

DAVID AND GOLIATH

I Samuel 16:1-13, 18, 17:3-11, 16-51, 18:6-9

From its beginning, Israel had been led by prophets of God. For them there was no separation of religion and state. And then one day, the people of Israel decided that they wanted to have a King; so that they could be like other nations. Begrudgingly, God honored their request saying, "...*they have **rejected** me from being king over them.*"

God then led the prophet Samuel to select Saul as the king of Israel. It is said that there was not a man in Israel more handsome than Saul, and that he was taller than any one else in Israel.

Saul ruled for several years and then an event occurred that led God to say to Samuel, "*I **repent** that I have made Saul king; for he has turned back from following me, and has not performed my commandments.*" God then gave Samuel the task of informing Saul of God's displeasure. Not a responsibility that the prophet Samuel wanted; and certainly not something that King Saul wanted to hear. Yet, Samuel did as God instructed. He confronted Saul and it was not a pretty sight.

Samuel was so depressed about Saul that one day God said to Samuel, "*How long will you grieve over Saul...? I will send you to Jesse...for I have selected a king among his sons.*" Now envision the situation. Saul who is still king is reeling from Samuel's announcement that God is displeased with him as king. And now, God is sending Samuel on a mission to find Saul's replacement. How is Saul going to react if he finds out that Samuel is involved in selecting and anointing another king? Well probably like any king would react if he felt that his position was being threatened. Samuel was scared still he went to Jesse, as God commanded; however, he went under the guise of offering a special sacrifice.

Samuel invited Jesse to the sacrifice and also all of his sons. When Jesse's first son passed by Samuel he felt for sure that he was the one that God had selected as king because like Saul he was a big handsome man; but God said no, just as he did with the next six sons. Samuel was uncertain what to do. God had sent him to Jesse yet God rejected all of the sons. So Samuel asks Jesse, "*Is this it? Are there no more sons?*" "Well" says Jesse, "*There remains yet the youngest, but he is keeping the sheep.*" When this youngest son, David, comes before Samuel, God says, "*Arise, anoint him, for this is the one.*"

According to the scripture Samuel then anoints David—in the presence of his brothers. It is uncertain whether David and or his brothers or father really know what is taking place; for remember Samuel does not indicate why he has come to them; he keeps up the appearance of making a special sacrifice. However, it is

fairly obvious that everyone present realized that Samuel was taking a special interest in David.

When we read the account of Saul and David in I Samuel it becomes apparent that the writer is using two different sources for his material. He weaves these sources together to create one story; yet, there are discrepancies and duplicate accounts. One source has David as a musician in Saul's court yet later Saul does not know David when he appears on the battlefield. One can either take the position that the discrepancies and the duplications discredit not only this story but the entire Bible or one can understand that the Bible is a people's story of their faith journey with God. And that the importance of the story, the entire Bible, is not in the details but rather in the meaning. What meaning does today's story have that it survived in oral tradition, and then was documented in writing to be preserved for all time? How was it that this story affected the faith journey of the people of Israel? And how is that this story can affect the faith journey of those who read it today? So as we continue, let's not be so focused on the historical details of the story that we miss its meaning, its power, and its challenge.

The Israelites under the leadership of King Saul are at war with the Philistines. One of the Philistines, Goliath, a giant of a man, challenges the Israelites to a one-on-one competition—a single battle. Goliath the Philistine will fight one of the Israelites and whichever individual man wins then the country they represent wins and must serve the other country. So instead of thousands dying in battle just one person will die. Interesting concept!

It is recorded that, "*When Saul and all Israel heard these words of Goliath the Philistine; they were dismayed and greatly afraid.*" Well yeah! Goliath is like a giant even to Saul who is the tallest man in all Israel. They have no one that can stand up equally in battle to Goliath. For forty days Goliath comes forward every morning and every evening to challenge the Israelites to send out just one man to fight him. And no one comes forward!

David, the young secretly anointed king to be, enters the picture. David's father has sent him to the battle field to take food to his brothers. While there David hears Goliath challenge Saul and all of Israel. And he says, "*Who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God.*" David also sees how the men of Israel flee when Goliath makes his stand. David is a cussin and a fummin! The Israelites understood circumcision to be a sign of relationship with God. To be called uncircumcised was a term of derision. It would be like saying, "*You dirty old...*" And also, youthful David does not understand the fear that is overwhelming the Israelites.

(Read I Samuel 17:28-29) Eliab, is embarrassed that his youngest brother, who is just a keeper of sheep and not a man who can do battle, is being presumptuous. Eliab even questions David's motives for having brought food to

the battlefield—he just wants to see what is going on. Eliab accuses David of just being a nosey brat! I love David’s youthful response, “*What have I done now!*” Apparently, this is not the first time that David’s older brother has been on his case.

(Read I Samuel 17:31-51) David is a youth! And it shows! He resents that his elder brother continually is on his case. While adults, or the more mature, might be nervous and even enamored about approaching the King, David tells the king an exaggerated story of how he has fought off bears and lions with his bare hands. David is fearless! David’s fire for life and living has not yet been dosed by the realism of age. David is still willing to take a risk. He is willing to try something he has never done before. He probably even believes that he has fought off lions and bears with his bare hands. All of Israel flees from Goliath; but not David—he runs towards Goliath.

Friends, maturity is a good thing. There is wisdom that comes with age. Yet, too often as we mature and gain wisdom we lose our enthusiasm for life. We are often no longer willing to face the Goliath’s. And sometimes we even scoff at those who are willing to face Goliath. Like Eliab, David’s elder brother, we may even question the motives of those who have a fearless enthusiasm for life and faith. We may even become cynical, thinking to ourselves, just give them a few years and they will calm down, they will be more realistic.

David would never have been Samuel’s choice for king among the sons of Jesse. Saul would never have selected David, from all of Israel, to go up against Goliath. And Goliath would never have anticipated that he would be defeated by a boy with a sling shot. Yet, God said to Samuel when He was leading Samuel to select a king, “*Do not judge based on appearance...for I see not as humans see; humans look on the outward appearance, but I, your God, look upon the heart.*”

Now remember, David has already been anointed king—he will replace Saul. We know this, but on the battle field that day David does not know, Saul does not know, and all of Israel does not know. **(Read I Samuel 18:6-9)**

As the women sing a song of exaggerated praise regarding David’s victory over Goliath, King Saul becomes angry. Saul is one those who became wise with age; which led him to be unwilling to face Goliath even in full armor much less with a slingshot. Saul is now fearful of David’s youthful enthusiasm and impulsiveness. And according to scripture Saul begins to look upon David with a “*suspicious eye*” which causes Saul to be guided by fear rather than by faith and also leads more quickly to his downfall and death.

So what are some of the lessons learned from the story of David and Goliath? Do not discount youthful enthusiasm. Try to remember that God looks not at the outward sophisticated appearance but rather upon the pliable willingness of the heart. Try not to allow age, wisdom and maturity to cause you to flee from your

Goliath. And certainly, do not become jealous or envious or fearful of youthful success.

When young enthusiastic impulsive David, the most unlikely of all candidates to be king, came in from watching the sheep, Samuel heard God say, "*Arise, anoint him, for this is the one.*"