

"God Leads"

June 3, 2018

Scripture: 1st Samuel 17: 32-49

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 despised 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.



In our scripture today, we have a story that is very familiar to us. We learn the story in Sunday school when we are little.

This story sticks with us because few stories capture our imagination like the story today. It is the story of the small guy triumphing over the giant. It has always been a common theme in books and movies and it will continue to be so. It is a simple story about what can happen when we trust God to lead us. It is the story of good triumphing over evil. And if we are honest, we all hope to be like David at times - standing up to what is wrong in the world, standing up for our faith and for our God, doing something good for the world and for those we love. It is indeed a good story. Let us pray...

As we begin, let's set the stage for today's heroic passage. Tensions were always high between the Israelites and the Philistines. Hostility was the norm. In today's scripture we come to another time when the armies line up on opposite sides of the valley and prepare to do battle. But, as was the custom at times, instead of all-out war, each side puts forth a champion to decide the battle. Such was the case when you had a nine-foot-tall behemoth of a man to fight for you. Of course, you put your stock in the giant. This reminds me of last week's message when Clint spoke of the things that matter to the world – power, strength, smarts, looks. The Philistines put their hope in the giant because he represented the things the world valued. Now, Goliath might not have had smarts or looks, but he certainly had power and strength and military experience. Day after day, Goliath would come out and challenge the Israelites to send forth someone to face him. Of course, the Israelites had no giant.



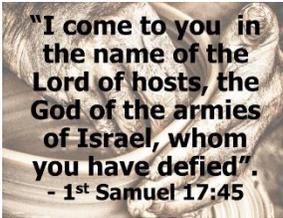
They had no one to go out and defeat the gigantic Philistine in one-on-one, hand-to-hand combat. So, day after day, the Israelites just stared at the ground when the giant came out to issue the challenge. Until one day when this shepherd boy comes along.

Something inside each of us loves a good underdog story. I think that is a big part of what attracts us to the story of David and Goliath. Against all odds, the small guy wins. People love movies that play out this theme. Movies such as *Rudy* or *Hoosiers* or *The Karate Kid* or, coincidentally, *Facing the Giants* play out this theme of the small guy winning. Sometimes this story plays out in real life too. Remember the run that little Loyola University Chicago made in the big

dance, the NCAA basketball tournament, last March? That little #11 seed that could knocked off team after team – big basketball powerhouses like Miami and Tennessee and Kansas State – before finally falling to mighty Michigan. And remember this lady? This 98-year-old nun, the chaplain of the team known affectionately as “Sister Jean”, became the face of Loyola basketball and drew support from all walks of life all across the nation for her little team that could. Yes, we are drawn to and love the underdog. But within these story lines is an important fact that we cannot overlook. The small guy represents good and doing things the right way. The small guy represents what is right in the world, what is pure and untainted. This is the true story of David and Goliath. Good triumphs over evil. Faith exceeds personal strength and prowess. God reigns supreme.



When we look at the main character in the story, we see a picture of bold and courageous faith being lived out. In David, we see someone whose life is so integrated with God’s life that stepping up and stepping out for God is just something natural that David does. When the lion and bear came and attacked the sheep, it was not David’s might or strength or ability that drove off the attacker. It was David’s trust in God that enabled him to drive off the lion or the bear. In our story today, David is sent to bring food to his brothers in the Israelite camp. David is too young to be in the army, to really be in the camp. As he is there delivering the food, he hears Goliath challenging the Israelites. But he does not hear it as a challenge to the army or to King Saul or even as a challenge to himself, but as a challenge to God. It is to this challenge that David responds, saying to Goliath,



"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".

David was saying to Goliath, you come to me with weapons and might and strength. I come to you in the name of God. The name of God is the name above all names. The name of God is the name that brings power beyond the things of this world. We know the rest of this story. It does not end well for Goliath. The stone flew straight. The giant *"fell face down on the ground"*.

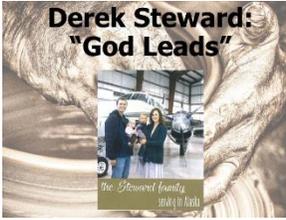


David trusted in God and stepped out in bold and courageous faith. David allowed God to lead. This is what can happen when we allow God to lead us too. God is still the name above all names. God is still able to do anything and everything. The idea that we can be the David's that stand up for God to fight against the things of this world is both scary and energizing. The belief that we can do anything because God will go with us, no matter what the world says, is empowering.

Another guy from the line of David lived with this same absolute trust in God. He chose the way of love over the path of hate. He chose to engage the pain and hurt of this world to bring joy and hope to those in need. He took on the powers of the world and the religious leaders of the day to bring freedom to the captives. He chose to serve rather than to be served. He chose to give rather than to take. He too was a nobody from tiny Bethlehem that stood up for God,

saving everybody in the process. Jesus put His whole trust in God and allowed God to work in and through His life. In His words, in His actions, in all He did, Jesus showed the love of God to others. It was a love that was embedded in His heart. We are called to model that love. Just as it was with Jesus, people can see on our faces and hear in our voices what is in our hearts. Our faces and words need to reveal the love of God that is in us too. It is this love of God that allows us to see the world as God sees the world. When we do this, we do not see as the world sees. Our world says looks and power and possessions matter. We know that these things do not matter to God. When we see someone, we need to see them, just as God saw David and just as Jesus saw everyone He met. When we see as God and Jesus see, we too will meet "the least of these" and we will help the world to change.

As Christians, we are called to boldly and courageously live out our faith just like David did and just like Jesus did. We are called to trust fully in God and to allow Him to lead us and our lives. Sometime one of us might be called on to slay a mighty giant. Who knows which one in this room may one day take on poverty or injustice or prejudice for one of the "least of these?" Who knows which one in this room might one day help someone take on an addiction, freeing them to live a new life? And who knows what remote corner of the world God might send someone in this room to, sending them to make a difference for the kingdom. We just do not know. If we trust fully in God, who knows where He will lead. It is both scary and energizing to think where God might lead us when we trust fully in His guidance and direction.



Today, I want to invite Derek Steward to come up and share his story of where God is leading him and his family. When we trust, it is amazing where God leads.

GPS – Grow, Pray, Serve

- 1) How is your faith growing, leading you to step out or step up for God?
- 2) Perhaps you see a giant that needs slain. They are all around. Spend some time in prayer for the faith to take the first step.
- 3) What exists in our community that should not exist here? How can you become a part of erasing poverty or prejudice or injustice or...?