

Sermon Text for June 13, 2021

By Rev. Robert K. Bronkema

John 6:1-14, I Samuel 17:19-51 *“The story of David and Goliath”*

Stacy and I stayed up way too late on Friday evening. We began a movie at 9:30 and the plan was to watch about 30 minutes of it, by then both of us are normally out, but we found ourselves completely engrossed, I would recommend the movie. It is good for the entire family. It is called the boy who chased the wind, maybe you've seen it before. It is a true story. It is about a 13 year old boy who created a windmill in the midst of a famine in Malawi and as a result saved his village and his family from starvation because he was able to get water out of the well and into the fields. A 13 year old boy able to save the village, able to, against all odds, overcome his father and his family not believing that he had anything useful to contribute. We both stayed awake.

Both of our Bible stories today contain examples of God being able to use children for His purposes and so that the kingdom of God could be proclaimed and so that people would be able to point to the power of God and know in their own lives that even against all odds, God will prevail. Have we forgotten that? Even in our own lives, God will prevail. God is able. Turn to your neighbor and say God is able. Today, if you are on social media I want you to post those simple words, God is able. Maybe even make it a trend, #Godisable.

I want to challenge you today to remember times in your own life when you saw God's victory against all odds. We read about God choosing the impossible to happen so that his glory can be revealed. Let's look at our Scripture today and the story of David and Goliath.

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If I were to ask you to think about your image of David, what would David look like? Ultimately it doesn't matter, but I have been fascinated by the depiction of David since I have had the opportunity to see famous sculptors shape and fashion him after their own imagination. Which of these images most closely reflects what you have in mind when you think of David as he fights Goliath, in this story that we all know so well.

At the point of this story, we don't know how old he is. We see him introduced in the chapter before this one when Samuel has already chosen him to be the next king and he has been anointed to be the king. He also goes into the current king's court, King Saul, in the previous

chapter, to play the harp for him to calm his spirits down. None of this seems to be remembered by Saul as we find ourselves in the chapter after that.

We know that his brothers are old enough to go into battle and David is not. David is back home in Bethlehem, that's where he was born and raised, that is why Bethlehem is called the city of David and why Mary and Joseph have to go back to Bethlehem from Nazareth to register there, because Joseph is from the line of David. Israel is fighting the Philistines and David's father, Jesse, tells David to go to his brother who are fighting, and take them some provisions. From Bethlehem to the valley of Elah, where the fighting was taking place, was about 15 miles, about how far it is from here to Chestnut Level, down past Quarryville.

A few weeks ago we had a client from our food bank who was in a motorized wheelchair and made his way from there to us in order to get his groceries. We were able to take him back in the Johnson wheelchair van so save him the trip back, but I remember thinking, what a trip to make. That is the trip that David takes, and he could probably do it in 4 or 5 hours, with the provisions, but as soon as he sees the battle lines he drops off the provisions for his brothers with the baggage handlers there.

David witnesses a scene which causes him to be embarrassed. There is an opposing soldier who is mocking the Israelites and even worse, is mocking the Israelite God, the God of creation that we all worship. David tries to rally the troops and asks who does this Philistine think he is? We serve the living God, go get him? His brothers try to shush him, but somehow the king catches wind of David big talk and asks to see him. I'm sure he was disappointed when he sees him, just a boy, can't help at all.

Saul calls him a boy, a few times he is called a boy in a way to discount anything that he may have to offer. But David turns the attention away from himself and focuses it back on God. After recounting his ability to turn away the wildlife that would threaten his livestock he says this phrase in vs.37: "The Lord who saved me from the paw of the lion, and from the paw of the bear, will save me from the hand of the Philistine." Notice that it is David, this boy, who is the first to bring up the name of God as the deliverer. Saul responds and says May the Lord be with you, but it was David who said that God is going to be our deliverer, we will just be the vehicles through whom God can act. Even against all odds, and by the way we have seen God work against all odds in the life of Israel, he can do it again.

Saul agrees, but then he tries to load on David those security blankets that society provides us which we think we need in order to survive. Take on this helmet and this shield and this sword and this coat of armor, but David isn't able to even walk with all of this on. David

refuses and strips himself of all that Saul puts on him. He knows what people and the world would think of what he is doing. His brothers already tried to get him out of there, he had nothing to offer. When the king does agree he tries to give him what the world thinks it needs in order to have the victory, in order to succeed, but David says no, for as he tells Goliath in vs. 47 “that all this assembly may know that the Lord does not save by sword and spear, for the battle is the Lord’s and he will give you into our hand.”

And off he goes and he stops and picks up five smooth stones in order to face Goliath. A child with stones going against a seasoned warrior with armor and the best technology has to offer as far as weapons and defenses go. What can a child with these stones do against a giant? Or in the words of Andrew: There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish, but what are they among so many people. What is this boy and his few rocks against such a giant, or a boy and his lunch in front of 5,000 people?

We read in John 6 vs.6 that Jesus asks the question “where are we going to buy bread enough for all these people to eat?” We read that he knew what he was going to do but he just wanted to ask the question to see how his own disciples, the ones who were walking alongside of him, if they could at all imagine that God could do the impossible. The crowd had gathered because they had already seen him perform miracles and heal the sick and all the other signs that he had done, like turn water to wine a few chapters earlier. What are we going to do? Like Saul the king and all the Israelites when they were faced with an impossible task had no solutions.

Andrew did not provide a solution, maybe he was making a joke, here’s a kid with his lunch. Here are five smooth stones, can you work with this? He works with it and when it was all said and done the people were taken from hunger and curiosity to making a statement that “this is the prophet who is to come into the world.” The role of Jesus and what Jesus does in this story is not surprising, it is the boy who provides what Jesus uses that is surprising.

Throughout this pandemic we have had a whole team of people working behind the scenes to ensure that things could run as smoothly as possible so that you could worship uninterrupted throughout this whole time. While we have the usual suspects who have been working tirelessly on the media, sound, and camera team: Bill Potter, Leo Petrokonis, Mark Feiler, Don Johnson, Bill Payne, Ron McVey, David DiFranco, Sue vonder Luft, Tim Ott, Peter Witmer, there was also a group that you may not know about.

Almost from the very beginning Tomas Avendano, a high school student, has been here every week running the media off and on, Mitchell Ely was here every week for months along with his brother Quentin, Ryon was in there for a few months as well, now Gavin Elias is here

every week working on a camera. We have our own team of boys and girls, who are providing their smooth stones and their loaves and fish that you don't even know about. I wonder if those 5,000 people who got the fish and the bread knew that it came from a boy offering up his food. Against all odds here at FPC we move forward even as we do so at times on the shoulders of these teen, and some even preteen, kids who show us that God is not only able but chooses to work in ways that often surprise us.

Our way of life has always been programmed to pursue the possible and that which we consider achievable. We do that with the tools that we believe we have been given through education, experience, hard work, learning on the job. David called Goliath out because he came against him with that which the world tells us will give us success: look at vs.45: You come to me with sword and spear and javelin; but I come to you in the name of the Lord of hosts. Nothing is able to overcome the Lord of hosts even if it is just a boy with smooth stones, loaves and fish, and a desire to spend time here at FPC to help us lead you closer to your Savior.

The world tells us that it is only through money, and power, and might can you make a difference. Jesus came and with these boys reminds us as Christians to rely upon humility and faith. Nothing else do we need, we can strip all that is extraneous away and trust in the Lord and in the Lord alone. The purpose of David's victory is not simply to save Israel or defeat the Philistines. The purpose is the glorification of YHWH in the eyes of the world. The same should be true for any of our victories.

Amen.