

Today we have one of the most famous stories in the Bible—the story of David and Goliath. Let me just give you a little background to the story. Saul has just become the first king of Israel after the people of Israel requested the prophet, Samuel to give them a king just like the rest of the nations around them. Saul started good and has led the Israelites in subduing their enemy, the Philistines. In today's story, the Israelites were facing the Philistines again. And for this time, the Philistines are at the advantage because they have the giant Goliath on their side.

Goliath, a giant man, has begun challenging the Israelites to a champion's duel. A champion's duel is a "winner takes it all" contest. If Goliath wins, the Israelites will surrender and become their servants, but the Philistines will surrender and become their servants if Israel's champion wins. For forty days, this Goliath would come before the army of Israel and challenge anyone for a champion's duel, but no one dared to take his challenge. This was when David came to the Israelites' camp to deliver a brown bag lunch for his brothers in the army. There, David saw this "giant Goliath" standing before the armies of the living God and challenging them (1 Samuel 17:26).

We, too, these days see multiple "giant Goliaths" of crisis standing before us and challenging us—the giants of Covid-19, unemployment, poverty & social inequality, and financial/political corruption. Shall I name more? How about the giant of racism, sexism, and many other -isms, political polarization, supply chain diversification, food insecurity, climate change, and so on. These are just a few of the "Goliaths" we are dealing with these days. I'm sure that all of us have the "Goliaths" of our own personal lives also. As we continue to unfold the story of David and Goliath in the Bible, I encourage us to think about the "Goliaths" of our own lives and how we deal with them.

Now, let's talk about how the "Goliath" of the Bible had been handled. Let's start with Saul and the armies of Israel. How did they take Goliath? According to 1 Samuel 17:11, they were dismayed and terrified. In great fear, they all fled from Goliath (1 Samuel 17:24). As a reader of the story observing the characters' behaviors, we might call them "cowards" or "unfaithful people." However, once we put ourselves in the story, our reaction to their behaviors would be different.

What if we are "Saul" in the story? Would it be easy to tell Saul to go out and fight because he is the king? What if we are one of those soldiers in the army? How easy would it be to tell those soldiers to fight "Goliath" and fulfill their duties as a soldier?

I know some of you who are worshiping with us are Veterans. So, let me ask you, Veterans. How easy was it for you to be in the war and see people killing and being killed around you? I know it was not easy. All servicemen and women! Thank you for serving our country the way you did. You may not think of yourself as a hero, but please know that you are a hero in my eyes and the eyes of many people. Thank you.

It is human nature to run away from problems and put them off to another day, hoping that they will get solved, somehow and by someone apart from us. None of us are voluntarily and eagerly welcoming problems in our lives, aren't we? So, what Saul and the armies of Israel did in today's story is what we humans usually do when we face a problem or challenge.

In contrast, we see Shepherd boy David in the story responding to Goliath differently. The motivation factors behind the actions David took can be summarized with a phrase from Sun Tzu's "The Art of War" [손무의 손자병법]—"jipi-jigi, baek-jeon-bul-tae" (知彼知己, 百戰不殆, 지피지기, 백전불태) which means **"If you know your enemy and know yourself, then there is no danger even though you go into a hundred battles."** David had no fear of danger in the battle against Goliath because he knew his enemy "Goliath," and he also knew "who he was" and "whose he was."

David knew his enemy "Goliath"—a liar who intentionally demoralizes God's people. Goliath's strategy is this: First, intimidate the whole army of Israel with his size and look (1 Samuel 17:4-7). Then, instill fear in the people's hearts (1 Samuel 17:8-11). He is drawing a mental picture of them, facing him one-on-one and making them imagine how pathetic they are. And Goliath is succeeding in tormenting the people of the Lord. But there's another thing that Goliath is doing that is really affecting the people's nerves, and David recognized this—insulting the armies of the living God (1 Samuel 17:26).

David knew his enemy, Goliath, and how he works in the hearts of God's people. He knew Goliath was big and scary, but he also knew that Goliath was not

invincible. David knew Goliath was beatable because he knew "who he was" and "whose he was."

David knew he belonged to the Lord who "rescued him from the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear" (1 Samuel 17:37). He knew his God would rescue him from the hand of this 'giant Goliath.' David knew his God, not through the book of Torah or the Jewish religious practice at the temple. He knew his God through his personal experience at the field while tending the sheep. He knew his God is a defender, a deliverer, and the fighter who fights His people's battles as they fully rely on Him.

Perhaps, there are some of us facing "Goliath" right now and being terrified. This "Goliath" might be a very difficult situation, sickness, financial fix, relationship problem, or whatever you can name. To overcome your "Goliath," please know that you need to remember "who you are" and "whose you are." You are a beloved child of God (1 John 3:1). God has promised you that He will never leave you nor forsake you (Deuteronomy 31:8).

Without Goliath, David is just some punk throwing rocks.¹ But by facing Goliath in the name of his Lord Almighty, David defeated Goliath and transitioned from a shepherd boy in the field to the king of Israel. Through the "Goliaths" of our lives, maybe God is transitioning us to something great we may not know right now. No matter how big or scary the "Goliaths" of our lives might be, by the Lord's grace and help, the "Goliaths" of our lives will fall sooner or later because our God is victorious God and the battle in life belongs to the Lord (1 Samuel 17:47). So, let us fully rely on God and face the "Goliaths" of our lives boldly today. Amen.

¹ A quote from the "My Giant" movie in 1998.