

Willow River Parish: Clear Lake, Deer Park, and Faith Family

Title: A Challenge Met

Lesson: 1 Samuel 17:32-49 NRSV

³² David said to Saul, “Let no one’s heart fail because of him; your servant will go and fight with this Philistine.” ³³ Saul said to David, “You are not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him; for you are just a boy, and he has been a warrior from his youth.” ³⁴ But David said to Saul, “Your servant used to keep sheep for his father; and whenever a lion or a bear came, and took a lamb from the flock, ³⁵ I went after it and struck it down, rescuing the lamb from its mouth; and if it turned against me, I would catch it by the jaw, strike it down, and kill it. ³⁶ Your servant has killed both lions and bears; and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be like one of them, since he has defied the armies of the living God.” ³⁷ David said, “The LORD, who saved me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear, will save me from the hand of this Philistine.” So Saul said to David, “Go, and may the LORD be with you!”

³⁸ Saul clothed David with his armor; he put a bronze helmet on his head and clothed him with a coat of mail. ³⁹ David strapped Saul’s sword over the armor, and he tried in vain to walk, for he was not used to them. Then David said to Saul, “I cannot walk with these; for I am not used to them.” So David removed them. ⁴⁰ Then he took his staff in his hand, and chose five smooth stones from the wadi, and put them in his shepherd’s bag, in the pouch; his sling was in his hand, and he drew near to the Philistine.

⁴¹ The Philistine came on and drew near to David, with his shield-bearer in front of him. ⁴² When the Philistine looked and saw David, he disdained him, for he was only a youth, ruddy and handsome in appearance. ⁴³ The Philistine said to David, “Am I a dog, that you come to me with sticks?” And the Philistine cursed David by his gods. ⁴⁴ The Philistine said to David, “Come to me, and I will give your flesh to the birds of the air and to the wild animals of the field.” ⁴⁵ But David said to the Philistine, “You come to me with sword and spear and javelin; but I come to you in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. ⁴⁶ This very day the LORD will deliver you into my hand, and I will strike you down and cut off your head; and I will give the dead bodies of the Philistine army this very day to the birds of the air and to the wild animals of the earth, so that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel, ⁴⁷ and that all this assembly may know that the LORD does not save by sword and spear; for the battle is the LORD’s and he will give you into our hand.”

⁴⁸ When the Philistine drew nearer to meet David, David ran quickly toward the battle line to meet the Philistine. ⁴⁹ David put his hand in his bag, took out a stone, slung it, and struck the Philistine on his forehead; the stone sank into his forehead, and he fell face down on the ground.

I talked about the two kings of Israel: Saul and David last Sunday. God chose the youngest of Jesses’ eight sons, who was always treated as an exception. Through this story, we could learn that God’s standard is different from humans. 1 Samuel 16:7 NRSV tells that “Humans look on the outward appearance, but the LORD looks on the heart.”

(Slide1) Today's scripture is about David and Goliath. This is the most famous war story in the world. Why is that? Because David won the fight against the giant. If Goliath beat David, it wouldn't be interesting at all. If it did, this story wouldn't be so famous. But, David's exciting victory gives hope to everyone who is frightened in front of the giant named Goliath.

There are a lot of Goliaths in our lives. The Goliaths are the things that scare us, the things that make us anxious, the things that make us feel defeated. We often stand in front of Goliath. For some, it can be a test, or diseases, or economic hardships that are difficult to solve alone.

In fact, in common sense, David can never win against Goliath because he is much smaller and weaker than the giant. So, people who follow common sense or logic might tell us to face up to the reality and conform to it. Or they might suggest to us that we give up. The weight of reality called Goliath prevails in people's consciousness. If David faced reality, followed and gave up, as the people say, the story of David and Goliath we know would not exist. At the time, no one expected David to beat the giant.

(Slide2) David came to the famous Valley of Elah on his father's errand to deliver food to his three brothers, and he heard about Goliath who frightened Israel soldiers. The giant was provoking the Israel soldiers every morning and evening, but all the soldiers of Israel were afraid of the fight with Goliath and they lost their fighting spirit because Goliath was a strong giant that people could never knock down with their strength.

Nevertheless, David couldn't understand that situation and thought, "Why is God's army intimidated by the Philistine giant? Why are they scared and unable to take a step back, saying they are God's army? Isn't king Saul's army the army of the living God?" So he volunteered and came forward because no one else came forward.

(Slide3) David had suffered several dangers while living as a shepherd. He believed that it is by God's grace that he survived. His faith and experience that God saved him encouraged him and set him up against Goliath, who seemed never to be defeated.

He experienced God's greatness while protecting his sheep. He guarded his sheep in a field of fear and loneliness where animals such as bears or lions might threaten him. God was the only one he could rely on there. For him, God was a living

presence. It wasn't God he heard from the book. There is no grace to those who think they live on their own. Those who rely on God's touch every moment always thank God.

(Slide4) In the movie titled "the Iron Lady" by Phyllida Lloyd, there is a famous line: "Watch your thoughts for they become words. Watch your words for they become actions. Watch your actions for they become habits. Watch your habits for they become your character. And watch your character for it becomes your destiny." David's confession of faith became like his destiny. May your faith also be in God like him.

(Slide5) When Saul said to David, "You are not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him; for you are just a boy, and he has been a warrior from his youth." (33) But David confessed his faith to him saying, "The LORD, who saved me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear, will save me from the hand of this Philistine." (37)

Like his words, faith is believing that God loves us and saves us from any dangers. Paul tells that "Anyone who loves God is known by him." (1 Corinthians 8:3)

(Slide6) Finally, King Saul allowed him to go to a one-on-one battle with Goliath. "Saul clothed David with his armor; he put a bronze helmet on his head and clothed him with a coat of mail." (38) But, David removed them because he was not used to them. (39) He knew that protection comes from God, not the king's fancy armor. What he needed was a new paradigm. He needed his own weapon to win. He had the experience and skills he had mastered to protect sheep from lions in the fields. What he needed was his staff and five smooth stones. So he took them.

(Slide7) When the giant looked and saw David, he disdained him because he was only a youth, ruddy and handsome in appearance. (42) But David shouted at him, whom looked down on him and mocked him, "You come to me with sword and spear and javelin; but I come to you in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied." (45)

David was not afraid of Goliath at all. David, who emphasized the name of God, contrasts with Goliath, who served idols. David believed that God would protect him and relied on God, but Goliath used his gods to curse him because he thought himself that he was strong enough without the help of the gods. David participated in the war and confronted Goliath to let all the earth know that there is a God in Israel. (46)

Finally, David set out for Goliath, who strode toward him. He quickly ran toward him, the object of everyone's fear, shouting "all this assembly may know that the LORD does not save by sword and spear; for the battle is the LORD's and he will give you into our hand." (47).

(Slide8) The first stone David threw was struck exactly in the head of Goliath's forehead. The daily practice in the field was revealed in practice. He knocked down the giant with his only means of protection, five smooth stones.

Goliath was more than meets the eye, more than imagination to people. His height was almost 10 feet and his armor weighted about 132 pounds. It was the calculation of the people that another superhuman force was needed to deal with Goliath.

When people saw Goliath in person, everyone was frightened and lost their fighting spirits. Even the brave soldiers of Saul's camp did not dare to fight. When our imagination is dominated by evil and our way of thinking is governed by power, we cannot see the good and the true, the just and the beautiful thing. However, David did not become obsessed with the logic of the power of Goliath, but proceeded with faith. David's challenge was not reckless, but he saw exactly what the truth is.

Beloved, we, humans, tend to follow the logic of power, the logic of money, and are afraid when we don't have enough of these things. But David was different. To be happy in one's life, one must prepare five smooth stones like David. It is pride, love, faith, hope, and forgiveness.

(Slide9) Paul tells that "God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world, things that are not, to reduce to nothing things that are, so that no one might boast in the presence of God." (1 Cor 1:27-29)

If you believe in God, don't stay in that arrogant place any longer; come down. If you believe in God, don't be intimidated by weakness, but boast your weakness. Now look at your hands. What are you holding? Is it money? Is it common sense or is it faith? Above all, trust and rely on God. God is with us. May God's grace be with us every day against Goliath and give us faith and courage to overcome the Goliaths in our lives. Amen.