

## **“David: Giant Problems”**

Date: August 20, 2017

Place: Lakewood UMC

Texts: 1 Samuel 17:1-58

Occasion: People of the Bible, series

Themes: Dependence on God, trust, courage in the face of enemies

The slender, beardless boy kneels by the brook. Mud moistens his knees; bubbling water cools his hand. He’s looking for rocks, stones actually, smooth stones. The kind that stack neatly in a shepherd’s pouch and rest flush against a shepherd’s leather sling. Flat rocks that lay heavy on the palm and travel like missiles into the head of a lion, a bear, or, in this case, a giant.

Goliath stares down from the hillside. Only disbelief keeps him from laughing. He and his fellow Philistine soldiers have been terrorizing the valley. Goliath towers above them all – all nine feet nine inches tall.

He looks like the main contender at the World Wrestling Federation match. His biceps burst, his thigh muscles ripple, and he boasts to the crowd: “This day I defy the ranks of Israel! Give me a man and let us fight each other.” (1 Sam. 17:10)

No one from the Hebrew army volunteers, until today, until David. David just showed up this morning. He clocked out of sheep watching to deliver bread and cheese to his brothers on the battle front. That’s where David hears Goliath defying God, and that’s when David makes his decision.

He takes his staff in his hand, and he chooses for himself five smooth stones from the brook and puts them in a shepherd’s bag, a pouch that he has, and his sling is in his hand. And then he draws near to the Philistine giant.

Goliath scoffs at the kid, nicknames his *Twiggy*. “Am I a dog, that you come to me with sticks?” (vs. 43) Skinny, scrawny David. Hulking, brutish Goliath. The toothpick versus the tornado. What odds do you give David against this giant?

Better odds, perhaps, than you give yourself against your own giants. Oh, your giant doesn't carry a sword and shield and your giant looks very different: unemployment, abandonment, sexual abuse or depression. Your giant doesn't parade up and down the hills of Elah; he prances through your office, your classroom and your bedroom.

He brings you bills you can't pay, grades you can't make, people you can't please, bottles you can't resist, pornography you can't refuse, a career you can't escape, a past you can't avoid, and a future you can't face. You may well know the roar of Goliath.

David faced a giant who bellowed his taunts and challenges day and night: “For 40 days, twice a day, morning and evening, the Philistine giant strutted in front of the Israelite army.” (vs. 16)

The giant you face does the same thing – first thought of the day, last worry of the night – your Goliath dominates your day and infiltrates your joy. Does anyone here today have a giant of a problem they're facing right now? Well, learn from David what to do about it.

David appeared to be all wrong for the job. No more than a boy, really. No formal training. No skills to speak of with a sword and shield. What he did have was an Ally he trusted with his life. So, let's see how David relied on his Ally to tilt the battle in his favor.

Goliath's family was an ancient foe of the Israelites. Joshua had driven them out of the Promised Land 300 years earlier. He destroyed everyone except the residents of three cities: Gaza, Gath,

and Ashdod. The city of Gath bred giants like Yosemite grows sequoias. Guess where Goliath was raised? – you got it, Gath. His ancestors were to the Hebrews what pirates were to Her Majesty’s navy – a royal pain that wouldn’t go away.

The soldiers who fought for Israel must have seen Goliath and mumbled, “Not again. My dad fought his dad. My grandad fought his grandad.”

Perhaps you’ve groaned similar words. “I’m becoming a workaholic just like my father.” “Divorce streaks through our family like the back of a skunk.” “My grandad had trouble with the bottle. My Dad was a drunk, and I’m following in his footsteps.” Some giants are generational.

King Saul sends his best warriors to the battlefield, to do battle with the Philistines. Goliath taunts them. “When Saul and his troops heard the Philistine’s challenge, they were terrified and lost all hope.” (1 Sam. 17:11 MSG)

But what am I telling you? You know Goliath. You recognize his walk and wince at his words. You’ve seen your Godzilla. The question is – is that all you see? You know his voice – but is it all you hear? David saw and heard more.

Read the first words he spoke in battle, which by the way are the first recorded words he speaks in the Bible: “David asked the men standing near him, ‘What will be done for the man who kills this Philistine and removes this disgrace from Israel? Who is this uncircumcised Philistine that he should defy the armies of the living God?’” (vs. 26)

Now pay attention to this. David shows up discussing God.

The soldiers mentioned nothing about God, the brothers never spoke his name, but David takes one step onto the stage and raises the subject of the living God. He does the same thing when he meets with King Saul. Listen to him again:

“The LORD, who delivered me from the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear, He will deliver me from the hand of the Philistine.” (vs. 37) No one else discusses God. David discussed no one else *but* God. If you turn in your Bible to Psalm 121, page 965, you’ll see what might very well be David’s battle plan to deal with Goliath. Let’s read it together.

What giants in your life are big enough to make you temporarily lose sight of God and fear for your well-being? David reminds us that we need to focus on God and not on the giants of our lives. David put his trust in God, and used what he had to do battle with Goliath.

The king tried to give David some equipment to go out and fight the giant. But the equipment wasn’t right for David. So he goes out with his little sling shot and his pouch of smooth stones.

David’s brothers cover their eyes – both in fear and embarrassment. Saul sighs as the young Hebrew walks to his almost certain death. Goliath throws back his head in laughter, just enough to shift his helmet and expose a square inch of forehead flesh.

David spots the target and seizes the moment. The sound of the swirling sling in the only sound in the valley. Sssshww. Sssshww. Sssshww. The stone torpedoed through the air and into the skull. Goliath’s eyes cross and his legs buckle. He crumples to the ground and dies.

David runs over and yanks Goliath's sword from its sheath and cuts off his head. You might say David knew how to get a *head* of his giant.

When was the last time you did the same? How long since you ran *toward* your challenge? We tend to retreat, finding our favorite hideaway – whether its food, television, alcohol or worse. For a moment, a day, or a year, we feel safe, insulated, anesthetized.

But then the work runs out, the liquor wears off, or the lover leaves. And we hear Goliath again, bombastic walking up and down the hills and valleys of our life.

Try a different tack. Rush your giant with a God-saturated soul. Seize your faith and go after your problem head on. “Giant of divorce – you are not entering my home.” “Giant of alcohol – you are not going to take me down again.” “Giant of insecurity, child abuse, bigotry, or debt – you're going down.”

Our God is bigger than any problem. David knew that. Like David, we need to see past our Goliath-size problem and realize we serve a God who can bring down our toughest foe.

Retreating from our Goliaths might make us feel safe in the short run, but the only way to real victory is by rushing our giants with a God-saturated soul. Let us pray our opening prayer once again:

“Father, thank you for giving us a fighting chance against the giants in our lives. Thank you for ensuring human might doesn't always make right. Guide our thoughts and direct our focus when battles arise. Help us look to you for the strength we need. In Jesus' name, Amen.”

This sermon borrows heavily from the book *Ten Men of the Bible* by Max Lucado, Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2015. Chapter 5, “David: Giant Problems and Colossal Collapses,” pp. 91-96.