

Giant Killer

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Preacher: Jonathan Middleton

[0 : 0 0] 1 Samuel, page 288 on the Bibles in front of you, and we're in 1 Samuel chapter 17. The original big guy versus the little guy story.

So starting at verse 1. Now the Philistines gathered their forces for war and assembled Soko in Judah. They pitched camp at Ephesdamen between Soko and Azekah.

Saul and the Israelites assembled and camped in the valley of Elah and drew up their battle line to meet the Philistines. The Philistines occupied one hill and the Israelites another with the valley between them.

A champion named Goliath, who was from Gath, came out of the Philistine camp. His height was six cubits and a span. He had a bronze helmet on his head and wore a coat of scale armor of bronze weighing 5,000 shekels.

On his legs he wore bronze greaves and a bronze javelin was slung on his back. His spear shaft was like a weaver's rod and its iron point weighed 600 shekels.

[1 : 0 6] His shield bearer went ahead of him. Then the Philistines said, This day I defy the armies of Israel.

Give me a man and let us fight each other. On hearing the Philistines' words, Saul and all the Israelites were dismayed and terrified. This is where David comes into our story.

And long before the days of Deliveroo, he's sent to bring bread and cheese to his brothers. And he hears the challenge from Goliath. And in verse 26 he asks those around him, Who is this uncircumcised Philistine that he should defy the armies of the living God?

So we pick the story up again at verse 31. What David said was overheard and reported to Saul and Saul sent for him. 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.

[2 : 3 7] 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, but he was not used to them.

I can't go in these, he said to Saul, because I'm 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 hand, approached the Philistine.

[3 : 45] Meanwhile, the Philistine, with the shield-bearer in front of him, kept coming closer to David. He looked David over and saw 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 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 rang quickly towards the battle line to meet him.

[4 : 54] 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. So David triumphed over the Philistine with a sling and a stone.

Without a sword in his hand, he struck down the Philistine and killed him. David ran and stood over him. He took hold of the Philistine's sword and drew it from the sheath. After he killed him, he cut off his head with the sword.

When the Philistine saw that the hero was dead, they turned and ran. Then the men of Israel and Judah surged forward with a shout and pursued the Philistines to the entrance of Gath and to the gates of Ekron.

Their dead was strewn along the Shariim road to Gath and Ekron. When the Israelites returned from chasing the Philistines, they plundered their camp. David took the Philistine's head and brought it to Jerusalem.

He put the Philistine's weapons in his own tent. This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. Thank you so much, Katrina, for reading.

[5 : 58] It would be a great help to me if you keep your Bibles open at 1 Samuel 17. If we've not met before, I'm Jonathan Middleton. I'm the assistant minister here at St. Silas.

Our senior pastor, Martin Ayers, is away at dangerous camping this weekend, which is possibly the most dangerous thing about the weekend for them and for us.

Let's pray and ask for God's help as we begin. Lord God, we pray that as we come and come to this familiar passage for many of us, we pray that you would address personally each one of us here, and that you would speak into our hearts and minds, and that the Holy Spirit would illuminate for us what you have to say to us through your word this morning.

For we ask it in the name of our Saviour and King, the Lord Jesus. Amen. Well, this time of year, summer's over.

It can seem like all change, a new term, a new academic term, people coming and going, arriving for work, coming to university.

[7 : 14] Perhaps you are here, arrived in Glasgow to come to university. Perhaps you're just about to head off to study or work in a different city.

Well, that kind of thing can be pretty daunting. A new city, new jobs, new friends, new colleagues. Something like Freshers' Week can be pretty daunting at the best of times.

But perhaps, especially so if you're a Christian, Freshers' Week will feel quite intimidating, possibly, if you're walking with Jesus.

There's a fear of not joining in, the fear of not fitting in, the fear of standing out as you stand up for Jesus. And not just Freshers' Week, but the workplace too, can be quite intimidating, can be quite difficult to stand up for Jesus.

And in the kind of post-Christian Scotland that we live in, there's going to be times that we'll feel as Christians that the entire Philistine army is lined up against us.

[8 : 29] Well, it's a new school year too. And this year, our daughter's class was given a worksheet to complete questions about themselves, way to get to know each other, kind of icebreaker type of thing.

And one of the blanks they had to fill in, if we get the slide up, Alan, a hero I look up to is. And then if, yeah, so I understand that a number of the children in her class put their dads in that box, see their dads as their heroes, which is kind of sweet, I suppose.

But I have to say, our daughter didn't put me in that space. Instead, and I share this with her permission, she wrote down God. God is her hero.

And it was quite scary, she said, to write that down. She didn't know what her teacher might think of her. She thought it possible that she might be made fun of by some of her friends.

And it was quite a scary thing for her to do. And it can be quite scary for us too, if we're honest, when we have to stick our heads above the parapet, as it were, and face those around us who are opposed to Jesus.

[9 : 42] Well, the Christian life, that means that we're involved in a spiritual battle. And we're going to encounter opposition one way or another in our Christian lives sooner or later if we're walking faithfully with Christ.

And the story of David and Goliath, the story that we've just read, helps us see how we can approach these kind of daunting situations. And we're going to approach this story from two angles this morning, two headings that are in the handout, if you find that helpful as we go along.

And first, we're going to see that it's a total mismatch. It's a total mismatch, but not necessarily for the reasons we might expect. It's a total mismatch.

And then secondly, we're going to sort of zoom out and we're going to look at it from a wider perspective and see how it's part of a pattern in all Scripture. So firstly then, it's a total mismatch.

And if you've been around church for any time at all, there's a fair chance that you'll be familiar with the story of David versus Goliath.

[10 : 56] Even if you've not read the story, the phrase David versus Goliath has become part of the English language, embedded into the English language.

It's a metaphor that basically stands for an improbable victory. And we love that kind of thing, don't we? We love the victory, the triumph of the underdog.

On the evening of the 8th of February, the year 2000, one sub-editor at the Scottish Sun newspaper came up with arguably the greatest newspaper headline in Scottish sporting history, perhaps even the greatest headline in football history.

As lower division minnows, Inverness, Caledonian, Thistle, Inverness, Kelly, Thistle, knocked out Glasgow Giants, Glasgow Celtic. Super, Kelly, go ballistic, Celtic, are atrocious, went the headline.

And if there's a few blank faces there, then don't get the cultural reference. And there's a song in the film, Mary Poppins, which rhymes with the title.

[12 : 05] Well, we might not have heard of Mary Poppins, but we've heard of David versus Goliath. But actually, do we know how this story goes? And it starts with a description of a battle.

Battle lines are drawn up. Armies assembled on one side. The Philistines are lined up. On the other side, the Israelites facing them. The valley in between them is the setting for a monumental contest.

And instead of the whole army marching forward, just one man comes forward. A looming figure enters the scene. And just look at how he's described in verse four.

So a champion named Goliath from Gath came out. His height was six cubits in a span. He had a bronze helmet on his head and his armor weighed 5,000 shekels.

On his legs, he wore bronze shin guards and a bronze javelin was slung on his back. His spear shaft was like a weaver's rod and its iron point weighed 600 shekels.

[13 : 08] Now, they don't have the metric system back then. They don't even have the imperial system. But basically, Goliath was one massive man. Goliath was very tall, three meters tall, 10 foot tall, something like that, according to the text here.

And a bronze helmet atop his head, sort of augmenting his already impressive height. Not only that, he's got a javelin. Not only that, he's got a spear. Not only that, he's got a sword on his side.

He's even got a personal shield bearer. And if this was a pack of top trumps, Goliath, you're a top trump. Apparently, unbeatable stats.

Armed to the teeth, he's like a gigantic one-man Swiss army knife. With all those options at his disposal, he's like the human equivalent of a main battle tank coming into view.

And as prize fighters often do, as the pre-fight buildup happens, think sort of Mike Tyson types, as pre-fight buildups often do, he's taunting the opposition, verse 8.

[14 : 13] So Goliath stood and shouted to the ranks of Israel, choose a man and let him come down to me. If he is able to fight and kill me, we will become your subjects.

But if I overcome him and kill him, you will become our subjects and serve us. And so Goliath's making a bold claim, isn't he, in verse 10.

This day I defy the armies of Israel. Give me a man and let us fight each other. So he's saying he will fight as their representative, and he's challenging Israel to do just the same.

Now can you see why there's nobody in Israel who'd want to go and fight this Goliath? We're going to come back and think about that just a little bit more in a minute.

But then David appears, doesn't he? And as Katrina said, they've not got delivery or just eat back in those days. So he's tasked with this errand to go and deliver cheese sandwiches to his brothers on the front line.

[15 : 17] And hearing Goliath's challenge, David volunteers to fight him. Verse 32. Let no one lose heart on account of this Philistine.

Your servant David will go and fight him. Saul tries to give him his sword and armor. In verse 38, to give him at least a bit of a fighting chance.

But then it's this kind of comical scene, isn't it? So David refuses. Next verse, I can't even walk in this, he says. Instead, he reaches down into the riverbed and grabs five smooth stones and puts them in his satchel and then descends down into the valley to face the giant.

Now, if we were to compare their top trump stance, we're not told David's height. If you were here last week, remember the Lord told Samuel not to consider his height.

But whatever it is, verse 42, Goliath's not impressed. The Philistine, Goliath saw that David was little more than a boy, glowing with health and handsome.

[16 : 28] And he despised him. David's choice of weapon, verse 40, the slingshot, the traditional weapon of the shepherd.

We'll give it a relatively high score for this. In the right hand, it's a formidable weapon, can reach up to 100 miles an hour of speed. And it's a formidable weapon like that.

But armor, well, he's taken that off, so there's no armor to speak of. Fear factor. Now, this is interesting. Goliath's certainly not afraid of David, that's for sure.

But he's expecting to do battle with a seasoned warrior who looks like himself. Instead, he sees this little shepherd boy with his staff in hand.

Am I a dog? Verse 43, that you come at me with sticks. Come here, and I'll feed you to the birds. And it looks on paper, at least, like a total mismatch.

[17 : 27] No contest. But we need to think a little bit more about this fear factor. Because in many ways, this whole chapter is all about the fear factor.

So let's back up a little bit. And you notice, near the beginning of the passage, when Goliath comes out and lays down the gauntlet to the Israelites, the text highlights the emotional response of the Israelites in verse 11.

The text highlights the emotional response. On hearing the Philistines' words, Saul and all the Israelites were dismayed and terrified. Not one person steps forward.

Not a single person. And that goes on for 40 days, doesn't it? Verse 16, Goliath has been taunting Israel day in, day out for 40 days.

And along comes David. And the difference, the difference between them is in how David hears Goliath.

[18 : 40] So look with me at verse 23. Goliath, the Philistine champion, stepped out from his lines and shouted his usual defiance. And David heard it.

whenever the Israelites saw the man, they all fled from him in great fear. So notice the difference between their perspective and David's perspective.

They take one look at this colossal silhouette that's coming into view and they run scared. They scarper. But verse 26, end of verse 26, David says, who is this uncircumcised Philistine that he should defy the armies of the living God?

Do you see? We've got different perspectives. The same situation, same circumstances, different perspectives.

They're looking at the same thing but they don't see it in the same way. And the way David sees it, Goliath's come to challenge Israel but actually he's come to challenge the living God.

[19 : 54] They're saying, the people of Israel are saying, he comes to defy us. Verse 25, David's saying, he's defying God himself. God's reputation is at stake and David recognizes that.

It's the same situation, different assessments of the same situation. And David recognizes that Goliath's challenge is ridiculous.

Even though he's tall, even though he's strong, even though he's armed to the teeth and carrying all this heavy armor, he doesn't ultimately have any power at all when it comes to facing the living God.

And David knows this. He knows that he serves the living God who fights his battles for him. And so in verse 33, when Saul dismisses David and says he can't go out and fight Goliath, David tells how he's beaten wild animals in the past.

He goes through his CV with Saul, essentially. He's killed a lion, he's killed a bear, and this, by the way, for video gamers of a certain generation will bring to mind the Tekken franchise and the Mortal Kombat with a giant panda.

[21 : 14] I'm not sure if that's a very helpful illustration, but anyway, David's not afraid of lions or bears. He's not impressed by a Philistine giant because he knows nothing.

It's nothing to do with his own strength at all. It's nothing to do with him, but he traces it all back to God. God's been fighting for him this whole time, verse 37.

The Lord who rescued me, the Lord who rescued me from the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear will surely rescue me from the hand of this Philistine giant.

And so, when we finally get to the point where David and Goliath meet and Goliath mocks him practically, laughs him off the stage, show the thing, David's deadly serious, verse 45. David said to him, you come against me with impressive-looking armor and weapons, but I, I come against you in the name of the Lord Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel whom you have defied and this day the Lord will deliver you into my hands and the whole world will know that there is a God in Israel and 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.

David knows it's a complete and utter mismatch and Goliath doesn't stand a chance. But we're getting ahead of ourselves again and to see the full significance of this battle we need to take a step back and see it within the context of the full sweep of scripture.

[22 : 57] And just before we do so let me tell you a story from my own sporting school background. it's not very impressive most of the time but this was a personal highlight.

I've been out of action for about six to eight weeks with a knee injury and when you've been out like that for a number of weeks the way they do it is they put you in one of the lower teams to give you match practice and get you back up to match fitness.

Well that particular Saturday morning we were playing our arch rivals and there were about three or four of us who were in the same situation three or four of us coming back from a lengthy injury and from the first and second 15 being eased back to injury from injury in one of the lower teams probably the sevens or the eights something like that.

Well it was an absolute rout. The opposition didn't stand a chance and after about five minutes they didn't even want the ball they'd never seen so many dump tackles and for about 20 minutes to spare the referee finally had mercy on them when the score was 110 to nil and it was great fun of course if you're on the winning side but less so if you're on the receiving end.

Victory was a foregone conclusion. It should have never happened like that of course. A total mismatch. Well David versus Goliath was a total mismatch. And now we're going to see how it's part of a really important pattern in scripture.

[24 : 29] The story of David Goliath is one of the most famous in the whole Bible. But the reason for its significance is not what people often think.

The point is not that David was super brave and beat up the big scary giant. The point is not that you and I should bravely confront our own personal Goliaths.

And to understand the point of the story we need to do two things. We need firstly to recognize who we are. We need to ask the question who am I in this story?

And because David's the main character the hero of the story because we read it like that almost instinctively we read ourselves into the role of David.

And then we're kind of in danger of thinking that I just need to be more like David. I just need to be a little bit more brave and I just need to be more like him. The problem with that the problem is that David has just been anointed as God's chosen king.

[25 : 39] God's Messiah. And at this stage in the story Saul's still king of a nation but David's been anointed for that purpose as God's future king.

That's what we read about last week in chapter 16 verse 13 if you just go back a page. Chapter 16 verse 13 Samuel anointed David and from that day on the spirit of the Lord came powerfully upon David.

And then the very next thing basically that happens is that David immediately goes and does battle with Goliath. Well friends you and I are not the anointed king.

We are not God's chosen king. We are more like the people of Israel in this story but unlike the people of Israel we have no need to fear or be dismayed.

We have no need to be distressed or afraid when we encounter opposition to our faith. Why not? Because in King Jesus we have an anointed king.

[26 : 46] God's chosen Messiah who has already won the battle and his pattern we already see in King David. And so to understand the point of the story its true significance we need secondly to see how the drama of the story of David versus Goliath fits into the big picture.

Fits into God's unfolding purpose across the sweep of scripture. So really we need to go all the way back right back to the very beginning right back to the garden of Eden.

So why don't we go there now to Genesis chapter 3 page 5 you'll find it there in your Bibles in front of you Genesis chapter 3 keep a thumb in 1 Samuel 17 God God God God God God created the first humans Adam and Eve and placed them in the garden of Eden and given the role of guarding the garden to Adam but into this garden paradise enters a serpent who embodies evil and rebellion against God instead of guarding the garden as he should have and ridding it of this evil presence the serpent Adam and Eve listen to the serpent's lies and twisting of God's word. And by sinning against God, by giving in to temptation and taking from the fruit that was forbidden to them, Adam and Eve transferred their allegiance from God to Satan.

Well, as Adam and Eve left the garden, all looked a little bit lost, didn't it? But it wasn't. Among the curses, God also makes a promise. And in Genesis chapter 3 verse 15, we have one of the most important lines in the whole Bible. Speaking to the serpent, the Lord God said, I will put enmity between you and the woman and between your offspring and hers, and he will crush your head and you will strike his heel. So to put it simply, God promises Satan that Satan hasn't won. Sure, the serpent might have convinced Adam to join him in his rebellion against God, but one day God promised to send someone else, a descendant of the woman, to do what Adam should have done in the first place. He should have crushed the head of the serpent then and there. And the role of the promised offspring to the woman that will be to be the king that Adam failed to be, to slay the enemy that Adam cozied up to, and to win the battle that Adam lost.

Now when we get to the book of 1 Samuel, we find the promised land, the land that God had given to his people, it's overrun by an evil presence. Just as God's enemy, the serpent, trespassed in the garden of Eden, the enemy of God's people, the Philistines originally from Crete, are trespassing in the promised land. And the way Goliath is described, he even looks a little bit like a snake. So if you just turn back to 1 Samuel 17 on page 288, 1 Samuel 17 verse 5, he had a bronze helmet and was covered in scale armor of bronze. The Philistine champion came out covered in armor of scales. The bronze armor was like scales covering his body. The description is serpent-like, it's reptilian. He's come out to defy the armies of the living gods. But where's Israel's king? Where's Israel's representative in all this?

[30 : 52] He's hiding. That's where. And you know, King Saul was specifically chosen because the people thought he'd fight their battles for him. So back in chapter 8 verse 20, it should be on the screen, that's what they demand. We want a king over us, then we'll have a king to lead us and to fight our battles for us.

So where's King Saul? Well, he's cowering in his tent in fear. They've got the king they asked for, he's head and shoulders above the rest, according to his description, but he's not up for fighting their battles for them. He's just as fierce as the rest of them. And like King Adam, King Saul fails to defeat the serpent. Meanwhile, David, anointed but not yet king, does precisely, does precisely what the king ought to do. He confronts the serpent. He confronts the giant, verse 45. David said to the Philistine, 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. And then verse 48, as the Philistine moved closer to attack him, David ran quickly toward the battle line to meet him and 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.

And after he killed him, he cut off his head with the sword. So David, motivated by faith and not by his own bravery or pride, with one small stone and a slingshot, let's fly the stone.

Stone sinks into his foreheads. And the giant Philistine who defied the armies of the living God falls down. The anointed David crushes the serpent's head, crushes the head of the serpent-like giant.

David is a serpent crusher, an important part of the pattern of fulfillment in the Bible. But he's not the promised serpent crusher. He would come a thousand years later like David. He'd be born in Bethlehem. And in the river Jordan, Jesus was anointed not by oil, but that which the oil represented, the Holy Spirit, as God's chosen king, the Messiah. And Mark records immediately after this, just as the Spirit had driven David to do battle with Goliath after his anointing as king, at once the Spirit drove anointed Jesus out into the wilderness. And there, for 40 days, he confronted the great enemy of God's people and the great enemy of God himself, a foe from the garden, the serpent Satan. So do you see the significance of what's happening here in chapter 17 of 1 Samuel?

[34 : 08] Having been anointed as king, Jesus immediately begins to do what the king was supposed to do all along. He fights the ancient serpent and wins the battle for God's people that we can win for ourselves. He confronts the enemy from the garden of Eden. He endures the temptations we all succumb to.

And just when he looks his very weakest, at his death on the cross. As the writer to the Hebrews puts it, he destroys the one who has power of death. That is the devil. In other words, through his death and resurrection, Jesus fulfills the promise of Genesis chapter 3 verse 15. He crushes the head of the serpent. And friends, when he returns, our resurrected king will finally cut off the serpent's head, as it were, once and for all. Or in the words of the book of Revelation, the serpent, enemy of God's people, will be destroyed forever, thrown into a lake of burning sulfur. So friends, whatever the weeks and months ahead holds, whatever battle it is you may face, whatever dread overwhelms your soul, whoever it is you encounter who is opposed to the living God. Remember this. You've got nothing to fear. You've got nothing to fear in sticking your neck out in the workplace, in the pub after work on a Friday. You've got nothing to fear about speaking up for Jesus at the school gate. You've got nothing to fear in writing down that your hero is God.

You've got nothing to fear in standing out as you stand up for Jesus. Because in Jesus, we stand behind a king who is our true hero, who cares about God's reputation, who cares about God's people. And thanks to his final victory over Satan, we won a battle that we never even had to fight. We won a battle we never had to fight. And so we can rest in him, brothers and sisters. The battle is the Lord's and the victory's already won. A foregone conclusion. Amen. And let's join together in prayer.

Father, we thank you that in King Jesus, we have the hero who conquered our worst enemies, Satan and sin and death. We thank you that in King Jesus, we have nothing, no one to fear. And so we pray that by the Holy Spirit who dwells within us, you would enable us and equip us to take the opportunities that present themselves to us over the coming days and weeks to boldly proclaim the good news that we have in that to those around us. For we ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.