

Sermon - 06-20-21
1 Sam 17:1a, 4-11, 19-23, 32-49; Ps 9:9-20;
2 Cor 6:1-13; Mk 4:35-41
God's Glory – Our Deliverance

Here's what I think I've learned from this classic story of David vs. Goliath: Sometimes the one who seems to have the greatest advantage really has the biggest disadvantage. Recall the old saying "the bigger they come the harder they fall." This is the giant, the larger-than-life challenger that bullies us; the scary person or situation that intimidates us.

Page two of this story is that the disrupter, the one who won't play by the standard rules – has the advantage of surprise and agility. Something else I think I've learned from the David vs. Goliath story is that the underdog – the David – needs to have a strategy and a plan. Underdogs should never meekly accept the ways of the dominant player in the game. That leads to the predictable outcome.

How did David's strategy allow him to accomplish a victory in the face of certain defeat – a very lightly armed young man against a giant with huge spear, sword and shield? The answer is in the question, isn't it? Though Goliath could probably propel his spear a phenomenal distance and speed, David has five smooth stones in his shepherd's pouch – five shots to one. Though this eight-foot-tall giant could easily cut the kid in half head to foot or sideways, he won't get that close. David is little – but very fast. He keeps his distance and plans to take as many shots as he can.

Here's the part we really need to hear today – in our own challenges and in our own anxious fears: Goliath trusts in his reputation, his huge size, big voice and overwhelming strength. What does David trust in? Who does David trust in? Let's hear it again as David says, "God, who delivered me from the teeth of the lion and the claws of the bear, will deliver me from this Philistine." (1 Sam 17:37 MSG) Will you and I trust completely in our Heavenly Father to bring us through tough times?

Later on, "David answered (Goliath's threat), "You come at me with sword and spear and battle-ax. I come at you in the name of God-of-the-Angel-Armies, the God of Israel's troops, whom you curse and mock. This very day God is handing you over to me. I'm about to kill you, cut off your head, and serve up your body and the bodies of your Philistine buddies to the crows and coyotes. The whole earth will know that there's an extraordinary God in Israel. And everyone gathered here will learn that God doesn't save by means of sword or spear. The battle belongs to God—he's handing you to us on a platter!" (vv 46-47 MSG)

We need to hear that David takes no glory for himself. Rather, he gives all the glory to God – believing that his dependence upon the Almighty will get a faithful answer. Goliath is used to being admired and marveled at. He has doubtless gotten a lot of awards and bonuses as the king's favorite in Philistia.

David had practiced with his sling shot many times. And he had battled lions and bears while shepherding his father's flocks. He was a perfect tool in the hands of God that day. Goliath fell flat. David was delivered – and so was the entire army of King Saul.

David's five smooth stones have names thought of by Eugene Peterson: the stone of prayer, the stone of story-making, the stone of sharing the pain of our fellow human beings, the stone of naysaying or contradiction and the stone of community-building.

David had five stones in his pouch, but he slung only one that day he toppled Goliath to the ground. Certainly, he prayed before he went out to meet the giant. He also proclaimed the story of a favorable outcome for him, his comrades, his nation and his God. Third, he shared the pain and the anxiety of those gathered for battle that day. They were brave, but the contempt and hostility of the strong-man Goliath damaged morale. He had in his pouch the fourth stone of contradicting the threats of the bully – and the expected outcome of the confrontation.

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I say the stone David used was the fifth stone. By calling upon and depending upon God for an amazing outcome, he built community and increased the faith of everyone there that day – faith in God.

Consider the body of Christ. Some have called us an army. I pray we make peace, not war. And we need the witness – faith and action – the community-building of those who have faith in God. We build each other up by our words of encouragement and hope and by stepping out to be in ministry with each other.

The Apostle Paul writes to the people of the Corinthian church words of unity and correction. He basically says, “Get over yourselves! It’s about who God is in our midst. It’s about the power of God in the risen Christ to bring us into true worship – true faith – and the ministry of reconciliation in the world. He tells the church that we’re not here to grow into super-saints or Bible scholars. We are here to serve.

Today, we also see the sovereign power of Jesus as he rises from sleep in the stern of the boat and quiets a dangerous storm of Lake Galilee. He chides His dear disciples for their lack of faith in Him. If you are in the boat with Jesus, do you think the boat could be swamped by waves? Jesus asks, “Why are you afraid? Have you still no faith? We lean into Jesus for our safety and our deliverance from danger, He proves again and again His glorious power over every force that would harm you and me. Amen.