

The Story of David and Goliath
 (or, “How Do YOU Glorify God
 In Your Own Life?”)
 I Samuel 17:31-51 (TEV)
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 Oakland Avenue Church-Rock Hill
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(Note: The Scripture is read within the sermon.)

***The point of the story of David and Goliath
 is to glorify God.***

The point of the story of David and Goliath
 is NOT to moralize that
 the little man can defeat a giant.

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Let me set the stage for the story.

Moses has led the Children of Israel out of slavery in Egypt. They have crossed the River Jordan and have taken possession of “the promised land.” They have been ruled by judges or charismatic leaders until they have finally demanded of Yahweh God to be governed by a king.

And so, Samuel anoints a man named SAUL to be the first king. It is during the reign of King Saul that the shepherd boy, DAVID, is anointed by Samuel to be the next king, unknownst to King Saul.

It is at this point that today’s adventure begins. You will recall that the enemies of the Children of Israel were called **the Philistines**. It is from their name “Philistine” that we get the name “Palestine.”

The shepherd boy, David, had three older brothers who were soldiers in the army of King Saul. It was David’s job to carry food and supplies to his brothers from his

father; it was also David's job to bring his father the news from his sons on the battlefield. On one such visit to the battlefield, the shepherd boy David caught a glimpse of the giant Philistine name GOLIATH. Listen to how the editor of the book of First Samuel describes Goliath:

A man named Goliath, from the city of Gath, came out from the Philistine camp to challenge the Israelites. He was over nine feet tall and wore bronze armor that weighed about 125 pounds and a bronze helmet. His legs were also protected by bronze armor, and he carried a bronze javelin slung over his shoulder. His spear was as thick as the bar on a weaver's loom, and its iron head weighed about fifteen pounds. A soldier walked in front of him carrying his shield. (I Samuel 17:4-7; TEV)

The giant GOLIATH then began to taunt the Israelites, trying to get one of them to come out and fight him. But the editor records: "When Saul and his men heard this, they were terrified." (vs. 11)

The editor of I Samuel remembers that the shepherd boy David was incensed that Saul and his men were terrified.

This story reminded me of the much earlier story of Moses sending 12 men to spy out the land of Canaan before the Children of Israel tried to conquer the land. You will remember that 10 spies returned and said that it would be impossible for them to take the promised land. Only two of the spies, Caleb and Joshua, gave a favorable report:

"...the Lord is with us; do not fear them."
(Numbers 14:9b; RSV)

In similar words of faith, the shepherd boy David angrily asked King Saul's soldiers:

"...who is this heathen Philistine to defy the army of the living God?"
(I Samuel 17:26b; TEV)

Today's passage of Scripture begins at verse 31 of Chapter 17 of I Samuel:

Some men heard what David had said, and they told Saul, who sent for him. David said to Saul, "Your Majesty, no one should be afraid of this Philistine! I will go and fight him."

“No,” answered Saul. “How could you fight him? You’re just a boy, and he has been a soldier all his life!”

“Your Majesty,” David said, “I take care of my father’s sheep. Any time a lion or a bear carries off a lamb, I go after it, attack it, and rescue the lamb. And if the lion or bear turns on me, I grab it by the throat and beat it to death. I have killed lions and bears, and I will do the same to this heathen Philistine, who has defied the army of the living God. The Lord has saved me from lions and bears; he will save me from this Philistine.”

“All right,” Saul answered. “Go, and the Lord be with you.” He gave his own armor to David for him to wear: a bronze helmet, which he put on David’s head, and a coat of armor. David strapped Saul’s sword over the armor and tried to walk, but he couldn’t, because he wasn’t used to wearing them. “I can’t fight with all this,” he said to Saul. So he took it all off. He took his shepherd’s stick and then picked up five smooth stones from the stream and put them in his bag. With his sling ready, he went out to meet Goliath.

The Philistine started walking toward David, with his shield bearer walking in front of him. He kept coming closer, and when he got a good look at David, he was filled with scorn for him because he was just a nice, good-looking boy. He said to David, “What’s that stick for? Do you think I’m a dog?” And he called down curses from his god on David. “Come on,” he challenged David, “and I will give your body to the birds and animals to eat.”

David answered, “You are coming against me with sword, spear and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the Lord Almighty, the God of the Israelites armies which you have defied. This very day the Lord will put you in my power; I will defeat you and cut off your head. And I will give the bodies of the Philistine soldiers to the birds and animals to eat. Then the whole world will know that Israel has a God, and everyone here will see that the Lord does not need swords or spears to save his people. He is victorious in battle, and he will put all of you in our power.”

Goliath started walking toward David again, and David ran quickly toward the Philistine battle line to fight him. He reached into his bag and took out a stone, which he slung at Goliath. It hit him on the forehead and broke his skull, and Goliath fell face downward on the ground. And so, without a sword, David defeated and killed Goliath with sling and a stone! He ran to him, stood over him, took Goliath’s sword out of its sheath, and cut off his head and killed him.

When the Philistines saw that their hero was dead, they ran away.

(I Samuel 17:31-51; TEV)

What a story!

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is NOT to moralize that
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Now, there are several comments that I want to make
about the story of David and Goliath.

I. THE FIRST COMMENT HAS TO DO WITH ARMOR FOR BATTLE.

The Editor of I Samuel is very graphic in describing the armor of the Philistine giant, Goliath. In like manner, the apostle Paul is very graphic in describing the armor that you and I as followers of Jesus are to wear. Listen and think about yourself:

Put on all the armor that God gives you, so that you will be able to stand up against the Devil's evil tricks. For we are not fighting against human beings but against the wicked spiritual forces in the heavenly world, the rulers, authorities, and cosmic powers of this dark age. So, put on God's armor now! Then, when the evil day comes, you will be able to resist the enemy's attacks; and after fighting to the end, you will still hold your ground.

So, stand ready, with truth as a belt tight around your waist, with righteousness as your breastplate, and as your shoes the readiness to announce the Good News of peace. At all times carry faith as a shield; for with it you will be able to put out all the burning arrows shot by the Evil One. And accept salvation as a helmet, and the word of God as the sword which the Spirit gives you. Do this in prayer, asking for God's help.

(Ephesians 6:11-18; TEV)

II. MY SECOND COMMENT HAS TO DO WITH THE FIVE SMOOTH STONES CHOSEN BY DAVID WITH WHICH TO FIGHT GOLIATH.

I have in my library a set of books entitled 20 Centuries of Great Preaching that I bought when I was right out of seminary. The set is a gold mine, not of great preaching (which I never found!) but rather of historical interest; it has the historical setting for each preacher.

One of the preachers listed is a French Roman Catholic monk named *Bernard of Clairvaux*; he lived about 850 years ago from 1090 until 1153. I doubt that you and I would have like his preaching which was said to have reflected a rather pious mysticism

in which every word of the Bible had a mystical meaning for him. We would have found it hard to understand a man who could preach for 18 years on the Old Testament book, The Song of Solomon, and only reach Chapter 3, verse #1 !

In a sermon entitled “David and Goliath,” Bernard of Clairvaux likens the giant Goliath to the sin of PRIDE and he likens the five smooth stones which David took from the little stream to be five words from scripture with which to fight the sin of PRIDE:

the word of warning,
the word of promise,
the word of charity,
the word of example,
and
the word of prayer.

If you find that kind of eisegetical, mystical preaching better than expository preaching, then you will be glad that my days as your preacher are numbered!

III. MY THIRD COMMENT ON THIS STORY HAS TO DO WITH DAVID CUTTING OFF THE HEAD OF GOLIATH.

All the years of my ministry I have told stories to the kindergarten children. While I was in Clemson, I did it every Wednesday morning. My method was to begin at the start of the Bible, telling the stories as we came to them.

After I had been at Clemson for about 10 years, I was “called on the carpet” (so to speak) by one of my colleagues Pansy Duke. The kindergarten teachers said that one of the parents had complained that the stories I was telling were too graphic and were frightening the children. So, I had to tell less-violent Bible stories. But, if you know the Bible, it shows us humans “warts and all,” and that includes some very violent scenes!

The David and Goliath saga brought this all back to me this past week when I wrestled with whether or not to tell you the story just like the Bible tells it. David killed

Goliath, took Goliath's sword, stabbed him with it, and then, he used it to cut off his head.

This kind of wrestling about my sermon occurred this past week while I was becoming more and more depressed about our war in the middle east. At the end of the summer, one of our nephews is returning there, this time, not to Iraq from where he has just come home, but to Afghanistan. Two words that describe some of the pictures that come out of that part of the world are the words "slaughter" and "carnage."

My Bible stories and the saga of David and Goliath almost seem tame in light of the present horror stories coming out of the middle east.

Do you ever doubt the power of evil or
the strength of sin in the world today?

Do you ever want to take more seriously
your promises to follow Jesus?

Do you ever feel that God wants you to do SOMETHING
about sin and evil here in Rock Hill and
in South Carolina and in the United States
and in the world?

*Why are YOU here if God does not have something
for you to do to make the world a better place?*

IV. A FOURTH COMMENT THAT I HAVE HAS TO DO WITH TODAY'S LECTIONARY CHOICE FOR THE GOSPEL READING.

I thank God for *J.B. Phillips* and his paraphrase of the Gospels, for it was by reading *J.B. Phillips'* paraphrase that the Bible first became alive and vital and interesting to me as a teenager. I do not believe that I would be standing here in this pulpit today if it had not been for *J.B. Phillips*. Listen to the way he paraphrases today's Gospel Lesson:

On the evening of that day, he said to them,
 “Let us cross over to the other side of the lake.” So they sent the crowd home and took him with them in the little boat in which he had been sitting, accompanied by other small craft. Then came a violent squall of wind which drove the waves about the boat until it was swamped. Jesus was in the stern asleep on the cushion. They woke him with the words: “Master, don’t you care that we’re drowning?”

And he woke up and said to the water: “Hush now! Be still!”

The wind dropped and everything was very still.

“Why are you so frightened? What has happened to your faith? he asked them.

But sheer awe swept over them, and they kept saying to each other,

“Who ever can he be?---even the wind and the waves do what he tells them!”

(Mark 4:35-41; JBP)

WHAT A WONDERFUL STORY!

It is a story of complete faith: Jesus asleep in the storm,
 a perfect picture of trust in the sustaining
 and protecting power of God.

Do YOU ever have that kind of trust in God? The shepherd boy David did!

And what about the *miraculous* part of the story-----the stilling of the storm?

All three synoptic-gospel-writers, Matthew, Mark, and Luke, evidently thought it worth remembering, most probably as an example of Jesus being God. For, had not the old Testament told many times of Yahweh God creating and controlling the seas and even sea monsters which the Hebrew people so feared? And here is the Son of God, Jesus, doing that very thing!

*The point of the story of David and Goliath
 is to glorify God.*

*The point of the story of Jesus calming the storm at sea
 is to glorify God.*

*The point of the story of YOUR life
 is to glorify God.*

DID YOU EVER DOUBT IT?

