

David and Goliath

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[0 : 00] Now we're going to look back today at the passage that we, that David read, that was read from the front today by Callum. David probably read it somewhere else as well.

But it's about David and Goliath and we didn't read the whole of the story, it's a really long story, but in our morning worship we've been looking at the children's Bible story, stories, and recognizing the importance of them in the Bible and kind of bringing them, I hope, into our consciousness once again. And I'm sure that you'll find today, if you've been here for the rest of these sermons, that there is a theme that emerges through these stories that we have from the Old Testament, which remind us, and I hope encourages us and encourages you that there is a consistency in the Bible message, there's a consistency, a beautiful consistency about what God reveals to us. He doesn't tell us everything and he doesn't randomly just tell us things, he gives us what he wants us to know and it all is beautifully consistent. And we find that there's a theme throughout these Old Testament stories that there's a common thread as God is revealing more and more about himself as he brings us to that point of the great revelation of himself in Jesus.

But for many people the story of David and Goliath is a kind of myth, isn't it? A kind of the hair and the tortoise, that kind of myth, giant against a wee man, or at best it's maybe a story with a spiritual lesson like, be courageous and you can slay whatever giant you want, or believe in yourself and you can do anything with a kind of moralistic theme behind it. But actually these stories are far more radical and far more meaningful and irrelevant than just a moral lesson or a pleasant, or if you read it maybe, you thought unpleasant story about victory over giants. Now there's not, it's not, and none of these Old Testament stories are simply inspirational stories about the human spirit, however inspirational the human spirit can be and I'm not denying that, but there's a much higher lesson that God is teaching us in His Word. This is God's living Word, we remember that, we recall that, we keep coming back to that, that this is God's living Word, His spoken Word to us and He's saying, this is how it is. He's saying, this is who I am, this is who you are, this is who I am. He's saying, I alone are the one who gives life, I alone can overturn your death.

It's almost, it's incredible, I know, every week we speak about death. You know, if you want to bring your friends along to something where we speak about death, bring them along to the church.

We're always speaking about death, but we can't, when you're in Scripture you can't really help that because it deals with the biggest, because we also speak about life and I think that's very significant, these two things, life and death and that takes us to the central message often of God's Word and the answer that comes from God and so it never deals with just peripheral issues in our lives and today we celebrate life and we celebrate marriage and we recognize death and we see it because that's the human experience. So we come to David and Goliath and you all know the story of David and Goliath, everybody knows the story of David and Goliath, it's all been said before so I'm not going to repeat the story. If you don't know the story of David and Goliath, please go back to it in the Bible and read maybe chapter 16 and the beginning of chapter 17 as well and that will give you a fuller picture of the story.

[4 : 08] So I'm not really going to mention today one or two things that maybe you might think we would mention. I'm not going to speak about Goliath being a great big giant and the height he was, he was a big man. I'm not going to speak about the armor that he put on and how great and important that armor is. I'm not going to explain why or talk about why David chose five smooth stones, not about the trajectory of the sling or his shepherding skills and prowess. I'm not going to, I'm taking a chance today, I'm not going to repeat the story because I'm presuming that you know the basics of the story today. I'm not really going to explain the bit that I didn't read from the beginning of chapter 17. But I am going to ask, and I think we always need to come to God's word with this, why did God inspire this story in his living word? Why has he included David and Goliath

in the Bible and how does it fit in with what he wants us to know about himself? Because that's where the Bible stories are about. They're about God and they're about us in relation to God.

So I'm going to speak about four words that come out through this passage. One is defiance, the second is appearance, the third is absurdity, and the fourth is faith. So we're going to look at these four things in relation to this story, which I believe are part of God's message that comes through this and the other Bible stories to a greater or lesser degree that we've been looking at. The first is defiance, okay, because there's a theological undercurrent in this story. David and Goliath are not the main players in this story, although it does seem like that. This is a story of the Israelites who are God's redeemed people, God who has rescued them and brought them into a promised land and they are to be God's worshipers, they are to be people who stand for God, they represent God as it were, and they're the people from whom, as we look forward, the Christ will come. We're Christians today, we trust in Jesus Christ, the Christ came through this people. Okay, so there's an undercurrent beyond the individuals David and Goliath, but there are key words in this story which help us to appreciate that theological undercurrent, and David understands the theological and the spiritual undercurrent as a young shepherd, and he reminds us in verse 26, David said to the men who stood with him, by him, what shall be done for the man who kills the Philistine and takes away their approach from Israel? For who is this uncircumcised, not part of the covenant, Philistine, that he should defy, defy the armies of the living God? So in a nutshell, David gets what's going on here. He sees someone who represents unbelief and defiance against the living God, seeking to destroy and annihilate God and God's people here. He speaks about the living God. He knows that it's about the honor and reputation of the living God that is being challenged here, and it's interesting that the living

God, there's another word for the living God in this chapter, Yahweh, the Lord, the redeeming God, the name of God who revealed, redeemed his people, Yahweh, and that comes across six times in this chapter. So there's this undercurrent of the Lord being his will or his reputation being at stake, but interestingly, the same word that David uses here about defiance, defying, that also is used six times. So the writer and the inspiration of God wants us to recognize that the Lord is central to this story, and defiance against the Lord is also central to this story. So when David speaks, and there's three speeches of David in this chapter, he focuses on the Lord. They're very God-centered. They're not about himself. It's not about, look at me, and look at my courage, and see what I'm going to do to Goliath. He is dependent on the Lord, and he recognizes who the Lord is, and recognizes the battle.

So that defeat for the Israelites would have meant subjection and servility to godless and destructive idol-worshipping people. And Goliath himself in verse 43, when he rubbish is this young slip of a lad that comes down to fight him, he says, you know, he swears by the name of his own gods, and he recognizes that there's this spiritual battle, there's this spiritual defiance that's being outworked here. We also see it in the fact that David, did you know that David faces three Goliaths in this story? You only thought it was one.

There's three Goliaths in this story. David fought two Goliaths before he even met the big man, because there was three Goliaths of defiance and unbelief in this story. The first is his own brother, Eliab. In verse 28, we have these words, now Eliab is older brother when he heard David speaking to the men. His anger was kindled, and he said, why have you come down, and why have you addressed these few sheep in the wilderness? I know you're presumption and the evil of your heart for you've come down to see the battle. So Eliab is just, he's contemptuous about David's stance and about what David is seeking to do in defense of the living God, and he questions his motive in the heart. You're evil in your heart. So that's a great defiant Goliath that David has to overcome, and then he has to overcome the defiance and probably more the doubt of Saul, the great king of Israel who in verse 33 says, you're not able to go out against the Philistine. And so there's the cynicism and doubt from Saul, and there's this contempt from Eliab, his own brother, and it's spiritual. It's a spiritual doubt and a spiritual unbelief and contempt that they have for the living God. And this story therefore is about spiritual defiance, and it's about the powers of darkness defying the living God. And that has been the story throughout history, hasn't it been, that the powers of darkness have deceived humanity, humanity have swallowed the lie and have been incited to rebellion, rejection and idolatry to crush God and in the Old Testament to crush the line that takes us to the living Savior,

[11 : 27] Jesus Christ. So defiance is the first word that we see here. And in response to that, the victory that David has over Goliath, then it is a signal victory. Corrie last week preached about Samson, same kind of thing. It's a signal victory. It was to prepare the Old Testament people and us, and they and we often forget that there is victory in God's revelation pointing forward. There's always that. This story of David and Goliath is pointing forward to something greater, and the divine trajectory of some greater victory. It's providing a lot of hints towards God's ultimate victory, promised, planned and enacted at Calvary.

So these stories are not cobbled together, moral stories from a bygone Eastern culture. This is the great God focus pointing forward to the work of God on the cross. So defiance is the first word. The second word is appearance. This is very important in the story of David and Goliath as well. Well, you turn back with me to chapter 16. We didn't read chapter 16, but chapters if you have a moment and you have your Bibles, turn back to it because there's two very important verses that link in with the story of David and Goliath. The first is verse one of chapter 16, speaking about Saul. The Lord said to Samuel, How long will you grieve over Saul since I have rejected him for being king over Israel? And then, verses six and seven, Samuel comes to anoint the next king after Saul, and he comes to the children of Jesse, the men. She's when they came, he looked on the liab and thought, Surely the Lord's anointed this before him. But the Lord said to Samuel, Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature because I've rejected him. For the Lord sees not as man sees man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart.

Saul had been rejected though he was discreet. He wasn't a man after God's own heart. Eliab, this great strong son was rejected because God looked to the heart. And it's Saul and it's Eliab in chapter 17 that are defiant against God because God and Goliath himself.

And but the great, the great point of this chapter 16 is leading into chapter 17 is that God doesn't look on the outward appearance. God looks in the heart. God isn't impressed with Goliath. God doesn't think he's a big shot. He's not really scared of him. And indeed neither is David, amazingly. And so that is a very important lesson that comes out from this great Old Testament Bible story about David and Goliath is that God doesn't look on the outward appearance, but God looks in the heart. God sees our heart. God sees differently. He saw into David's heart someone who trusted in him, relied on him and was a man after his own heart who trusted in him for his salvation. And that heart trust was what enabled David to fight lions and Goliath. The heart that David had given him a different perspective to Eliab and also to Saul because his heart was changed. His heart was renewed. That's a really strong and powerful message for us today that God isn't impressed with what we look like. He's not impressed with our outward judgment of one another. He looks in the heart. And so the question when we come to God's Word in an Old Testament story, I've got nothing you'll learn about this story. I know what the story, God asks the question of us today, well, what are we like in our core? What's our core like? What's our heart that nobody else sees today? What is it like in relation to God? The eyeball to eyeball that we must do in our hearts before the living God that no one else sees. Our innermost thoughts, our desires, do we love Him there? Do we trust

[15 : 39] Him? That's why He is so important, isn't it? Because nobody else here, nobody you will ever meet, supposing you meet the most important person in the universe, none of them can look into your heart. None of them. Nobody can. Your best friend, your spouse, your lover, whoever it is, nobody can look into your heart, but the living God can. So do we relegate God to the back end of our lives? No, we can't because He looks into our heart and He sees beyond the outward appearance. We might look great outwardly, but He's saying that is not what ultimately matters. Now, what we are on the outside does matter, of course, and I contradict myself entirely, because it reflects our heart, or to reflect our heart. So there is a sense in which it matters, but not in the sense of being primary. It's not God's standard. So today your status, your career, your beauty, your power, your success, your comparative goodness, you look around, you say, I'm definitely better than them. The comparative goodness that we have, the judgment that we make on other people so quickly and so often, our intelligence, our evident Christian profession outwardly, God isn't moved by any of that, because He sees far deeper, He sees into our heart and what we are like in our soul, and our heart condition reflects who we are. And so the great reality of the gospel is we all need Him. None of us, the church can never be, Christians can never be self-righteous, and we can never judge others and say, well, they're much, much, much, much worse than I am, because we all need, because we all fall short of God's glory and none of us can meet His standard of perfection,

and we all in our hearts look at them and need His salvation to change our hearts, to renew our hearts so that we love Him and we believe in Him and trust in Him and in who He is, because that then, what that does in terms of looking beyond appearance, when we commit Christ to our hearts to transform the heart that we can't transform, it then changes our perspective, doesn't it? The David's heart was right with God, and therefore he realized that Goliath was just a big galoot in many ways, because he had God on his side. Goliath wasn't a big problem. Eliath wasn't a problem. Saul wasn't a problem, because he was dependent on the living God, and he recognized that God was in his heart, and God, this was God's battle. So it changes, it changes us from the inside. So often, isn't it, in our lives, we want to change everything else, don't we? We want to change our circumstances, we want to change our looks, we want to change our prospects, we want to change what's happening outwardly, we want to change others, our husband, our wife, our neighbors, our boss, our colleagues, if only they changed, if only our circumstances changed, but God is saying, these things may or may not change, but primarily, He wants us to change our hearts, to look and see that it's not the outward appearance, it's not the Goliaths we face, it's not the problems that are on the outside, it's the internal attitude and the recognition of who God is. So, appearance is the second thing, and that's greatly challenging to each of us this morning in our lives. The third is absurdity. Okay, now, don't leave the building. I use that word advisedly when speaking about the word of God, and I don't mean to be flippant in any way. I use it in a sense to really try and challenge us a little bit, because there is absurdity. If you were here last week and you listened to Corey Sermon, you understand what I mean by absurdity, and that's no slight

on Corey Sermon. It was the best sermon he's preached here, but he was speaking about Samson, this antihero. There was absurdity in that story, wasn't there? And in many ways, when we look at the genealogy of Jesus, or we look at the roll call of faith that we've been going back and forward to from these stories, the people that inhabit Jesus' genealogy, there's absurdity there. Absurdity, at least on the way that we often make decisions about what we think God should do. And this story is a story of absurdity, isn't it? David, he's just a teenager. He's a young boy. He's hardly got his muscles built up in his arms. He's skinny and he's a mismatch and he's a kid, and he has no military experience, no weaponry skills. He can't even fit into the armor. It's rattling around him like a skeleton on him. It's laughable. But this is God's choice of a redeemer. This is who God chooses to redeem his people at this moment. It's David that God chooses, and we see that in Samson in his absurdity, now Samson was big and strong, but could we say he was a man after God's heart? Yeah, but it didn't seem like that. God turns so often in these Old Testament stories and in our lives, he turns conventional wisdom and human expectation on its head. Now I'm going to go straight into spiritualizing this, and I hope it's not wrong to do so, because we take this story of David and Goliath and the David who's in this story and the absurdity of David. It's become a byword for absurdity, isn't it? David and Goliath. It's an absurd battle. It's an unfair, unequal battle. But I'm going to take that story and remind ourselves that that is exactly what God is telling us in Jesus Christ, the absurdity of Jesus Christ as God's choice of a redeemer. And we read from 1 Corinthians. Have you got any on the screens? There's nothing on the screens. Okay. Then 1 Corinthians chapter 1, I'm just going to look up 1 Corinthians chapter 1, because we know this passage and it's an important passage. 1 Corinthians 1 chapter 23. For Jews demand signs and Greeks demand wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles. But to those who are called both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, the wisdom of God, for the foolishness of God is wiser than men and the weakness of God is stronger than men. So you've got foolishness and weakness. Okay, it's not absurdity, but it's kind of linked in, isn't it? Foolishness and weakness. That God's own word describes the cross in humanity's thinking is foolishness and weakness. So the greater son of David to whom David fighting with Goliath points to is Jesus Christ. And he is the Christ that humanity doesn't want. He's the absurd Savior. He's a nobody. He's nothing. He's a crucified Jew. He is weakness to the world. Many great atheists mock the gospel of Jesus Christ as being a gospel of weakness and patheticness and poverty. It's foolishness. But the reality is we mustn't just attribute that to others, because often we find an absurdity in the person of Jesus Christ because we want a Savior on our own terms. We want a Savior who will justify us and what we do and who we are and who will give us what we think we deserve. I deserve this. I don't deserve what's happening to me. I deserve to be well treated, because we think we have us, we often find the absurdity of Jesus as someone who demands our life and soul and who demands everything from us because of his outstanding and great love.

Christ says to us in this absurdity, he says, you have nothing that you can offer me for yourself. He's not one thing. You cannot stand before me with one item that will enable me to justify you and say, come into my glory. He says, you have nothing, but I'm offering you everything. I'm offering you a clean slate. I'm offering you forgiveness and hope and joy and life and fullness. You don't deserve anything, he says, in his absurdity but judgment, but I'm offering you nothing but mercy and love and acceptance. But I'm saying to you as you put your trust in me, it will lead you to live an absurd life. An absurd life, well, you are to do good to those who hate you.

You're to love those who persecute you. You're to give me 100%, not just 5% now and again, not just the odd Sunday morning of worship. I want it all. I want lordship over your life, over your thoughts, over everything you are because that's how you were made to live.

[25 : 23] It's absurd and foolishness and incarnate God who's born in poverty, isn't it? Nobody, nobody chooses that. Angels and demons couldn't second guess it. It's unspeakable. And yet the absurdity of a shepherd boy defeating Goliath is pointing towards the glory of Jesus Christ, incarnate, defeating the powers of darkness, of which all of this is a forerunner, finally and fully on the cross, defeated and will in fullness of time be destroyed so there is no more tears. So absurdity is the third thing. And I hope you'll think about Jesus Christ and his claims. It is the most radical, counterintuitive life that we live in Jesus

Christ. It is the most reactionary of all lives. We shouldn't be people who are complicit in the unbelief and the defiance of the world and of the hearts around us and in us.

So the last thing is faith. We've looked at absurdity, appearance and defiance. And the last thing is faith because this is a story as well about faith. It's the story of the faith of David. And that's very important because everything David says points to God, his faith in God. It's not about David just having courage. It's not talking himself in a good place and they're, oh, I can do it. He is utterly dependent on the living God to destroy animals that were seeking to devour his sheep and also Goliath here, the one who was defying the living God. And the interesting thing about David's faith, there's a couple of things here and with this I'll close as I apply it. First is that David knew himself in verse 39. We have the kind of slightly humorous story of him trying to put on the armour and it doesn't really work. And he says, look, I cannot go with these, I've not tested them. They're no use to me. I can't use these. He knew himself and he knew that he wasn't a big shot soldier and he couldn't wear all the armour here. He understood, he was a shepherd. He wasn't a soldier and he was willing to recognise that. And in his speeches he makes clear that he was weak and unable to fight these wild animals in Goliath on his own terms. He trusted in God. He knew himself. He never tried to be what he wasn't.

He didn't ever try to be a first class soldier wearing the armour. He needed God. He was a shepherd boy who needed God. He knew himself. And he knew himself because he'd come to know God. He'd come to know God. Not about God, to know God, to love God as his Lord and as his Saviour. He's mentioned in the Roll Call of Faith very briefly, interestingly.

There's some others, people who get much more in that chapter than David, the great King David, but he is mentioned. He's also mentioned in Acts 13:22 where it's spoken about him as being one who had a heart after the living God. And interestingly his trust in God is based on his past experience. Verse 37, he says that, the Lord who had delivered me out of the paw of the bear will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine. He had seen God working in his life. He knew God's deliverance. The Lord was his Saviour. And that gave him great confidence. He had trusted in God, seen God at work. He was in relationship with God. And he knew that the battle was the Lord's here. It's interesting. There's three speeches and the third speech is kind of his words of testimony that he speaks about the living God and he's going to defy who's going to, why should Goliath defy the armies of the living God and such like. And what he says is important and he's frustrated when

[29 : 42] Eliab tries to stop him speaking. He says, am I not allowed to speak? You know, I've got a testimony. I've got something to share. And in this story his speech to Goliath is 65 words in the Hebrew. Took me ages to count. And the words of the combat, the actual fight between Goliath and David is only 36 words. Now I think there's something interesting there because as in many cases in the Bible and indeed with the cross itself, it's understated.

The battle is already won. The victory is assured. Yeah, takes a sling stone. Boom, he's gone. There's no great drama around the battle. What's more important is his testimony of the living God and the testimony of victory. You know, Lord of the Rings or Braveheart or Gladiator, all these films

have this massive fight battle scenes. Yeah, that's tense and it's who's going to win and what's going to happen and it takes up a great big film. It's not like that in the Bible. Got a lot of testimony and just, well, the victory is won. It's almost understated. And that reminds us of the faith that David had in his living God. So as we close the challenge of faith, okay, that brings it right into our lives and right into our experience. The importance one of knowing ourselves and also knowing God. We need to know ourselves that we need God and that God doesn't want us to be what we are not. He doesn't want us. He's never created us to be someone else. He's created us to be ourselves, but ourselves who are not independent from Him. Don't wish your life away by wishing you were somebody else. Wishing your circumstances or your life or your person was different, your character and your gifts. Know who you are. Know who God has made you to be in your very self and your very being and that He loves you as you are. And in Christ, and as you take Christ into your heart and deal honestly with yourself, you will find your fullest identity, purpose and fulfillment in life. That takes time. Sometimes it takes humility and it takes honesty. Stop not dealing with yourself. Our time and our lives are so busy, we can fill them with lots of things that stop us asking questions about our own heart and who we are and about knowing ourselves. And the most important thing about knowing ourselves is we're spiritually lost without Christ and that we're spiritually found in

Him. And we can only know ourselves therefore like David as we know God, not about God. And that knowledge of God is based on two things, isn't it? It's based on the past reality of the cross for us. Just as David could trust because of what God had done for him in the past. So we've got far more. We've got God in flesh who came of whom David is both an example and a type, as it were, that Christ defeated, we're told, He defeated the powers of Colossians 2, 14, 15. He defeated, He destroyed the powers of darkness on the cross and that greater revelation of the Goliath, as it were, and greater love as no man than this, that He's done that for you. You need to apply that to your life. That's where the sacrament is there because it takes it and applies it to our own life. We eat and we drink because it's that most person of all things. Don't just believe it as a theological thing that's out there. So there's the past reality of the cross. But also like David, there must be for us as Christians, our faith will only grow as we have a personal reality of Jesus Christ. Now there's, maybe that's a challenge. Maybe you're only relying on what Jesus did on the cross. But today, yesterday, this last week, has God been in your life?

Are you aware of a changed heart, of answered prayers, of promises kept, of forgiveness, of a presence of Him in our worship, of how He's helped us to obey Him even against all the odds, and it's been the right thing to do. Do we have a testimony? Do we have words that we can say, this is my God, like David, this is my Lord, and I trust Him? Supposing everyone else denies Him, supposing I'm the only one left, and there's 160 red chairs here and I'm just sitting right in the middle on my own, I will not let go. And that brings a God confidence, what He's done in the cross, what He's done in our lives as Christians, it gives us a confidence that in our lives the victory that we need has already been won, our future is assured. Do we have that humble testimony that we live for and share Christ, not like trembling failures, but with a God confidence, even despite the seeming hostility and opposition that we face? I find it so easy to live for Jesus as if He is defeated, and as if Christianity is defeated, and as if I'm defeated, as if the outcome is undecided.

May that change for me and for everyone, as we trust and embed our lives more in what He has done for us in Christ in our lives, and also when we look back to the cross and when we see the great trajectory of Scripture pointing that to us. Amen. May God bless His word and may you meet with Jesus through His word today.