be the best known of all Bible verses. In our immigration context, be reminded that it was the **entire world**, excepting no region or race, that God loved enough to give his one and only Son. As Jesus followers, we are to look upon the immigration issue with our mission in mind—being a community that loves God and loves people. How will you live this out?

## **Gospel of the Nobodies: Guest Speaker - Rev. Casey Sigmon**

*I thank Rev. Casey Sigmon for sharing this week's message. This guide may not connect directly with Sunday's message, but will still guide you through the theme of the Gospel of the Nobodies.*

**Monday—Read [Luke 12:1-34](#)** in the New Testament. In this passage we read deeper into how the tension was building between the way things were accepted to be—the *status quo* at the time of Jesus, and the way things ought to be. In short, we get to read here a glimpse into the separate reality of God's kingdom. How would you describe a life that would be pleasing to God? Do you think that God understands and appreciates the pressures and demands that are made on our daily lives? If God does understand, how can he expect us *not* to worry about, for example, personal financial matters? How is Christian *treasure* different?

**Tuesday—Read [Luke 12:35 through 13:9](#)** in the New Testament. Jesus said that his followers were to live their lives as servants. As an exercise, as if you were in a literature class, you could interpret the final parable here as an unfinished one. If you take that lead, how might you be able to live your life as a plausible ending to the parable?

**Wednesday—Read [Luke 13:10-35](#)** in the New Testament. The religious leaders at the time of Jesus were constantly emphasizing their voluminous rules and regulations. Is there an echo of that kind of thing even here in the present time? What *spiritual practices* help you stay focused on what is actually most important to God? If you need help with this idea of *spiritual practice*, please ask a pastor, or bring it up as a discussion topic with your small group. Don't let abstract religious questions distract you from a *relationship* with God!

**Thursday—Read [Luke 14:1-35](#)** in the New Testament. Notice that in verse 11 Jesus said, "All who lift themselves up will be brought low, and those who make themselves low will be lifted up." How does this relate to what we've been talking about during this sermon series, the *Gospel of the Nobodies*? How do you personally handle Jesus saying that the chosen guests would not be allowed into the banquet, but others would? What does this mean to you?

**Friday—Read [Luke 7:36-47](#)** in the New Testament. In this passage we see Jesus accepting an invitation to have dinner with one of the Pharisees—a "somebody" of the time, to be sure! And yet at this dinner we see Jesus being lovingly ministered to by a "nobody" of the time. If we keep ourselves separated from people because of status or opinion, have we separated ourselves from the kingdom of God? Why is it so human to embrace the *status quo*? Be assured that all things are possible with God and that he is with us in the daily tension we live out between God's kingdom and our impossible humanity.



## Gospel of the Nobodies: Week 5 The Demon Possessed

**Monday—Read [Mark 9:17-18](#)** in the New Testament. The description given in this passage fairly matches the objective symptoms of epilepsy. But in ancient times, there was little understanding of epilepsy as a physical ailment. In the time of Jesus, this pack of symptoms was believed to evidence that a person was possessed by a demon! But in fact, it made no difference to Jesus, because he healed both the diseased and the demon possessed! Did Jesus ever stop to explain the science of an ailment he was about to cure? If you had been healed from a similar pack of symptoms, would you want the healing or the explanation?

**Tuesday—Read [James 1:13-18](#)** in the New Testament. Have you ever heard voices in your head telling you to do this or that thing? If we label these voices as demons then every one of us can be afflicted by demons that steal the very life from us. This passage teaches where temptation really comes from. Where does temptation come from, according to James? If sin is allowed to grow, does it give birth to death? Why is this true?

**Wednesday—Read [Luke 8:26-33](#)** in the New Testament. How is it that the demon possessed man knew who Jesus was? Since he knew who Jesus was, does this explain why the man was beside himself with fear? Does this give us any information about whether good and evil are things of equal, or balancing power. Demons that are terrified of God seems proof enough that God's power is so much greater than the power of darkness.

**Thursday—Read [Luke 8:37-39](#)** in the New Testament. The man who had been freed of demons is told to go home to his family and tell them everything God had done for him in healing him of his possession. Imagine the good news this was to his family. Imagine the power in the story this man would be telling. Were you in his shoes, where would you not go to tell this amazing story of the power of God? Once a nobody filled with demons, then suddenly a somebody carrying good news to the world!

**Friday—Read [Luke 9:1-27](#)** in the New Testament. How have you dealt with Jesus' question, "what advantage do people have if they gain the whole world for themselves yet perish or lose their lives?" What choices might you be facing that promise gain to you, but yet might cost you dearly? How can you gain the strength and self-knowledge to make the right choices?

## Gospel of the Nobodies: Week 6



**Monday—Read [Luke 23:32-47](#)** in the New Testament. Everything Jesus did was a statement about God. When he ate with sinners and tax collectors, when he healed lepers, when he talked with children and women who were nobodies in that day, he was saying something about God's love for people. We need to listen, don't we? Do you think Jesus would still be associating with nobodies today? Are you?

**Tuesday—Read [Mark 15:25-32](#)** in the New Testament. Jesus was mocked by virtually every ruling or influential status group of his time. In modern parlance, Jesus was bullied. This passage demonstrates what was done, but it also gives us a glimpse of these traits in us. In your entire history, have you ever bullied someone? Is there a confession on this that is due from you? By the same token, who among us has not been a victim of bullying?

**Wednesday—Read [Luke 21:5-38](#)** in the New Testament. Picture a worst-case scenario, the hardest tragedy you can imagine. That's what the destruction of the Temple sounded like to first century Jewish ears. And Jesus was predicting this very destruction! This endeared him to almost no one! Think back to a hard time that you have faced. Did your faith help you get through it? What made it hard to keep your faith during the hardship? What was your reaction to those who had told you hard times were on the way—that your Temple was about to be destroyed?

**Thursday—Read [Luke 22:31-62](#)** in the New Testament. The disciple Peter was the first one to say that Jesus was the Messiah ([Mark 8:27-29](#)). Peter was certainly no coward. You can think of Peter accurately as simply a human being under intense pressure. Has pressure ever led you to be ashamed of and to hide your allegiance to Jesus? What can we do to keep darkness from seeping into our souls?

**Friday—Read [Luke 23:43](#)** in the New Testament. Let's look again at this verse from Monday's lesson. Have you asked Jesus to remember you? If the thief on the cross next to Jesus was qualified for remembrance, are you not also? If you see yourself now as a nobody has this sermon series moved you to understand that you are nonetheless still worthy? As you have dealt with this sermon series, if you have, tell someone how your perspective on the nobodies has changed. It can be a personal revelation to actually form the words with which to tell someone your own unique story!



## Gospel of the Nobodies: Week 7 LGBTQIA+

**Monday—Read I John 4:18** in the New Testament. This is a good passage to take literally: “**Perfect love drives out fear.**” Maybe it's as simple as that? Jesus knew the rules, and sometimes he broke

the rules in order to show truly unconditional and protective love.

Sometimes we must also break the rules in order to show that same kind of love. How are you being stretched into a new way to drive out fear with perfect love? How will you respond to those who are different? Do we approach the subject of homosexuality from the standpoint of fear or of love?

**Tuesday—Read John 4:4-26** in the New Testament. Can you think of a single instance where Jesus failed to tear down the social barriers that in his time existed between people? In this story of the Samaritan Woman at the Well, remember that Jews at the time did not consort with Samaritans at all. It was forbidden. And yet notice here that Jesus nowhere derides her for her status, nor does he lecture her for her sinful life. Instead, as a result of her encounter with Jesus, she is moved to the point of actively going back to her town and finding everyone that she knew and bringing them all to Jesus so that they could believe in him too! She became an evangelist to her own people, and the world was changed. We are still talking about it! What challenge do you feel from this story? What barriers surround you and what keeps them from coming down?

**Wednesday—Read Leviticus 20:13** in the Old Testament and **Romans 1:26-27** in the New Testament. These are two of the very few scriptures from the Bible where reference is made to same-sex relations. These are very stark and alarming descriptions, to be sure. But on reading these passages searching for contextual meaning, do they really describe, or even proscribe, committed, monogamous, life-long, loving relationships? This question divides our opinion, and ignites our partisan passion, but is there not a way to remain unified? Why should this divide over interpretation interfere with our mission? Would division over this question be something that Jesus wants?

**Thursday—Read Leviticus 11:1-47** in the Old Testament. We often struggle when bible passages seem to reflect more the culture and historical circumstances in which they were written, but don't seem to reflect God's timeless will for human beings. This lengthy passage from the Old Testament brings this into focus, if you can stomach it. Were these complicated dietary restrictions meant to reflect God's will for a particular time, but maybe not for all time? Are we 21st Century Christians subject to the ritual protocols practiced by the ancient Hebrew people?

**Friday—Read I Peter 3:8 and Colossians 3:14** in the New Testament. As it comes to potentially divisive issues, unity, and not uniformity, is the goal. We are not of one mind, except, perhaps, we all might agree that we are not of one mind. Regardless, we are united in mission to bring the Kingdom of God closer to the here and now—nearer, our God, to thee—so to speak, rather than farther away. Will the positions you take bring you to productive discourse with those that disagree with you? Are you open to gain understanding by trusting and listening?