

Greater Faith: The Answer for Giant Challenges

I Samuel 17:32-50

Dr. Donald C. Hoagland

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Some things in life, particularly when you are young, seem insurmountable. For some who are here this morning riding a two-wheel bike like their big brother or sister looms ahead like the impossible dream. Others among us wonder if they will ever get that driver's permit in their hands. And there are others who are plagued by an uncertain economy and wonder about such things as job security, money to pay for their children's education and upcoming health care reform. All of these things appear as giants in our pathway; that is, huge obstacles and overwhelming challenges, that in many cases we feel ill-equipped to handle on our own. Walking around the house whistling a happy tune does not solve the challenges of life.

This morning as five of you are recognized as members of this church, I want you to direct your attention to the word of God. Obviously, all of us need to do that yet today's message is specifically addressed to you. You are all familiar with the encounter of David and Goliath. It is an important narrative not only because it demonstrates how good (in this case God's plan) can triumph over evil, but also because it demonstrates that the giants in our pathway are not insurmountable. They can be defeated when we are within God's will. So when you recall the triumph of David and Goliath, recall this theme that I'll share with you now. It is an axiom for life. "Little is much when God is in it," which means that we should never underestimate the power of God to use us or our circumstances.

Now look with me at the wisdom within this text. There are some real obstacles in life. We live in a world that is tainted by sin. Evil does exist, it is real. Sin is real. The Philistines represented a significant threat to God's people Israel. They were not advocates for God or God's people - they wanted to conquer them. Goliath was approximately 10 feet tall and a problem for Israel as well as David. My point, young people, is this: Not everything or everyone in life is either beneficial for you or out to be your friend. So know that you have attained the age of reason when you must discern between what is good for you and what is not. Our Lord put it this way in the gospels, "you must be as wise as a serpent and as innocent as a dove."

I wish and pray that I could promise you a world of peace and joy, but it just isn't so. While humans continue to sin against God there will be disharmony - at least until Christ comes again. Note these clippings from headlines around the country.

"Killing Our Children: In one year in the Chicago area, 57 children age 14 and under were murdered, felled by snipers, sacrificed by gangs. It was a year for burying the young." - Chicago Tribune

"Teen Violence Hits Home: The total firearm homicides for American males ages 15-19 was 3,187. On the other hand, total firearm homicides in males from seven other developed countries in the same age group was 72 - approximately two percent of the U.S. total." - Young D.C. Newspaper

"Crime in Philadelphia: The new mayor Michael Nutter has his hands full since the murder and crime rate continues to escalate; and much of it is related to drug trafficking." - Philadelphia Inquirer

Now you know and I know that "you folks" are not a part of those negative examples or statistics. However, you (we) need to remember that there are a lot of troubled people in the world today, especially youth, and that as Christians you can and must make a difference. For every one of you that says no to drugs, no to injustice and no to those who would defame the name of Christ - the pendulum begins to swing in the positive direction. Remember the influence of one person can make a difference. That was also evident in today's scripture

lesson. David was just an individual, but as scripture reminds us, “he was a man after God’s own heart.” David, as King Saul declared in verse 33, “was only a boy.” He was no match for a giant like Goliath according to Saul. Yet David didn’t see it that way - he had amazing confidence. Now why did he have such confidence? Look at the history of young David’s relationship with the Lord! That’s very important!

Note what David says in verse 37, “the Lord who delivered me from the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear will deliver me from the hand of the Philistine.” Do you see what David discovered? He looked back at his history; that is, the past experiences he had in trusting God fully. Knowing then that the provision of God had been with him in the past, there was no reason to doubt that God would not be with him in the present in his encounter with Goliath.

In Confirmation Class, part of what we learned as Christians who happen to be Presbyterians is that God has provided for us a way out when we were unable to provide one for ourselves. That in Jesus Christ God provided the perfect life and atoning sacrifice of His only Son - the only one who would be worthy to stand before a Holy God and pay the price for sin on our behalf. That is the good news of the gospel and it is the power of God to provide you with lasting confidence to take on the giants that have and will enter your pathway.

Remember, too, those times when you were in a jam, or you needed something and you sought God in prayer and God answered your prayer. Like David, that ought to give you confidence that you are never ultimately alone, that God is always with you and that nothing is impossible or insurmountable with God. So as you make your confirmation today, you are confirming that you have a history with God, a relationship with God through Jesus Christ, and that you are going to depend on Him and make Him the core of your life.

This morning take the time to ask older members of Supplee how important knowing God is. And particularly, how important knowing God was when they were your age. I’m sure they will tell you that learning to trust God is the most important of life’s lessons.

The third aspect of this encounter of David and Goliath that is crucial to remember is that David gave the glory to God. Recall with me what David exclaimed in verse 47, “All those gathered here will know that it is not by sword or spear that the Lord saves; for the battle is the Lord’s and he will give all of you into our hands.” The point that I want you to notice is that David didn’t go into battle claiming to be the greatest warrior that ever lived. Instead, he focused on giving glory to God. If you study the life of David you’ll note that there were occasions when David failed to give glory to God - at those times David experienced great pain and sorrow - so, too did the nation of Israel. The point of course is this: the mature person in Christ does not go around looking for praise or credit, but knows and lives out the fact that for any giants in our pathway that we may conquer, the glory goes to God. So if your goal is to be a contributing and helpful member of Supplee Presbyterian Church, then make the aim of your life bringing glory to God. God will be blessed, this church will be blessed, and so will you!

One of you may become a missionary, maybe another a teacher shaping young minds. Perhaps one of you will become a scientist helping to find cures for diseases. Whatever you do, make sure you know that today you publicly declared that you are Jesus’ disciple, that is, his follower. So hear a truth, “God in Jesus loves you.” Here’s a challenge, how are you going to make that known?