

**A GIANT PROBLEM 1 Samuel 17:1-50**  
**Holiday Island Presbyterian Church**  
**July 30, 2017**

**INTRODUCTION:**

No one can doubt that Jesus  
was probably the best preacher of all time.

So, I am going to take a page from his notes  
and instead of reading the scripture to you this morning,  
I am going to tell you the story of David and Goliath -  
- as faithfully as I can.

That is a techniques Jesus often used  
in order to make his point more interesting  
and more memorable.

**THE STORY:**

Our story begins with the Israelites and the Philistines  
at war - again - with each other  
and facing each other across the Valley of Elah.

The Bible paints the Philistines  
as being mortal enemies of the Israelites;  
there was almost a perpetual war between the two  
peoples.

So, here they once again at war.

The Philistines occupy a mountain  
on one side of the Valley of Elah -  
- the Israelites occupy the mountain on the other side.

The Philistines have issued a challenge:  
each side is to send a champion into the valley

**to battle each other to the death  
to determine the outcome of the war.**

**The Philistines have wisely chosen a fellow named Goliath.**

**The truth about Goliath has been lost in myth.  
He's like the Paul Bunyan of biblical times.**

**From the Dead Sea Scrolls book of Samuel  
and from the 1<sup>st</sup> Century historian Josephus -  
- Goliath is 6'9" tall.**

**Another ancient text says he was 9'9" tall.**

**Let's just agree that Goliath was big enough  
to scare the daylights out of the Israelites  
and nobody wanted to take the challenge to face him!**

**Least of all, Saul - the king.**

**So, for 40 days,  
each morning and each evening  
Goliath would take the field of battle in the valley  
and shout insults and taunts at the Israelites.**

**Goliath is no dummy!  
He chooses to taunt the Israelites in the morning and evening  
in order to interrupt their prayers.**

**Day after day this goes on and on.  
Goliath challenging - Saul cowering.  
At stake is the victor's right to enslave the losers.**

**Enter a shepherd named David.  
Youngest of the 8 sons of Jesse.**

**David already had 3 brothers in the Israelite army.**

**So Jesse loads him up with sack lunches for his brothers  
and sends him to deliver them.**

**When David got to the battlefield,  
like any young, inexperienced kid  
he was excited to see the armies lined up against each  
other.**

**So, David leaves the sack lunches with the quartermaster  
and heads into the ranks to find his brothers.**

**As they were visiting,  
Goliath came striding out of the Philistine ranks  
and began his daily taunt:  
“Why have you come out to draw up for battle? Am I not  
a Philistine, and are you not servants of Saul? Choose a  
man for yourselves, and let him come down to me. If he is  
able to fight with me and kill me, then we will be your  
servants; but if I prevail against him and kill him, then  
you shall be our servants and serve us.” And then he said  
Philistine said, “Today I defy the ranks of Israel! Give me  
a man, that we may fight together.”**

**You can imagine David’s response . . .  
. . . who in the world is this?  
And why doesn’t somebody shut him up!?!?**

**The Israelite army pretty much decided it was S.E.’s job . . .  
. . . S.E. - Somebody Else!**

**But, Saul has offered a good reward  
for whomever will face Goliath -  
- providing they win, of course.**

**Well, the reward sure beats having to watch sheep!**

**So David begins to show some interest in the challenge.**

**Didn't take long for David's curiosity  
to reach the ears of King Saul.**

**So Saul sends for David . . . and here the real story  
begins!**

**THE KING:**

**Here is Saul, annointed by Samuel  
to be king of the Israelites -  
- the chosen people of God.**

**Saul became king during a period of national humiliation  
- the Philistines had defeated the Israelites at Shiloh  
and captured the Ark of the Covenant,  
which symbolized the presence of God in their  
midst.**

**It fell to Saul to take the Israelites from being a bunch of tribes  
to national unity with a king as leader  
or face complete and permanent subjugation.**

**Up to this point, by the grace of God  
Saul had fought successfully against the Philistines,  
Ammonites, Moabites, Edomites, Arameans, and  
Amalekites.**

**He also succeeded in drawing the tribes of Israel into a closer unity.**

**Saul then had a falling out with the prophet Samuel  
that ended up with Saul in a deep depression  
feeling that God had deserted him  
and Saul consulted a witch of Endor for help.**

**My, my, my . . . how the mighty has fallen!**

**Of all the people gathered there that day,  
Saul was the one with the most experience with God -  
- how many times had God delivered him?**

**And yet,  
Saul's faith wavered, flickered and died as he faced Goliath.**

**Did Saul really think this Goliath problem  
was too great for God?  
Seriously?**

**Well, part of me can sympathize with Saul,  
because there have been times  
when I didn't trust God like I should have.**

**You've been there, too.  
A Goliath-sized problem comes up -  
- and we try to rely on our own strength  
and we realize that we can't do this on our own  
and we can't seem to trust God fully.**

**That's a terrible feeling, isn't it?  
Too often we make that choice and suffer needlessly -  
- under the weight of anxiety and fear.**

**Poor old Saul.**

**GOLIATH:**

**Now shift your attention for a moment  
to this big guy standing on the battlefield  
shouting taunts and insults to the Israelites.**

**Goliath had trained his whole life to be a warrior.  
He had never been defeated in battle -  
- and he had been in a lot of those!**

**Some say he was the principle reason  
the Philistines were able to steal the Ark of Covenant.**

**So what was Goliath expecting?**

**He pretty well knew that Saul wasn't going to come down that hill!  
Saul would eventually pick someone to face Goliath,  
Goliath would quickly defeat that person  
The war would be over  
And Goliath would remain the national  
champion!**

**Goliath's strength lay in his own abilities  
and his own size.  
He was totally self-reliant.**

**Sure, he was . . .  
. . . you know how this story ends -  
- you see where self-reliance can lead us if we're not  
careful.**

**Next time you are tempted to rely on yourself  
instead of sharing your burden with God  
or with someone God send to you -  
- think of Goliath.**

### **DAVID**

**Well, there is a third character in our story - David.**

**When David was summoned to Saul,  
his first statement to Saul was:**

**“Let no one’s heart fail because of Goliath; your servant will go and fight with this Philistine.”**

**Saul snickers at that and accuses David of being only a boy.**

**David responded:**

**“Your servant used to keep sheep for his father; and whenever a lion or a bear came, and took a lamb from the flock, 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. 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.” 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.”**

**Really?**

**A lion and a bear?**

**But if we focus on that exaggeration,  
we miss the most important thing 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.”**

**Something about what David said -**

**- and the way he said it -**

**- resonated with Saul and Saul relented.**

**Saul offered his armor and weapon to David.**

**Those were Saul’s protection - not David’s.**

**What had worked for Saul was not what David needed.**

**And this is my favorite part of the whole story:**

**David took his staff in his hand,  
chose five smooth stones from the dry creek,  
put them in his shepherd's bag, in the pouch;  
and with his sling in his hand  
he faced Goliath.**

**Do you know why 5 stones?**

**I used to think it was because David wanted insurance -  
- in case he missed with the first one  
he would have backup.**

**Research then led me to understand  
that Goliath had brothers!  
And a father!**

**David was getting ready to take on Goliath . . .  
. . . and his whole family!**

**Now that's faith!**

**David was relying on God to bring him victory  
and David was preparing to go beyond this Goliath-sized  
problem  
to wherever God would send him!  
Here I am, God!  
Let Your will be done!**

**CONCLUSION:**

**Three things happened that day.  
Three very unexpected things.**

**First of all,  
Saul faltered; couldn't rely upon his faith  
probably because he had strayed so far from God.**



**That was probably the most predictable thing that happened.**

**When we stray from the paths of righteousness,  
if we remain unrepentant pretty soon the guilt builds up  
and we begin to feel like we are so wretched  
that God has simply abandoned us.**

**Nothing could be further from the truth!**

**God is like the father waiting for his Prodigal Child to return.  
God wants a relationship with us so badly  
that we can be forgiven for anything we confess!**

**Had Saul turned to God that day . . .**

**. . . maybe we would be talking about Saul and Goliath.**

**The second unpredictable thing that happened that day  
was that Goliath fell - literally - in defeat.**

**Whomever bet against Saul that day  
ended up a very wealthy soldier!**

**The odds were very heavily stacked in Goliath's favor.**

**And why not?**

**Look at his size - his battle record.**

**World champion brawler!**

**Unfortunately,**

**when we choose to rely upon ourselves  
the absolute best we can ever hope to do  
is limited by our own skills, talents and strength.**

**That skill, talent and strength may take us far in this world  
but sooner or later . . .**

**. . . we are going to face a giant problem . . .**

**. . . or even a small problem . . .**

**. . . that our skill, talent and strength will not overcome.**

**That has happened to me . . . more than once;  
I'm sure it has happened to you, too.**

**The world kicks the door down,  
rushes in and attacks us in our sleep  
and we are at the end of our abilities.**

**That is a very good time to remember two things:**

**The first is the passage from Romans we read earlier:**

**“28 We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose.”**

**If you stay in a close relationship with God, As Paul said:**

**“38 For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.”**

**Now, the third unpredictable thing that happened that day.**

**And this may come as a surprise to you . . .**

**. . . God won the battle!**

**Oh, it's true that David slung the rock at Goliath -**

**- and it may be true that David's aim was true to the mark;**

**but it was God who called David -**

**- it was God who emboldened David -**

**- it was God who had equipped David for this very moment**

**And it was God that stood beside David on that day!**

**And God never abandoned David -  
- even though David went on to do some terrible things -  
- God led David to victory that day and far beyond that  
day.**

**So, let me leave you with a question -  
- one that only you can answer . . .**

**Where do you stand?**

**Are you separated from God?  
It doesn't have to be that way a moment longer!  
Right here - right now - right where you are  
you can turn back to God  
and walk out of here in full fellowship with  
God.**

**There is no ritual to it -  
- it all happens in your heart.**

**Or . . .  
. . . you can continue to be a Goliath in your own mind.  
Self-sufficient, tough, invincible.  
That is, until . . .**

**Or . . .  
. . . you can choose to be a David.  
Filled with faith and ready to serve God  
and face whatever Goliath comes your way!**

**As for me, I stand with Joshua who said:  
“ . . . as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord.”**