

“Let No Man’s Heart Fail Because of Goliath”
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I Samuel 17*

A quiet little man was sitting at a sports bar minding his own business when all of a sudden a big dude comes in and – WHACK!! – knocks the little guy off the bar stool and onto the floor. The big fellow says, “That was a karate chop from Korea.” The little guy thinks, “whoa,” but he gets back up on the bar stool when all of a sudden – WHACK!! The big dude knocks him down again and says, “That was a judo chop from Japan.” So the little guy has had enough of this...He gets up, brushes himself off and quietly leaves. The little man is gone for an hour or so when he returns. Without saying a word, he walks up to the big dude and WHAM!! Knocks him off his stool, knocking him out cold!! The little guy looks at the waitress and says, “When he gets up, tell him that’s a SLUGGER from LOUISVILLE!”

Well the little guy felled his giant, his Goliath. And who hasn’t had, who doesn’t have their giants, Goliaths? Whether in the workforce, the schoolyard, the neighborhood, the community? (And of course there are appropriate ways to confront and combat your Goliaths.)

But the key issue is to do so!!
Not to cower in fear
Not to shrink in the shadows
Not to live in anxiety
Not to exist in shame
But to face your Goliaths with heart, with faith, courage, with resolve!

I love young David’s words to King Saul, as Saul and all of his army including David’s older brothers are cowering in fear of Goliath. Here they are. And words for us today, as our giants stand in our way, in our paths to our futures. Verse 32 – “Let no man’s heart fail because of him...” Because of Goliath...because of that giant...because of that boss...because of that account...because of that bully (and they come in all shapes, sizes and ages).

As I was pulling this sermon together I thought about saying – “Now who hasn’t heard about ‘David and Goliath’, that great ancient story of the little guy winning over the big guy, winning against all odds?” And then, once again, it dawned on me – in our day and age – less and less can we rely on Religious, Biblical literacy. Now, no doubt those older than say 25 (?) will have heard of David and Goliath, but what about our children. When I say our children, I’m referring to our American children. Children learn morals and views of life, especially through stories, through narratives. The Biblical narratives have provided great teaching for our nation for hundreds of years, and we are losing much of this today. Our children need to hear and learn these stories. David and Goliath – the weaker, the smaller can prevail! Never give up! In the fact of seemingly insurmountable odds – go forward!!

Let no man’s heart fail because of Goliath!

Friends, hear me – it is no idle wish, to invite families into our church. It is a much larger issue and concern than just filling pews.

Imagine we are in the hill country of Western Judah, a border territory, on one side of the mountain stood the army of Israel, and on the other the army of Philistines -- the valley between them. No man's land.

And as they face off each other; out walks, or should I say thunders, this nine-foot behemoth - Goliath. His armor was foreign, frightening. He was an ancient "walking tank".

Goliath roars out the challenge to Israel: "Let's get started. Bring your pick of the litter and have him stand before me. If he kills me - we Philistines will be your servants, but if I kill your warrior - then you shall be our servants. I dare you to present your best."

Israel's response is fear. Even Saul is afraid. Who will be their champion? The Philistines are not only humiliating Israel, but also Israel's God - Yahweh. What can be done?

Verse 12 begins: "Now David....."

The story is woven together so beautifully. The scene has been set, the nervous perspiration is flowing freely, and the "angst" of each is at its height.

And in the midst of an impossible situation, "against all odds" -- two words of light break through the darkness of the day. A ray of sunlight pierces the pit of dread.

Someone Steps up.

Verse 12 - "Now David"

As of yet we only have a glimmer of hope, but nevertheless hope. "Scrawny hope" one might say. The youngest of the family of Jesse? A champion? For over six weeks Goliath stood before the weak-kneed Israelites, taunting them, terrifying them. Young David was delivering supplies to his brothers who were in the army. A curious David decided to get a little closer to the battle lines. David heard Goliath's challenge and saw his own people flee from the giant.

David speaks up ". . . who is this Philistine, that he should defy Israel and Israel's God?"

Word gets to Saul about this young man David. He is summoned before the King. Saul takes a look at David, this boy, this little boy and says, "Forget it. You are no match for Goliath. No way can you step up!"

David declares, "Let no man's heart fail because of him... The Lord who delivered me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear, will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine." Saul was at his wits end. He had no real champion. For six weeks they had been humiliated. This boy is at least sincere, perhaps a bit slow in the head, but sincere.

Saul gives him permission to fight. Here is another fascinating twist in the story. Saul has his armor put on David. -- The bronze helmet, the coat of mail, the sword. Picture the scene - Poor David couldn't move. It was all too heavy and cumbersome. It was like putting your heaviest winter coat on a newborn. David left the armor on the ground. And stepped up!

We need to be like David, willing to take the risk, to go against all odds, and shake off the encumbering armor that is keeping us from being able to take the offensive position in life. And step up! A risk? Yes -- but the way to experience life.

We have not been created for retreat!!

He takes his shepherd's staff, a few smooth stones, and his slingshot. Well equipped - David goes before Goliath. Well equipped? A skinny little boy with a slingshot and five smooth stones, going up against a nine foot giant in full armor?

Sylvester Stallone's "Rocky" never had such bad odds. Everything tells us that this boy is "dead meat." Instead of stepping up, he should be running for the hills! That's the logic of pragmatism – of the world – It's not God's logic, Spiritual logic.

Goliath looks at this "champion" of Israel. He taunts David by asking, "Am I a dog, that you come to me with sticks? Come here and I will feed you to the birds."

David responds: "You come to me with a sword and with a spear and with a javelin; but I come to you in the name of the Lord of hosts . . . This day the Lord will deliver you into my hand."

They approached each other in the valley. As Goliath came closer, David placed a stone in his sling and then placed the stone into Goliath's forehead. Goliath, the giant fell dead. Defeated!

The boy was victorious over the ogre.
Imagine - you can overcome!

How many times out of fear over the giants that stand before you -- have you retreated instead of charging ahead?

You are so small and that Leviathan, that obstacle is so immense! So there you stand on one side of the mountain watching in fear the obstacle on the other side of the mountain. Frozen, huddling - failing to risk, and failing to live, failing to step up!

For each one of you -- there are possibilities, and there are Goliaths.

What is your Goliath today? What is keeping you from crossing the mountain to the next horizon? What is keeping you from risking your emotional, intellectual, professional, spiritual life? What Goliath is stopping you from stepping up and going forward?

Listen to David's declaration: "Let no man's heart fail because of Goliath!"

There is some of David hidden in all of us. The brazen, childlike, innocence of purpose -- that says, "Goliath, Giant today I will overcome you!"

With the help of God, I will overcome you!
Amen.