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Surrender – 1 Samuel 17

**Read the text. 1 Samuel 17:1-51. (pg. 202)**

**It is always a humbling task to give a sermon on a story that everyone has heard so many times.** Even non-Christians and the average person in our world – if we were to ask about Bible stories that they know would name this story of a small shepherd boy, David and the enormous giant of a man, Goliath.

**What is it about this story that so captivates us as people and draws us in?** It is not exactly a pleasant story. Goliath gets his head cut off at the end . . . it is about war, but we love the story because it is about an underdog that prevails.

**It is the same reason that we got really excited about Butler in the NCAA basketball tournament earlier this year.** It was reported that Duke spends \$394,068 per player on their basketball roster. Butler spends \$347,108 on the entire team. Duke's coach had 76 NCAA tournament victories. Butler's coach was mistaken for a player buy Lucas Oil Stadium security before the championship game. Duke had 6 McDonald's All-Americans and Butler had a bunch of guys from Indiana.

**The story line was fantastic and anyone that did not have pre-existing loyalties rooted for Butler because we like underdogs.** And we like underdogs because there is a part of us all that believe we are underdogs at something. Perhaps no one thought we would amount to much. Maybe we are from a small town or didn't do well in school. Maybe we have had a lot of tragedy in our life. For whatever reason when we hear stories of underdogs prevailing, it gives us hope that we can too.

**Last week we began our sermon series on transformation and focused on the fact that the counter-intuitive place the Bible tells us that we have to begin processes of change – is surrender.** We don't need over-powering and resilient will power . . . we don't need more muscle – what we need to first do is realize that the power to change will come from God. We thus get out of the way and surrender to God.

**We heard this in our passages from last week. “Offer your bodies as a living sacrifice.” “Deny yourself and take up your cross.”** It is throughout the Bible though and Jesus himself calls out in agony from the garden. **“not as I will, but as you will.”**

**From our place of beginning on our knees, acknowledging that we need God to change . . . what do we do?** We rise to our feet with a confidence in a God that can help us change. We move boldly into the first steps of acting, believing and trusting that God will make it happen. One of my favorite final blessings makes this clear to us. **“Now to him (God) who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to His power that is at work within us, to Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever! Amen.”**

**Whether they fully understand the roots of the process, all successful methods for personal transformation or change begin with these two basic elements.** Admit that your will power is not strong enough to change on your own. We are not powerful enough. And second, believe and trust and have confidence that God is powerful enough.

**Alcoholics Anonymous has been successful in changing lives for decades because they have tapped into these two basic steps.** They state their first two steps of their 12 step program this way.

1. We admitted we were powerless over alcohol – that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.

**I believe that God uses stories of the underdog throughout the Bible to help us to understand the nature and sufficiency of His power.** God takes people without a chance in the world and makes them victorious so that there will be no doubt that they did not succeed on their own power and abilities, but only by the strength of God.

**Our story this morning of David and Goliath is an example of this.**

**The Philistines were not good folks.** Israel had lived side-by-side with them for some time, but there had been repeated friction throughout the period of the judges. The Philistines were not necessarily large in number, but a very strong military force. And because they saw Israel as a threat to their stability or

simply because they wanted more security with inland trade routes, the Philistines moved aggressively to gain control of the whole of Western Palestine. And because of the Philistines' military might, they posed a threat to all of Israel.

**The Philistines controlled territory along the Eastern side of present day Israel. (MAP)** Then here (MAP) is an example of the various advances that we making into the land of the Israelites. You can see why there may have been advantageous trading routes from the Mediterranean Sea that the would have wanted to protect.

**This is where the battle between David and Goliath would have taken place. And separating these two places was a large valley.**

**The Philistines were also unbelievably well equipped for battle.** They had expertly disciplined soldiers combined with a near monopoly on iron, which gave them access to superior weaponry. Israel was simply no match in terms of organization, training and weapons technology.

**In the time leading up to our story of David and Goliath, the Philistines demonstrated their might against Israel by defeating them at various points.** There was a sense of hopelessness that drowned Israel with regard to their Philistine neighbors. Although Saul achieved some victories for Israel, he had never been able to deal the knockout blow required to end the intrusions.

**As our story begins we have the Philistines again gathering their troops.** Saul and the Israelites army gather as well. The two are positioned on opposite sides of a valley . . . when this giant of a man steps up. The text tells us that this Philistine's name was Goliath and he was from Gath. There is some debate over how big he really was. Our text says 9 feet. Some translations say 7 feet. Regardless, the point of the text is that he was a very large man.

**(PIC) This should give you some perspective. This is Robert Wadlow born in 1918.** He was the tallest man ever recorded at 8 feet, 11 inches tall and 490 pounds. That is his father next to him for a frame of reference as to his size. Imagine yourself, the average sized person looking upon an army similar in size to you, when the giant man steps forward.

**And it gets worse. Goliath is wearing a ridiculous amount of armor.** His armor alone weighed as much as many of you. It weighed at least 125 pounds and as much as 220 pounds. He had a helmet of bronze, body armor, and bronze shin guards. Then he carried an enormous javelin as his weapon with a 15 pound iron point on it. And what I found hilarious about the description of Goliath that I never thought about before was that the text adds that Goliath also had a shield bearer that walked in front of him . . . because apparently 200 pounds of body armor was not enough. **I imagine it being like a guy with a dish pan walking in front of a tank to protect it.** Anyways, Goliath was a very threatening guy.

**As Goliath presents himself, he proposes a one-to-one battle by which the loser's side must become the servants of the winners.** It was known as a representative battle and was fairly common in the day because it saved the remainder of the armies from risk. And in this case the method clearly favored Goliath and the Philistines given Goliath's size.

**When the Israelites heard this proposal they were very scared and ran.** In the meantime, though, there is this young, musically gifted shepherd boy that has 3 older brothers that are amongst the troops in the battle with the Philistines. His name is David and one day his father sends him to check on his brothers and take them some food. So David packs up and goes.

**When David gets to the front lines he sees Goliath step forward and again mock Israel with his representative battle proposal.** David then also watches as the Israelites retreat in fear.

**It turns out that Saul is so desperate to find someone to fight Goliath too, that he proposes quite the deal.** Whoever can strike down Goliath will get really wealthy, Saul's daughter in marriage, and a perpetual tax exemption. Now your eyes are getting big.

**As David inquires about the reward, David's oldest brother gets a little aggravated.** You can tell David is excited about what he has just witnessed . . . he hasn't said anything yet, but you get the sense he is already thinking he might be able to do something.

**Now there are several lessons that I believe God wants to teach us through this story, especially around what is needed to be people of change and transformation.** David had surrendered to God and this story is about how he used the power of God to step forward in confidence.

**We see that David has already surrendered to God in how he sees in Goliath.** While all of the other Israelites have their tails between their legs at the site of Goliath and are running away afraid day after day, David sees Goliath in a radically different way. While the Israelites are saying did you see that guy . . . he was 12 feet tall, with teeth like a lion and armor that could never be penetrated . . . David says, did you see that guy, “he defies the armies of the living God.”

**David is not scared because he does not see Goliath as an unbeatable physical obstacle, but as a man destined for death because he opposes God.** That is the outlook of a person that believes in a big and active God.

**How many times in our lives do we stare at the Goliath’s in our lives and run in fear?** How often do we think about how broken our marriage is and want to get up and run? How often do we look in the mirror and see our addictions, our selfishness, our anxiety and worry, our anger and hate . . . and turn and run from confronting them because we don’t believe we can win?

**We don’t believe we can win because we know how weak we are and how overwhelmingly powerful our obstacles are.** We see our sin as an obstacle that we must overcome and it is impossible.

**But David does not look down at his young, weak, shepherd body and compare that to Goliath.** He looks up at His infinitely strong and mighty God and compares Him to Goliath. And that changes everything.

**When we have surrendered our lives to God, we no longer fight our battles alone and that gives us power beyond imagination.** David got this.

**We will always have doubters though.** I think the cool way to say it these days is that we will always have haters. As David is exploring the Goliath situation, his older brother is hating on him. David’s brother wants to know who is looking out for the sheep while David is gone, implying that David needs to scoot along and get back home to the farm where he really belongs. The fighting work is up to the big brothers. David’s brother seems to thin that David is just looking for entertainment and not truly understanding of the magnitude of the obstacle.

David's enthusiasm, though, eventually lands him in the company of Saul, who initially doesn't have much respect for David either. **Saul says, "you're just a boy." I fee like I hear that a lot.**

**Saul clearly doubts David's abilities.** But David convinces Saul to give him a try based upon his zeal and confidence. David tells him about the lions and bears he has already slain and David proudly proclaims that Goliath will find the same fate. Saul eventually says, "go," but then says, "**may, the Lord be with you.**" It sounds like a nice blessing, but I don't wonder if Saul was a tad sarcastic, "MAY, the Lord be with you." Like, "good luck with that."

**Saul tries to dress David up in his armor, but it just looks ridiculous, he doesn't fit and David can hardly move in it.**

**There is a lesson for us here too. Having confidence in God often means that we don't do things the way most people would.**

**There was a research study done not too long ago where a researcher went back and examined battles over the past 200 years, where there was an overwhelming power pitted against a so-called underdog.** What he found was that nearly 80% of the time the Goliaths beat the Davids, but when the Davids or the underdogs employed what he called an unconventional strategy, the Davids won more than 60% of the time.

**Underdogs change the rules of the game. David puts down the armor that Saul wants him to use, picks up his staff, a bag (I picture a fanny pack), and grabs some smooth stones and a sling.**

You can imagine the image then as he approaches Goliath in battle. (PIC)

Goliath want to laugh too. He says, "Am I a dog, that you are coming after me with sticks?" It is a reference to the staff that David has and really how silly it is in comparison to the power and might of Goliath.

David's response explains everything. **"You are coming against me with sword and spear and javelin. But I am coming against you in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel's armies, who you have defied. This very day the Lord will deliver you into my hand!"**

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