

“David and the Dwarf”

Trusting God to Knock Our Giants Down to Size

June 13, 2010

1 Samuel 17

Psalm 27:Selected Verses

Ephesians 6:10-11, 14-18

2 Corinthians 12:9

Romans 8:31-39

A Sermon preached by
Pastor Rob Fulton
First United Presbyterian Church
Bellefontaine, Ohio

Now, of all the famous battles described in the Old Testament, perhaps the MOST famous was not fought between two armies, but between two PEOPLE. It was the battle that took place in the Valley of Elah between a shepherd boy named David and a giant by the name of Goliath.

But before we look at that fearsome duel, I want us to look again at something that occurred PRIOR to that battle when God's prophet Samuel went to the house of Jesse, of Bethlehem, to anoint one of Jesse's sons as the future king of Israel. This was the story we focused on last week, if you will remember. As Samuel stood before Jesse's seven sons trying to decide which one God wanted to be Israel's next king, God said to Samuel:

“Pay no attention to how tall or handsome anyone is. For I do not judge as humans judge. They look at a person's OUTWARD appearance, but I look at their HEART!” (1 Sam. 16:7)

Now, if God's statement ever applied, it applied to the story of David and Goliath. Goliath, after all, had all the OUTWARD APPEARANCES that would certainly impress and intimidate other people. And that's EXACTLY what he had been doing. He was not only a fearsome fighter, but he was even MORE fearsome in his appearance. David, however, had been given the ability to “see as God sees,” for he was, after all, *“a man after God's own heart!”* And he was neither impressed nor intimidated by Goliath's appearance. He knew, even at his young age, that no matter HOW big a giant might be, GOD is even GREATER. And no matter how POWERFUL that giant might be, God is even MORE powerful.

Now, with that in mind, let's look what happened when David and Goliath faced off. The scriptures describe the scene:

The Philistines gathered for battle in Sucoh, a town in Judah; they camped at a place called Effes Dammim, between Sucoh and Azehah. Saul and the Israelites assembled and camped in the Elah Valley where they got ready to fight the Philistines. The Philistines lined up on one hill and the Israelites lined up on another with the valley between them.

Well, that was the scene in the Valley of Elah – the Philistines on one hill and the Israelites on the other, ready to fight it out in the broad valley below. But even MORE important than the setting were the CHARACTERS in the story. First there was GOLIATH, whose size and appearance were so impressive that the writer describes them in detail.

And there came out from the camp of the Philistines a champion named Goliath, a giant of a man, whose height measured six cubits and a span.

Of course now, we don't understand what a cubit and a span means much any more because we measure in feet and inches. But a cubit was the distance from the elbow to the tip of the middle finger...which for me is about 18 inches. And a span was the measure from the tip of the thumb to the tip of the little finger when a hand is completely spread out...which for me is about 9 inches. So Goliath being six cubits and a span meant that he was **9 feet, 9 inches tall!** He was an ENORMOUS man. The Los Angeles Lakers and the Boston Celtics would have both KILLED to have him on their teams. I mean, he made Shaquill O'Neil look like a MIDGET! And if you add to his height the length of his arms when he lifted them over his

head, you can just IMAGINE what an imposing shadow he would have cast.

But it wasn't just his SIZE, either. It was how he was DRESSED, as well. He was wearing what we would call a "coat of mail"...a heavy canvas-like garment interlaced with overlapping bronze rings which covered their warriors from shoulders to knees. And the covering Goliath wore was so heavy that it weighed over 150 pounds. He also wore a bronze helmet...and bronze shin coverings...and carried a bronze sword and a spear as big around as a strong man's arm...eight feet long, with a tip on the end of the spear that weighed 15-20 pounds.

Now just pause for a moment and allow your mind to picture such an imposing sight! Imagine how frightening it would be to take on a GIANT of that size and protected by that amount of armor. CLEARLY the odds were stacked against anyone FOOISH enough to face him in battle!

But then listen what Goliath did next! He stood out in front of his army and began shouting TAUNTS are the Israelites!

What are you Israelites doing over there lining up for battle? You don't stand a CHANCE! You're a bunch of weasely little MIDGETS! You're weak and puny and couldn't defeat an army of BABIES, much less me and the mighty Philistine army! Why don't you choose one of your men to come out and fight ME? If he wins and kills me, the Philistines will your slaves. But if I win and kill him, then YOU will be OUR slaves. Hear my challenge, you scrawny servants of Saul! I double dog DARE you to pick someone to fight me! What are you, a bunch of mice...or men?

What Goliath was doing, you see, was suggesting a tactic that was used by armies from Biblical times all the way up to the middle ages...a fight between champions...a one on one battle between each army's most powerful fighter which would then determine the entire outcome of the war! "There's no need for your entire army to be involved in this!" Goliath shouted. "Just send a fighter and I'll take him on. I'm the champion! I'm the greatest! Why don't you come and get me, you sniveling little cowards?"

"And when Saul and his men heard this," the scripture tells us, "they were TERRIFIED!"

Now, Goliath didn't just issue his challenge once and then let it go! Heavens no! His challenge went on for FORTY DAYS. Every morning and every evening for well over a MONTH, he marched out there, flaunting his size and his strength, DARING someone to take him on.

How APPLICABLE to the "giants" WE sometimes face in life! They don't just come at us once & then leave, now do they? They come morning, noon and night...day after day after day...relentlessly trying to intimidate us and scare us into retreat. They come in the form of a person or a problem...an illness or a tragedy...a worry or a concern – a FEAR that hammers on your heart day in and day out...yelling at us across the ravines of our own personal valleys in which we find ourselves...TAUNTING us to come out and take it on...or run away and hide in defeat. To be sure, few things in life are more persistent or intimidating than our giant fears and worries...ESPECIALLY when we face them on our own.

Well, meanwhile, about ten or fifteen miles away, up in the Judean hills in the little town of Bethlehem, a teenager named David was keeping his father's sheep. He was too young to be fighting in the army, but his father, Jesse, had asked him to take supplies to his three older brothers who were part of King Saul's troops.

Back in those days, you see, there were no mess halls or field kitchens or k-rations. In fact, the army had no responsibility to take care of its troops at all. Each family supplied the needs of their family members who were a part of the army and occasionally those supplied needed to be replenished...PARTICULARY in a long standoff such as the Israelites were experience with the Philistines in the Valley of Elah. So Jesse sent his youngest son, David, to the battle front to check on his brothers, deliver their rations to them and let them know that their family hadn't forgotten about them.

When David arrived at the Israelite camp, the soldiers were in full battle gear, heading out to the battle line, shouting their war cry. "OoooYa!" David left the supplies he had brought with the supply master and went to find his brothers on the line.

Now, picture the scene with me, if you will. David is standing there talking to his three brothers when all of a sudden his hears this thunderous bellowing voice from across the valley, shouting threats and challenges at the Israelites. And just as suddenly, all the soldiers begin running to the rear in utter panic and terror! No only was Goliath shouting his usual threats and curses to the Israelites, but on this particular day, he was actually moving out of the Philistine's camp and advancing toward the Israeli lines. The stalemate was apparently over. If the Israelites weren't going to send anyone out to deal with Goliath, then Goliath would simply come and get THEM!

Which, of course, says to me that if you continue to TOLERATE a giant in your life day in and day out, the giant will eventually move in on you and try to consume your life. It'll take your thoughts which normally ought to be on God and make ITSELF the center of your attention. Which is why you simply can afford to TOLERATE giants in your life. You've got to find a way to get RID of them.

Now remember, David has never seen this Goliath before. Nor has he heard his challenges. But suddenly he's standing there as everyone else is running away, facing this giant of a guy who is shouting all kinds of challenges and threats and cursing the God of Israel. And that made David angry...LIVID! NO ONE talks that way about the God of Israel and gets away with it! So why is everyone running away?

-7-

Of course now, this is the forty-FIRST day the Israelites have encountered Goliath. But it's the FIRST time it's happened to David. When David asks what's going on, they tell him that King Saul has offered a REWARD to anyone who would kill the giant – great riches...the hand of his daughter in marriage (sounds like a fairy tale, doesn't it?)...and a lifetime exemption from taxes for the soldier's family.

Now, I'm not so sure the daughter was much of a reward (you'll see why when we meet her later!), but a bride, great riches, and a perpetual tax exemption plan SHOULD have sounded like a pretty good deal! Unfortunately however, no volunteer had stepped forward to accept Saul's offer. Even the potential reward wasn't enough to lure someone into a fool-hearty encounter with Goliath!

Well, pretty soon, King Saul heard about David being in the camp and about his asking why no one was willing to face Goliath. So Saul sent for David. Now, keep in mind that King Saul is looking for someone...ANYONE who will challenge the giant so that HE won't HAVE to! After all, HE'S the king! HE'S the one ultimately responsible. And if he can't find someone ELSE to take Goliath on, the impossible job will fall to HIM...sooner than later since Goliath is advancing on the Israelite camp. So the great and mighty King Saul seeks out even a young shepherd boy to do his dirty work. (Saul, you see, didn't yet know that David had ALREADY been anointed to one day replace him as king!)

When they meet, David says to Saul: *"Your Majesty, NO ONE should be afraid of this overgrown bully! I will go and fight him!"*

King Saul, of course, protests: *"Oh NO!, YOU can't go and fight this giant! You are but a boy and he has been a warrior for more years than you've been alive!"*

But remember what God ALREADY told Samuel when Samuel went to find the next king of Israel: *"People look only at a person's outward APPEARANCE. But I look at their heart!"* Saul, of course, hadn't learned that, so he only looked at David and said, *"You're too young! You're too small! You're too weak! You're too inexperienced!" You're just a kid! How can YOU take on that giant over there?"*

Now, as I picture it, I think David was thinking: *"Giant? WHAT giant? (Remember now! He's a man after God's own heart!) The only giant in MY life is GOD! That's a DWARF over there, Saul!"*

So David describes to Saul how God has been faithful to him in the dangerous situations he's faced BEFORE...and how he believes God will be faithful to him in fighting Goliath as well. *"I have fought lions and bears with God's protection and I will do the same with this heathen Philistine who has defied the army of the living God. The Lord has saved me from lions and bears and he will save me from this Philistine bully as well!"*

So often, when we are facing our own giants, we forget what we ought to remember and remember what we ought to forget. We remember our defeats and we forget our victories. Most of us can recite the failures of our lives in vivid detail. But we're often hard-pressed to name the specific, remarkable victories God has pulled off in our lives.

Not so with David! He says:

"You know WHY I can fight Goliath, Saul? Because the SAME God who gave me power over the lion and the bear will give me power of Goliath! It is GOD who will empower me! So let me at that over-grown dwarf!"

Well, that let SAUL off the hook! So he says to David, *"Go! And may the Lord be with you!"* Isn't it remarkable how people can use spiritual clichés and catch phrases to cover their empty lives? They know all the right words to use...all the pious-sounding sayings. But they don't have the trust and faith to back it up. Well, Saul was just such a person. Because as soon as he said, *"The Lord be with you!"* he turned RIGHT AROUND and tried to take the whole thing BACK out of God's hands by offering David the protection of his own sword and armor.

Now, you can't tell me the Bible doesn't have sense of humor. It says *"Saul clothed David with his own garments."* Here's Saul, a good foot taller than anyone else in all of Israel, a size 48 long to be sure, putting his armor on young David who is a 34 regular if he's even that! It would be like a six year old trying to wear his daddy's suit! Saul hands David his sword, but it's so big David can't hardly hold the thing. Then Saul drops his oversized helmet on David's head such that it covers his eyes...and wraps his coat of mail around David and David is so bound up he can't even walk...much less fight. Finally, David says, as kindly as he knows how: *"Thanks, but NO THANKS, Saul! I can't fight with all this stuff on! GOD is the only protection I need!"*

Taking all of Saul's gear off, he picks up five smooth stones from the streambed and puts them in his pouch. And then, with only his sling in hand, David went out to meet Goliath. Oh, but don't make the mistake of thinking that the sling and the stones were the ONLY things David took into battle with him. Oh

no! He took something MUCH more important. He took his faith in GOD with him. Oh, Goliath was an intimidating character, all right! There wasn't a person in the Philistine's camp...or the camp of the Israelites, for that matter...who would have given David a snowball's chance in you know where against Goliath. But that didn't matter to David. He knew he had GOD on his side. And THAT, you see, made all the difference in the world!

Well, when little David came out to meet Goliath in battle, Goliath was, of course, more than just a little MIFFED! *"What IS this?"* he shouted when he saw David coming toward him. *"Curses on the God of Israel for sending on a CHILD to do a MAN'S work! Come on boy! I'll feed you to the animals and the birds to eat!"*

But instead of David being frightened, Goliath's taunts only made David MORE determined. He answered Goliath:

You came against me with sword and spear and javelin. But I come against YOU in the strong name of the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel whom you have defiled. This very day, the Lord will give you over to my hand! I will defeat you and cut off your head. Then all the world will know that Israel's God is a God of power who does not need swords and spears to save his people! 1 Sam. 17:45-47

Now, just THINK of it! David stood before Goliath UN-intimidated. Did you get that? UN-intimidated! Can you IMAGINE such a thing? How could he POSSIBLY be un-intimidate in the face of such a MASSIVE giant in his life...threatening his very existence! Intimidation, of course, is our major problem when we face the giants of OUR lives, now isn't it? When the problems...the situations...the fears...the disasters of life come our way – in other words, when the GIANTS stand before us – we get tongue-tied. Our thoughts get confused. We get SCARED. We focus on the odds AGAINST us. We forget to pray. We forget who it is that is on our side as we stand there with our knees knocking. I wonder what God must think when all the while he has told us: *"My power is sufficient for your every need! What you need to do is TRUST me!"*

Well, that's EXACTLY what David did. With unshakable confidence, David told Goliath *"The Lord will give you over to my hand! I will defeat you and cut off your head! Then ALL THE WORLD will know that the God of Israel is a God of power!"*

And THERE it is! That's the SECRET of David's strength and confidence. *"The battle is the Lord's,"* he said. *"Not mine...not Israel's...but God's!"*

Infuriated, Goliath charged at David, determined to get rid of this mere annoyance so that he could then move on to destroy the entire Israelite army which was cowering behind David in fear and trembling. But as Goliath moved forward, David took one of the stones in his bag and slung it at Goliath. Hitting him squarely between the eyes, the giant fell with a mighty THUD at not only David's feet, but at God's feet as well! Then running up to him, David took Goliath's own sword and, as he had predicted, cut off the giant's head for all to see!

Well, the terrified Philistines, of course, didn't wait around to see what would happen next. When they saw that the mighty Goliath had fallen, they turned and ran lickety-split as fast as their little legs would carry them...the now fired-up army of Israel in hot pursuit. David, on the other hand, simply sang songs of praise to the Lord!

Now, I don't know what intimidating giant is threatening you and your life right now. It may relate to your job...your spouse...your school...your health. Maybe it's a person...your parents...your children...your boss...that person you just have a terrible problem getting along with. Maybe it's your anger that's threatening to get the better of you...or maybe your resentment of someone who's "done you wrong." Perhaps it's some FEAR that's lurking just around the corner. Maybe it's your health...or related to your marriage...or your career...or LACK of career right now. Maybe your "giant" is some family crisis you're trying to deal with. Who KNOWS what kind of giant it may be that's intimidating and threatening your life right now.

Or perhaps you don't even KNOW what lies across the valley you're facing. Maybe you can't get a handle on what that giant is. But it's there haunting you none the less. The uncertainty ALONE is intimidating enough. WHATEVER it is, the "giants" in our lives have a way of sapping our energy and draining our faith.

But you know what? The assurance of the David and Goliath story is that the battle is not ours alone. It is GOD'S battle too! And God says to us, just as he said to David, *"take what you have – take your five stones and your sling of faith – and then TRUST ME to help you out! You don't have to wear someone else's armor. You don't have to fight someone else's battle! You don't have to solve all the problems alone! Just TRUST me! Go out there and face your giant with the weapons you have at your disposal and TRUST ME to be there with you! TRUST ME to accomplish a great victory on your behalf! TRUST ME to help you help you cut that giant down to size! And then when I DO, remember to give me the glory, for the victory is mine!"* Thus says the Lord.

So to GOD be the glory, this day and EVERY day, both now and forever more! Amen...and AMEN!

This document was created with Win2PDF available at <http://www.win2pdf.com>.
The unregistered version of Win2PDF is for evaluation or non-commercial use only.
This page will not be added after purchasing Win2PDF.