

“Already Equipped”
1 Samuel 17:41-48
Fourth Sunday After Pentecost
June 17, 2018 (B)
Pikes Peak UMC, Pastor Dea Sharp

1 Samuel 17:41-48 (NRSV)

⁴¹The Philistine came on and drew near to David, with his shield-bearer in front of him. ⁴²When the Philistine looked and saw David, he disdained him, for he was only a youth, ruddy and handsome in appearance. ⁴³The Philistine said to David, “Am I a dog, that you come to me with sticks?” And the Philistine cursed David by his gods. ⁴⁴The 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.” ⁴⁵But 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. ⁴⁶This 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, ⁴⁷and 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.”

⁴⁸When the Philistine drew nearer to meet David, David ran quickly toward the battle line to meet the Philistine.

We love the underdog, in movies and in sports.
We root for David.

I hope, in the last couple of weeks and today, that you’ve taken a couple of lessons from David home with you!

With today’s reading we recall David, a giant and a slingshot.
We have to also recall that before David becomes a giant slayer, he’s the underdog, youngest son...
from one of Israel’s smallest tribes...
with a vocation as a lowly shepherd, running back and forth to deliver food to his big brothers on the frontlines.

TALK ABOUT UNDERDOG!

I find a first lesson right here.

Bottom-of-the-totem-pole-David is **still** hard-working! He seems almost “blissfully ignorant” of his position and is cheerful even, no matter how mundane the work.

Do we go about our every-day-detail-and-drudgery-lives, like that?

Probably not.

We'd really like to walk into our lucky break and be recognized for just how amazingly talented and wonderful we are.

But remember God's words about David?

"I (God says) don't see as mortals see; they look on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart."

David gives us this lesson: That a good measure of character is how we act when we have work that's hard, repetitious, smelly and goes unnoticed.

We can still bring glory to God!

Before today's reading, remember that the Israelites are at war with the Philistines.

On one of his trips to bring provisions to his brothers, David hears about Goliath. Everybody's heard about Goliath!

The Israelite army is frightened of Goliath's reputation.

In fact, King Saul, has offered, to any man who can defeat the giant, one of his daughters to the victor.

Now, feminists, don't get up in arms about "giving away" a woman...recall the value of that woman instead!

Seriously, that reward is priceless!

Even David is curious about the reward!

For all his hard work and humility, he's not without ambition.

He wants to know, "what's in it for me?"

The reward is great, but I think David's ambition is (again) from his heart, for his people.

Because whoever kills that Philistine giant, brings back respect to the nation.

David also has enthusiasm for God. Goliath and the Philistines have been shouting out some rather NOT NICE words about the Israelite army and **THE** living God.

Here's where David's ambition and enthusiasm is different from the others (including his own brothers.) There's an offer of cash, a wife and (this one doesn't sound too bad) permanent tax exemption AND YET: nobody...NOBODY... is willing to stand up to Goliath.

The lesson from David: Sometimes, even a little ambition can be a good thing, especially when it includes the well-being of others and love for God.

When David learns about the reward his eldest brother, remember old Eliab, gets on his case. "Why are you here? Shouldn't you be watching the sheep?"

A lot of us have "older brothers" – or someone who treats you like their younger sibling, even if there's no blood involved...you know that "someone" who points out your failings; sees only the worst.

Sometimes, it's the people who know us best that underestimate the most.

Quick lesson from David: Shrugs it off. Get right back to what you know God is guiding you to do.

The story continues.

David goes to King Saul and says, *"I'll go. I'll fight the Philistine."*

Can you imagine?

Saul gives him the *"Scram kid. Don't bother me boy"* and David talks right back to share his "resume" of exploits while out in the fields with the sheep.

"I've protected the flock from a lion and from a bear. I've rescued the lamb and killed the predator. I'll take care of that Philistine just like that. He's defied the armies of the living God."

"The Lord saved me from the paw of the lion and the bear and the Lord will save me from the hand of this Philistine."

Talk about chutzpah!

And Saul, makes you wonder....just says, "Okay. And may the Lord be with you."

Gee, thanks!

Then, Saul tried to put HIS OWN armor on David, the young boy.
Bronze helmet, coat of mail, a strapped on sword...and still *expected the kid TO BE ABLE TO WALK!*

Hello???

So, rational David, remember God's spirit has been upon him from the moment of his anointing, David takes off the armor, grabs his shepherd's staff, picks up some stones out of the creek bed, and with his slingshot in his other hand heads out to meet the Philistine.

This story is called "David and Goliath," but actually, the mirror of Goliath ISN'T young David.

It's Saul, who is supposedly a giant among *his* people. Scripture tells us he was taller than any of the Israelites."

He's the "people's choice king." They wanted someone BIG to go out and fight our battles.

In other words, Saul was supposed to be doing exactly what Goliath is doing. He's supposed to be the "man in the middle" representing his people.

Do supposed that maybe Saul thought that if David wore his armor out to battle, people might think it was him. Hmmm!

One of David's qualities however, is that he knows himself.

He's not Saul.

He's not Goliath.

David knows his strengths and his resources.

How often do we go through life trying to wear other people's "armor" and try to live up to someone else's expectations?

Goliath is the "man in the middle" for the Philistines.

Saul is supposed to be the Israelite "man in the middle."

And David? He's filling that role, too, but in a different way than we might expect.

Let's take a look at this picture.

We're in a valley (this is the horizontal view) between two mountains, two armies, in the flat "in between." It's the place where "man in the middle" Goliath has been coming, day after day, to challenge the Israelite army.

It's also the place where "man in the middle" Saul should be.

Now, turn the picture to VERTICAL.

The space is now between heaven and earth, where David is the man in the middle, standing between the people and their God.

The unlikely one, after God's own heart, is the *real* champion against unbelieving people on both sides of the Israelite/Philistine divide.

Off David goes.

Off goes Goliath's mouth, taunting David.

And we get to the point that Sally read:

"David said to the Philistine, "You come to me with sword and spear and javelin; but I come to you [I LOVE THIS PART] in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. This very day the Lord will deliver you into my hand, and I will strike you down and cut off your head; so that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel [who] does not save by sword and spear; for the battle is the Lord's and he will give you into our hand."

And we know how it turns out.

Goliath is knocked down, dead with a rock in his head.

And David, AS HE PROMISED HE WOULD, grabbed Goliath's sword and cut off the giant's head.

Yeah, that pretty much finishes it.

But, is there's a lesson even HERE, TOO.

What are we to make of David dropping his slingshot and picking up Goliath's sword and, needlessly really, cutting off the giant's head as a trophy?

What can we learn in this ruthless ending to an otherwise "underdog wins again" story, a defense of Israel and God?

Perhaps it's this:

Even David, the one after God's own heart, is still, at the end of the day, human.
Just like us.

And, as human beings, we are equipped with goodness, greatness even.
And, as humans, we're also capable of incredible lapses of violence and selfishness.

As David's story continues in the chapters to come, he will do many great things.
And he'll lead his people to greatness.

But, if you'll go home and read for yourself, something else starts to happen, too.
David will grow stronger and wealthier and more powerful and famous.
In essence HE becomes a giant.
In his military career, he'll even begin to act like Goliath!

Oh, how fallible we humans are!
'Cause, sometimes we lose sight of who we are; who we're meant to be.
Don't we sometimes become the very things we've fought so hard against and want to destroy?

How can we get out of that cycle?
We can't.
Not on our own.

Like the Israelites out in that valley, we become immobilized by our human limitations.

Dear Ones, we need a champion.
We need a man-in-the-middle.
And that's who Jesus is.

David was God's champion. He fought on God's behalf against the unbelief of the people.
But Jesus, **who we believe** to be fully human and yet fully divine, is **OUR champion**.

He is the ultimate man in the middle, standing between heaven and earth.
He took ON HIMSELF **our** sin and what should have been God's justice.

While David wanted Israel to know that "the Lord does not save by sword and spear," a sling and a rock **were still** required.

Jesus breaks the cycle of violence by calling us to peace, by calling us to love even our enemies, and reminding us to put our swords back in their place – 'cause those who live by the sword will die by the sword.

So how do we defeat the "giants" of our lives without becoming one ourselves?

Jesus taught it won't be by sword or sling.
Jesus told us that it would be by loving service.

Jesus tells us "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and...are tyrants over them. It will not be so among you; but whoever wishes to be great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be your slave just as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

David is our picture of the Greater Champion, Jesus Christ.
David defeated the enemy and delivered a nation, in a single battle, for a short time.
Jesus Christ has defeated Satan and sin and evil and death and delivered his people for **all** time.

Praise God for the lessons of David who leads us to a closer walk with Jesus.

Amen!