

HOPE IS HERE: HOPE FOR FACING BATTLES IN LIFE

Sermon written by Martha-Jean Fitch

October 9, 2022

TEXT: I Samuel 17:20-51, Psalm 27:1-3

Hope is here! Oh – how we need that gift of hope! The hope that God gives us when we are weary – giving the strength we need, right when we need it! The hope God gives us when we are helpless –giving us the answers we need. The hope God gives us in a broken and divided world – to work within us to bring unity and peace.

Today – we come to discover the hope that is given to us when we feel like we’re facing more than we can handle in the battles and giants in life. The good news is that there is no enemy we can face in this life that God cannot give us the victory over because we have a God who will fight for us and give us hope.

That’s the message we hear today from our Scripture, found in I Samuel 17 – with the familiar story of David and Goliath. I invite you to open your Bibles up to I Samuel 17 and follow along as we remember this great story of our faith.

This story takes place long before David is King of Israel. At this point, he is just a teenager – working as a shepherd in his father Jesse’s fields. His brothers are all at the battleground of the war between the Israelites and the Philistines. Jesse has asked David to take some gifts to his brothers and check on them and see how they are doing.

Let’s look at what happens, beginning reading at verse 20 of I Samuel 17: ²⁰*So David left the sheep with another shepherd and set out early the next morning with the gifts, as Jesse had directed him. He arrived at the camp just as the Israelite army was leaving for the battlefield with shouts and battle cries.* ²¹*Soon the Israelite and Philistine forces stood facing each other, army against army.* ²²*David left his things with the keeper of supplies and hurried out to the ranks to greet his brothers.* ²³*As he was talking with them, Goliath, the Philistine champion from Gath, came out from the Philistine ranks. Then David heard him shout his usual taunt to the army of Israel.*

David has certainly found himself in a massive conflict – greater than I would guess he was expecting. It is clear that the Israelites are traumatized by this Philistine champion, Goliath. Goliath was a huge giant – measuring about 9 feet 9 inches tall. Now if that height is hard to imagine – think of it this way. Most basketball hoops in gyms and parks and professional courts are almost always 10 feet tall. And Goliath was over 9 feet. I don’t think he would have any trouble dunking a basketball in! And Goliath was covered with heavy armor and he carried a heavy spear; he was a formidable looking warrior who continually taunted and terrified the Israelites. For 40 days, every morning and night, Goliath shouted out to the Israelites, with great threats of intimidation and derision. This was the overwhelming situation David all of the sudden found himself in.

The truth is that we're hardly ever prepared to handle what life throws at us. It's a phone call with a diagnosis. It is the discovery of a betrayal. It is the bad news we hear about the sudden death of a loved one. No one asks to be placed in a position where there doesn't seem to be a clear sign of victory. That's where David finds himself and it may be where you find yourself today....

Pastor David Beirne¹ reminds us that we can't avoid the Goliaths in our lives – they are going to show up, threaten to block our way, dare us to come up against them with our own strength and abilities, taunt and discourage us ... if we listen and allow it. Your Goliath may be an addiction, habit, attitude, a job layoff, financial problems, marital problems, illness, ... anything in our lives that just sounds too big and looks too threatening.

It is at this point when we have to decide how we will respond. Do we give up and accept defeat? Or do we trust in God to give us the strength and hope to carry on?

By looking at how David faced his Goliath in the Bible, we can learn some principles about facing the threatening, discouraging obstacles that come up in the life of every Christian. We can look at Goliath in one of two ways:

1. the eyes of the faithless, or ...
2. ... the eyes of the faithful.

As we look at the Biblical story of David and Goliath, we notice that the limited view of the faithless brings about fear, which results in dominance by the enemy.

Fear comes when we live by sight, not by faith. The view of the faithless is the view limited by sight. It is a limited view because the spiritual is not involved ... only the natural, physical. It is seeing obstacles as undefeatable giants. We see this is how the Israelites responded to Goliath. Look at v.24-25:

When the Israelites saw the man, they all ran from him in great fear. ... they had been saying, "Do you see how this man keeps coming out? He comes out to defy Israel."

The word "defy" means "to taunt, ridicule, humiliate"; isn't that what the evil one wants to do in our lives? ... to see us cower and hide and run away so that our faith can be mocked?

Let's add to our list of Goliaths ... Goliath for you may be a habit you need to break, bitterness you need to release, an unsettled matter you need to which you need to bring closure, a problem from the past, or even a difficult moral decision. It might even be a habit or an addiction that you are trying to fight – and you're afraid of what life will look like, if your life will change too much and you will lose too much if you try to defeat Goliath.

The Goliaths in our lives are heavily armored ... they seem to be in control and impenetrable. When our minds are so focused on the giant, we can cower and shake in fear and worry.

¹

But when we live by faith and not by sight, we can know courage and hope.

Let us notice the steps David took to defeat this giant, the same steps you and I can use to observe the victory from the Lord.

The first step David took to defeat his giant was to: Refuse to be discouraged. And ignore the doubts of those around him.

David's brothers ridiculed and accused him of having selfish motives for being there. Saul expresses his doubts and fears. There must have been many who laughed at the vision of David. There were certainly many well-trained soldiers who must have heard David's idea who said, *"Well, that will never work. You're too young and not well trained – and Goliath is so much bigger than you."*

The tempter/evil one will whisper those doubts in our ears – sometimes using the mouth of God's people – saying all sorts of negative things to get you to crawl back in your place and yes – even to shake in fear. But we don't have to cave into those doubts and fears. As Priscilla Shirer says: *"You can be strong, even when you are weak. Fortify yourself in specific, strategic prayer. Arm yourself with specific promises from God's word, asking His Spirit to guide you to places in His word that directly refute the enemy's messaging. Defeat the message, and you'll defeat the messenger."*²

The second step David took to defeat his giant was to: Recall how God has worked in his life in the past.

When Saul is convinced that it is impossible for David to fight Goliath because he is just a boy – David declared how God was faithful to him in the past and helped him as a shepherd. God was with him when he was protecting sheep in the field from lions and bears. Surely the Lord would protect him in this battle.

When we find ourselves in seasons of struggle, sometimes we have to remind ourselves of how God has been with us in the past. Hope comes with trust. When we believe someone is trustworthy, it gives us hope. That hope gave David the confidence he needed to go and stand forth before Goliath.

Chuck Swindoll puts it this way: *"Has God come through for you in the past? Hang on to those victories: write them in marble, not in sand. Then when a greater test comes, your faith will have a solid place to stand."*³ God has helped me in the past and He is my hope for the future!

The third step David took to defeat his giant was to: Reinforce his focus on God. Everyone in the Israeli army had their eyes on Goliath and filled their ears with his threats. But David put his eyes on God and filled his heart with the promises of God – and that made all the difference in the world.

David Jeremiah once said, *“It is ok to talk to God about how big our problems are but we also need to talk to our problems about how big our God is.”*⁴ And truly God is bigger than all our fears and all our trials. We can have hope to face all our giants because there is nothing that has a power greater than God. We can declare, like David did in Psalm 27:

*The LORD is my light and my salvation - whom shall I fear?
The LORD is the stronghold of my life—
of whom shall I be afraid?
2 When the wicked advance against me
to devour me, it is my enemies and my foes
who will stumble and fall.
3 Though an army besiege me, my heart will not fear;
though war break out against me,
even then I will be confident.*

Armed with this faith – David could boldly say, in verse 45: *“You come to me with sword, spear, and javelin, but I come to you in the name of the Lord of heaven’s armies – the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. Today, the Lord will conquer you, and I will kill you and cut off your head. And then I will give the dead bodies of your men to the birds and wild animals, in the whole world will know that there is a God in Israel! And everyone is assembled here will know that the Lord rescues his people, but not with this sword and spear. This is the Lord’s battle, and He will give you to us. 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.”*

David knew he had a great and mighty God who would fight for him. The battle belonged to the Lord. That is what gave him strength – that is what gave him hope.

Finally, notice what David did to defeat his enemy: he ran toward his problems, now away from them.⁵ Verse 48 says: *“As Goliath moved closer to attack, David quickly ran out to meet him. Reaching into his shepherd’s bag and taking out a stone, he hurled it with his sling and hit the Philistine in the forehead. The stone sank in, and Goliath stumbled and fell face down on the ground. So, David triumphed over the philistines with only a sling and a stone where he had no sword.”*

I love this -- he "ran quickly toward" the challenge. David knew that is what you have to do when there's a giant challenge in your life. Sometimes there is no way to meet that challenge but to hit it head-on. That may be the only approach that will work for you in the challenge you're facing right now.

Maybe your giant is a mountain of financial problems . . . difficulty in your marriage . . . a part of your life that is just pumping out an overload of stress . . . something from the past that haunts you . . . a relationship problem . . . a sin that is getting stronger and stronger in your life – something that is bigger than you are . . . something that is either out of control or very easily could get out of control. Hiding from it isn't going to solve it. Maybe you need to stop running from it, living in denial or escape. And halfhearted half-steps will not meet the challenge either. It's time to do a David -- run toward that challenge, proclaiming every step of the way, *"This*

battle is the Lord's. He will give this giant into our hands." If, that is, you stop, face it, run toward it, and throw everything you've got at bringing it down.² It becomes time to start throwing some stones. And in the midst of all of this – and all of life – give God the credit and glory for the victories in life.

A question posed by Pastor Beirne is one I now pose for you and for me.

Do you look forward to being involved in a battle for the Lord?

Can you trust that He will deliver you out of whatever you are facing now? Are we confident in Him?

When we find ourselves facing a Goliath, know that God is confident in us to do what is needed to overcome it.

What are your Goliaths? What is it you live in fear of that dictates how you will live, act, and feel? If your life is dominated by someone other than the Holy Spirit of God, you are being defeated by Goliath.

It is time for the army of the Lord to stop allowing these issues to dominate us and thus ridicule the reputation of God in Heaven.

Ignore the doubts.

Remember how God has worked in history and in your life in the past.

Claim God's promises and who He is.

Act boldly and confidently.

And then watch those giants drop!

PRAYER AND INVITATION

RESOURCES

Thanks to Pastor Beirne for inspiring much of this sermon in "*Facing Your Goliath*."

²Priscilla Shirer, *Faith and Fire – Elijah*. Lifeway Press, 2020. Page 198.

³Chuck Swindoll, *David – A Man of Passion and Destiny*. Insight for Living, 1997, Page 32.

⁴David Jeremiah, "*I Samuel 17, David and Goliath*", Turning Point.

https://youtu.be?C1X6_G9UqpA

⁵IBID.