
Sunday 20th June – Second Sunday after Trinity

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

1 Samuel 17:32-49

David said to Saul, ‘Let no one lose heart on account of this Philistine; your servant will go and fight him.’

Saul replied, ‘You are not able to go out against this Philistine and fight him; you are only a young man, and he has been a warrior from his youth.’

But David said to Saul, ‘Your servant has been keeping his father’s sheep. When a lion or a bear came and carried off a sheep from the flock, I went after it, struck it and rescued the sheep from its mouth. When it turned on me, I seized it by its hair, struck it and killed it. Your servant has killed both the lion and the bear; this uncircumcised Philistine will be like one of them, because he has defied the armies of the living God. The Lord who rescued me from the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear will rescue me from the hand of this Philistine.’

Saul said to David, ‘Go, and the Lord be with you.’

Then Saul dressed David in his own tunic. He put a coat of armour on him and a bronze helmet on his head. David fastened on his sword over the tunic and tried walking around, because he was not used to them.

‘I cannot go in these,’ he said to Saul, ‘because I am not used to them.’ So he took them off. Then he took his staff in his hand, chose five smooth stones from the stream, put them in the pouch of his shepherd’s bag and, with his sling in his hand, approached the Philistine.

Meanwhile, the Philistine, with his shield-bearer in front of him, kept coming closer to David. He looked David over and saw that he was little more than a boy, glowing with health and handsome, and he despised him. He said to David, ‘Am I a dog, that you come at me with sticks?’ And the Philistine cursed David by his gods. ‘Come here,’ he said, ‘and I’ll give your flesh to the birds and the wild animals!’

David said to the Philistine, ‘You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but 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 deliver you into my hands, and I’ll strike you down and cut off your head. This very day I will give the carcasses of the Philistine army to the birds and the wild animals, 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.'

As the Philistine moved closer to attack him, David ran quickly towards the battle line to meet him. Reaching into his bag and taking out a stone, he slung it and struck the Philistine on the forehead. The stone sank into his forehead, and he fell face down on the ground.

Mark 4:35-41

That day when evening came, he said to his disciples, 'Let us go over to the other side.' Leaving the crowd behind, they took him along, just as he was, in the boat. There were also other boats with him. A furious squall came up, and the waves broke over the boat, so that it was nearly swamped. Jesus was in the stern, sleeping on a cushion. The disciples woke him and said to him, 'Teacher, don't you care if we drown?'

He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, 'Quiet! Be still!' Then the wind died down and it was completely calm.

He said to his disciples, 'Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?'

They were terrified and asked each other, 'Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!'

Reflection

Both of today's readings have a common theme of facing things that threaten to overwhelm us, the giants and the storms of life. For many people, the last 15 months or so have been a bit like this. Covid 19 has been a giant, a storm, of unprecedented proportions as people have walked through anxious times, worrying about their health, worrying about vaccines, worrying about employment and money issues, worrying about how they and their friends and family are coping. These readings tell us how we should respond when we encounter such situations, in terms of where we should look for help and what we should think about. They are an invitation to put our trust in God.

So, in 1 Samuel 17 we have what is perhaps one of the best-known stories in the Bible. And it's a much-loved story because it's the story of the under-dog, and we all love an under-dog. Think back to when Susan Boyle first graced the stage of Britain's Got Talent, only to face the derision of the crowds and judges until she started to sing. David is a young man, not yet an adult, referred to both by Saul and by Goliath as just a boy, inexperienced in battle and unarmed, save for his

shepherd's staff, a sling and five stones. Goliath in comparison, is 9'9" tall, an experienced and champion warrior who has left the whole of the Israelite army quaking in their boots. The odds against David would seem to be overwhelming, but we of course know how this story ends.

David showed his resolute faith that God would give him the victory as he tells Saul: 'The Lord who rescued me from the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear will rescue me from the hand of this Philistine.' Where the Israelite army had looked at Goliath and thought 'He's so big! I can't possibly fight him!', David had thought 'He's so big! I can't possibly miss!' And with one good shot with his sling, Goliath falls to the ground.

The Goliath's we meet won't be heavily armed giants in single combat, but usually in the mind – situations that cause us to feel overwhelmed and helpless. How then should we respond? David shows us first of all that it is vital to be aware of who we look to, and what we think about. The battle for David didn't begin as he stepped forward to face Goliath, but in the days, weeks and years beforehand when he had been alone in the field tending his father's sheep against the threat of lions, wolves and bears. He knew through experience that God had saved him in the past and would do so again. I'm reminded at this point of the words of a worship song we sing called 'Do it again'. The words say, 'This is my confidence; you've never failed me yet.' This was David's confidence. It is ours too. When we face these situations, we need to look to God, to remember what he has done for us in the past, and to trust that he will do it again.

Our gospel brings us another well-known story when Jesus is crossing the Sea of Galilee with his disciples in a boat, when it looks like all hands are about to be lost in a sudden storm. Seasoned fishermen, the men in the boat with him were well aware of the geography of the area and how sudden squalls could develop out of nowhere, but even they are terrified. They wake Jesus who is asleep on a cushion and ask 'Teacher, don't you care if we drown?' To their amazement, Jesus uses the power of words, speaking in authority to rebuke the wind and command the waves to be still.

The God we serve is capable of defeating any of the giants or storms in our lives, he is bigger than any situation we might face. Jesus was not disturbed by the storm, he was sleeping through it, what disturbed him was the disciples' reaction to it. 'Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?' Crises in our life will come, and they reveal who we are and whose we are. We need to look to Jesus, to remember what he has done for us in the past, and to trust he will do it again. I leave my last words to Tom Wright as he comments that if we find ourselves overwhelmed

by situations that leave us fearful, Mark's invitation to us is 'OK, go on, wake Jesus up, pray to him in your fear and your anger. But don't be surprised when he turns to you, as the storm subsides in the background, and asks when you're going to get some real faith.

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