

Sermon for June 24, 2018
"David and Hurricane Goliath"

1 Samuel 17:32-49
Mark 4:35-41

"David and Goliath" - When I was growing up the story of David and Goliath was one of my favorite Bible stories. I guess it appeals to children. The hero of the story is a child who faced unbelievable odds and faithfully triumphs while the grownups just sit around. I remember one time our children's choir put on a musical called "David and the Giant." All the boys wanted to be David, but I got the part, and Tom Putman, who was a tall adult, played the giant.

You know the story. The Philistines are making war upon Israel. Their land and livelihoods are threatened. And the Philistines have a secret weapon: Goliath. A giant of a man. His mere physical presence on the battlefield would make others tremble. So, they used Goliath to taunt Israel and ridicule God. He would strut out onto the battlefield and proclaim that the whole war should come down to a one on one combat between him and Israel's best. None of the Israelites felt they could face him, then David a shepherd boy too small to even wear armor went out with just a slingshot. And Goliath the giant was slain by David a mere child.

But there is more to this story than just a small person overcoming odds. The story is really about faith. The Philistines or at least Goliath were trusting in human might. But so were the Israelites. They thought they could not face Goliath because he was so big. They thought that whoever would go out to face Goliath must wear armor to protect him, but the one who did go out could not carry their armor. He had to go out with the Lord as his armor. David overcame Goliath not with a stone but with faith. David overcame not because he was bigger than Goliath, but because his God was bigger than any Goliath.

This story has been a favorite of children and parents throughout the ages. I am sure that Peter and James and John and the other disciples of Jesus heard it when they were growing up. I am sure they imagined themselves to be the great David as a boy. They could picture the Philistine giant laughing at the people of God as an unarmored boy comes out to do battle. They could imagine themselves dodging the spears as they aimed their slingshot. They could imagine in their hearts placing their full trust in God in the face of a huge force. I can see them in their childhood as James got up on John's shoulders and Peter pretended to slay them.

Then one day the Son of David faced a Goliath of a storm. And I guess the disciples had left their imaginations at home that day. They could not imagine triumphing over the storm. In fact, their thoughts were focused on perishing in the face of this giant storm's power. Then someone woke Jesus, probably so he could help them bail water. I can hear them now, "Jesus! We are about to die, and you are taking a nap. Make yourself useful. Grab a bucket." But instead of a bucket Jesus lifted his voice and commanded the storm, "Peace! Be still."

Now some people imagine that Jesus raised his voice in a commanding way and yelled "Peace! Be Still!" But I imagine that Jesus spoke softly, maybe even in a whisper, "Peace. Be still." And at that moment the wind and waves stopped, and the sun shone through. It wasn't the power of Jesus' voice that calmed the storm. It was the power of the Spirit of God that dwelled in him that calmed the storm. There was no need for Jesus to raise his voice. He had created the wind and seas and he could very easily calm them.

I can think of other times when the followers of the Son of David faced a storm. We all face storms and trials in our lives. Often those storms seem huge. Sometimes they are literal hurricanes. I remember when Hurricane Hugo hit the SC coast. The devastation seemed insurmountable.

My home church Bethany UMC in Summerville was in the middle of it. I and another Bethany member were in seminary at Duke. She was able to contact them and find out their needs. Bethany was a staging ground and coordination point for getting aid to some of the more isolated areas of Dorchester and Berkley counties. A church in Durham, NC arranged a truck and the items that Bethany needed were gathered and shipped to them.

The task seemed too large but in faith people addressed the needs of others. Many people would have just given up in the face of such a huge task. But the people of Bethany and many other churches just like them knew that God was larger than the task that they faced. That faith that enables the David's of the world to stand up to the Goliaths is the faith that drives them. The same faith that led Jesus to calmly command the wind and sea.

What are some of the Goliaths we face today? Can you name some of the huge social and spiritual problems of our world? Poverty, racism, drugs, apathy, teen suicide, child abuse and neglect, apathy, materialism, selfishness, etc. ... What are the Goliaths you face in your life: addiction, debt, family problems, loneliness, anxiety, faithlessness? I am sure there are people here today that face all those problems and others. All these problems are huge. There is no way that we can possibly defeat all these enemies and there are many we didn't even name. These are giant problems that create storms of turmoil in people's lives.

This is a long way from childhood fantasies about David slaying Goliath. As a child in my imagination David defeated Goliath a thousand times, but mere imagination will not defeat these Goliaths. Our efforts are minuscule, and our power seems so small compared with the power of evil. Is it childish and foolhardy for us to go out against the well-armed powers of evil as small as we are?

No, it is not! Not if we go out in faith. God is bigger than the evils we face. God can defeat the giants that threaten us and calm the storms that frighten us. If we can only remember, like David, that it is not by our power, but by the power of God that we defeat the enemy.