



The Anglican Parish of Whangaparaoa Peninsula
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Sermon

David's Great Heart

1 Samuel 17; Mark 4:35-41

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Last week, we met David - David the eighth and youngest son of Jesse – David, anointed as king of Israel to replace Saul the reigning king who had failed in God's eyes.

David was just the youngest boy. He was just a shepherd but he was given a promise. How would he respond to that promise as his life proceeded as normal? How have you handled promises God has given you when life continues as before? Do you discard the promise or hold onto it and continue to trust God?

Time has moved on in Israel. A few years have gone by and the Philistines are again troubling Israel. That is why they wanted a king to protect them. Battle lines are drawn; the two armies face each other.

The Philistines already control the production of iron so the Israelites cannot have iron weapons¹. Now they threaten to make the Israelites their slaves. Not only is there this disparity of weaponry but they another ace – the tall warrior who sticks fear into their enemies hearts – Goliath.

By the way, *The Guinness Book of Records*, measured a Turk, Sultain Kösen, with a height of 8' 3" (251cm) in February 2011! Maybe we shouldn't be too ready to dismiss Goliath's 9'. Regardless, he was a fearsome man.

But I noted this. He gave his challenge to Israel everyday for forty days. That's 6 weeks! It is a very long time to keep armies waiting and idle. If the Philistines were confident of victory they would not have kept men in the field for 6 weeks. In fact, they did not think they could win the battle. What's the point? When we are faced with some fearsome threat, it is worth looking to see whether the threats are distracting you from some fundamental weaknesses. Is all the sound and fury a smokescreen so you won't notice some weakness?

The three oldest sons in David's family are serving in the army and every so often their father sent David to them with supplies. When David arrives he hears the boastful challenge laid down by Goliath and he is outraged. He tells people that he would be prepared to fight. Saul hears of it and summons him. "But you are just a boy!"

¹ 1 Sam 13:20

“The LORD who delivered me from the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine.”²

Saul tries to give David his armour. But David refuses – it does not fit him. It would put him into another arena, having to be skilled and successful with military weapons. Saul is thinking within the paradigm of conventional military weapons and battle. Rather David’s skill is with the simple weapons of a shepherd boy. Stick to your skills & strengths – don’t be persuaded to adopt techniques you are not familiar with.

But this is not just a physical battle. Goliath’s daily challenge to the Israelite army is a defiance of their God. When David goes out against Goliath, Goliath curses him in the names of his pagan gods: Dagon, Baal and Beelzebub.

David responds invoking his God, “...I come against you in the name of the LORD Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. This day the LORD will hand you over to me, and I’ll strike you down and cut off your head ... and the whole world will know that there is a God in Israel. 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.”³ And he is right.

Jesus and the Storm

In the gospel account, Jesus confronts a different threat. His men are terrified by a storm on the lake. This must have been something out of the ordinary, since at least four of the disciples were professional fishermen used to being out on the lake all night and they were unable to cope with the storm.

Jesus had said, “Let’s go over to the other side.” After the event, he rebukes them for their lack of faith. If God says we are going to the other side, you will get there.

To say to the saviour of mankind, “Don’t you care if we drown?” is a terrible slight. Of course he does and of course you are not going to drown.

Some commentators see this rebuking of the wind and the waves as a portrayal of another champions’ fight between Jesus and Baal. Baal was the Canaanite god of the thunderstorm (amongst other things). Just as Goliath had proposed a fight between two men to decide the outcome of the conflict, so in a sense Jesus might be seen to be challenged by the pagan god Baal. In the conflict he showed he was more powerful – with a simple command he stilled the storm and quietened the waves.

David stood up to the actual giant, Goliath - his bigger brothers were too afraid. Saul the king (who was the tallest of the Israelites) was too afraid.

Faith application

We are not likely to fight actual giants. But the same principles apply when we face financial hardship or major obstacles in life. These ‘giants’ make us afraid or worried because of the seemingly overwhelming circumstances we face.

Jason Clark in his book, *Surrendered and Untamed*, says, “I believe each giant in life [corresponds to] a promise; in fact, sometimes the bigger the giant, the bigger the promise. The moment God gives us the promise is the moment the giant’s fate is sealed. ... There is no longer any question about whether or not [I can defeat the giant, but the question is] how fully I can embrace my promise.”⁴

Remember last week, I compared Samuel anointing David as king to Jesus’ parable of planting a seed and its growth. Samuel anointed David as king and left him to it. David continued as a shepherd boy but he did not let go of his calling; he held onto God’s promise. When Goliath

² 1 Sam 17:37

³ 1 Sam 17:45-47

⁴ Clark J., 2011, *Surrendered and Untamed*, Baker Books, Grand Rapids.

challenged the armies of Israel, David was outraged. His thinking was not that of a boy, nor of a shepherd, but the thinking of a king.

Last week, we heard that God does not look on the outside of a man but on the heart. David is learning to see God's way too. Rather than see the power of the big man, he sees him in the same light as a bear or lion he had already killed.

This was an attack on the kingdom of Israel and David acted as a king ought. He went out to fight, threw his stone and killed the giant. David had God's promise.

When you face some fearful circumstance will you be overawed by the circumstance and the threats of the giant? Or will you remember that the dramatic threats may be hiding some weakness of the enemy's position? Will you hold onto God's promise and face down the giant? With God you are always in a majority.