

*“Slaying Our Giants”**Pastor Lauren Wright**May 5, 2019**Key Text: Samuel 17:32-50*

I have a dog named Myrtle – now, you might already know this, as I talk about her pretty often! She’s a tiny dachshund who just turned one. Myrtle only weighs about nine pounds, but she’s got the personality of a much larger dog! A few months ago, we were walking in Yowell Meadow Park as we do often, and we crossed paths with a much larger dog – a bloodhound. As we got closer and closer, can you guess what Myrtle did? Well, she did not freeze up and wait for me to pick her up! She didn’t try to pull me in the other direction, either. She charged ahead at this dog, barking and carrying on! So much so, in fact, that this giant, 100+ pound dog whimpered and tried to get away from her!

In that moment at the park, I was equal parts proud of Myrtle and embarrassed. I was proud that my tiny dog wasn’t afraid and was able to hold her own at the park! A few moments later, as we crossed into a sunny spot, I looked down and got this picture that I think sums up Myrtle well. Her body is tiny. She easily could have been pushed aside by the much larger dog. But I think the shadow is how she sees herself – so much larger!

Our scripture lesson for this morning tells another version of the dachshund verses bloodhound story: David and Goliath. We’re using this story to kick off our new worship series on fighting the good fight of faith. The life of faith is one that has many ups and downs, many highs and lows and twists all along the journey! And sometimes, the life of faith can feel like a fight or a battle – it can feel like you’re up against someone or something. So together, we’ll be talking together about many aspects of the life of faith – from slaying giants, to keeping the faith when times are hard, to celebrating what it means to be conquerors, to exploring the community that encourages us in our life of faith.

So, first, we’re talking about slaying giants in our lives – and as you heard read, we’re talking of course about the story of David and Goliath. I imagine that this is a familiar story for many of you! But in case it has been a while since you’ve thought about or read this story, David is an unlikely hero. But before we get to David and what he did, I need to tell you what happened right before our scripture for today.

There were two groups who were at war: the Philistines and the Israelites. They gathered on opposite sides of the land, and they were preparing for battle. But, before the battle would start, Goliath came out. Now, Goliath isn’t just any guy. He’s massive! 1 Samuel 17:4 tells us that he was “six cubits and a span”- which means he was about 9 feet and 9 inches tall. He also came out wearing a ton of very heavy armor – he was ready to FIGHT. So, he came out to taunt the Israelites, inviting them to send out just one person. He said that they’d fight one on one, and if that one Israelite could kill him, all of the Philistines would surrender. However, if that didn’t happen, all of the Israelites would serve them.

As you can imagine, this upped the odds tremendously, and terrified the Israelites! Who could they send to battle Goliath? He was so much bigger, so much stronger, so much more ferocious than any of them! So for many days, the people worried and watched and waited and strategized.

Many people were involved in this – many people who were strong and good soldiers and good leaders. Many people wanted to serve God!

But as is the custom in scriptures, it's not one of those likely soldiers that is the one who goes up against Goliath! No, instead, it's our unlikely hero, David, who prepares for battle. Daniel is the youngest son of Jesse, who is small and weak. He isn't even part of the army. He is tasked with tending to the animals for his dad, while all of his brothers prepare for this battle that could change their lives. But in the midst of a visit to check in on his brothers, and see that everything is going to plan, David winds up being summoned into this battle.

David – not the strongest, not the biggest, not the most skilled, not the one who has been preparing to battle giants for his whole life. Instead of all of those other people who are a part of this Israelite army, it's David.

And friends, this story starts to look bleak, because of all of that, the odds aren't looking so good. He's got so much stacked against him! Goliath isn't a regular guy. He's massive and well-trained. In a lot of ways, he's the perfect foil to David. He's big and strong, he's well-trained, he's the obvious choice. The odds are stacked against David.

As you start to think about this story, as you start to place yourself there, in the midst of David and Goliath, where do you see these in your own life? Where are you in the middle of your own David and Goliath moment? What places do you feel small and weak and like an unlikely defender, against a big giant? The more you think about it, I'd imagine, the more giants you can list! Maybe it's something with your job or school – does it always feel like a battle? Maybe it's a mental giant, or a person you have a difficult relationship with, or debt or finances that keeps you up at night. Maybe it's anger, or a form of temptation, or many of the different forms of pressure that overwhelms us.

The giants in our lives can look like a whole lot of things: but what it boils down to is, the giants in our lives are anything that stands between us and God. The giants are anything that steals our focus and threatens to keep us from fighting this good fight. And, as I'm sure anyone who has been a Christian for, what, more than maybe ten minutes, knows, following Christ and keeping the faith doesn't happen instantly and easily. Our lives are always going to contain giants of sorts – and that's ok! It's not wrong to be up against a giant. What's important, though, is knowing how to fight it, how to keep the faith when experiencing one.

Like David, maybe you're imagining your giant, and you don't think you're the right choice to go against it. Maybe you're picturing that person or situation or whatever it may be, and you see it as a nine foot, nine inch tall person next to you. Maybe you think to yourself "I'm not a strong enough Christian", or "a faithful enough pray-er", or "I don't have enough scriptures memorized" or any of the other dozens of reasons you may have to avoid going to battle with this giant. But as we see from the story of David and Goliath, no matter what the unlikely odds are that are stacked against us, giants can be slain.

In the story of David and Goliath, it wasn't the strong person, or the person who had the best materials to fight that won. In the topsy-turvy world of faith, these things aren't so important. No matter what our first response might be when faced with a giant, know that you can fight it.

The key in all of this is, how do we slay our giants? In David's case, he used an unlikely weapon. He didn't go for a sword, or something giant and heavy and ferocious. He didn't come in swinging. In fact, when Saul tried to cover him in armor and give him heavy tools to hold, he said no. Instead, he took it all off, and selected some rocks from the river to use in his slingshot.

Maybe some of you are excellent with a slingshot, and you think that's the solution to your problems – but for most of us, it's not the weapon that we glean from this, but David's attitude behind it all. With the giants in our own lives, be them personal or professional or mental or any other form they may present themselves in, it's not about coming in swinging, with all of your ammunition ready. It's about coming in with an attitude of humility, with the mind of Christ.

Fighting the good fight of faith means checking our hearts and minds and intentions and attitudes. Whether the giant you're up against is a person or a situation or an object or anything else, fighting the good fight means being keenly aware of the motivation you have behind it. It means going in first with gentleness. It means putting down the sword and heavy armor and picking up the peace of Christ.

A simple next step is to employ some of the principles we discussed in our Lenten study on Prayer. When faced with a giant in your life, what would it look like to prepare for battle by praying, rather than gathering ammunition? What would it look like to employ some of those prayer practices, like confession or fasting, first? What if you surrounded yourself with people who would encourage you and point you to Christ, rather than encourage you to battle endlessly?

As we continue in our sermon series together throughout lent, we'll keep talking about how we fight this fight, how we continue to live our lives of faith, and we'll keep talking about these and more strategies that we can use.

One of my favorite wordings in this whole story is what happens right after David flings his stone. Verse 49 reads **“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”**. Did you catch that? When hit with the simple stone, Goliath fell face down. Sometimes, in the life of faith, with the fight we are fighting, we are David, up against these big giants. But sometimes, we're also like Goliath. Sometimes, we are in real need of falling face down. Sometimes, we too need to be met with a simple stone, to come before God. Because the truth of the matter is, both David and Goliath were met with the same thing that day: God.

This same God that empowered David to go to battle, this same God that brought Goliath face down, draws us in today, too. Today we gather at the communion table to encounter God together, with one another. And friends, wherever you might find yourself in our story today, as one who is facing off with a giant, or someplace else, I invite you to join us at this table. At this table, the bread and wine we drink are the real body and blood of Christ, and as we experience this Holy Mystery together, we encounter God in real and powerful ways. I'm not sure where

you find yourself today, or what you may be in need of – but for all who feel surrounded by a giant, for all who feel they aren't enough, for all who feel weak, for all who are in need – Christ promises to meet us here, at this table.

Will you pray with me?