

Standing on the Promises of God

By Rev. Sheryl Stewart

6-20-21

1 Samuel 17: 1 (a), 4-11, 20-23, 32-49 2 Cor.: 6: 1-13 Mark 4:35- 41

Psalm 9: 9-20

Summary: My troubles may be bigger than I, but my God's promises prevail.

By now, you have certainly noticed that the lectionary has begun to follow the life of King David, of whom the Bible says, "He was a man after God's own heart." Last week, we opened with the calling of David by the prophet Samuel. The prophet was sure that David's eldest brother was God's choice, but God sees the inside, not external appearances. From this lesson we are urged to seek to please God on all sides: with all we appear to be and with all we have within us.

Today's passages recount David's famous encounter with the giant, Goliath. Armored, armed, experienced, and deadly, Goliath challenges David. He is still a boy, probably no older than 12. Goliath is two to three times the boy's height and weight. The behemoth challenges the youth but, more to the point, he challenges David's god. It looks impossible for a boy untried in battle to survive this battle, let alone prevail. Nonetheless, it is Goliath and the gods he depends on who fall flat on the face, dead.

I recall another incident when the Philistines have captured the ark of the covenant. They take it as a war prize and place it a tent where they keep all their

idols. Soon, all sorts of boils and tumors break out among the enemy, and there is an earthquake which causes the idols to fall flat on their graven faces before the ark of God. Having had enough of all this, the Philistines load the ark in a cart, hitch it to a pair of oxen, smack their rears, and let the cart travel without a driver away from their camp. Sure enough, the unguided oxen take God's ark straight back to Israel.

Continuing this theme of seemingly insurmountable adversity, the apostle Paul writes from prison, crouched on a cold, hard floor, chained to his jailer, and under a sentence of death. I am often uncomfortable in a cushy motel room; how must Paul feel? Meanwhile, he is slandered and opposed by rival theologians; yet Paul is singing songs of praise to God. The apostle can rejoice because he trusts the promises of God.

Finally, the Gospel shows Jesus sleeping in the middle of a terrible storm on Lake Galilee, one which is swamping the boat and threatening to capsize it. The small craft plunges up and down mountains of cold water. They cannot even see through the deluge, and they can barely hear themselves scream. "Don't you care, Jesus?" His disciples' shout.

Wakened by his terrified friends, Jesus rebukes the storm, and the wind and waves die down. The lake becomes smooth as glass. Sailing becomes calm and

easy. “Who is this, whom even the wind and waves obey?” wonder his students.

The answer is obvious: this is the Son of God.

All these examples show that the promises of God are far greater than any problem confronting the puny humans facing disaster. No mortal enemy, no collection of slanderers, no prison, no illness, no death sentence, no force of nature, no angel or demon, no power in the past, present or future; nothing in all Creation is more powerful than God.

We can follow the Apostle Paul’s example and sing. “On Christ, the solid rock, I stand; all other ground is shifting sand. I am standing, standing on the promises of God, my savior. Stand up, stand up for Jesus, stand in His strength alone.” Giants like Goliath charge us, shouting: “I’m bigger and stronger than you!” That is true, but the giant only smells strong. Hulking brutes think they fight lonely, helpless children. However, it is not our power which will face the monsters; rather, the battle belongs to the God who stands before us.

David, despite his youth and inexperience, despite his limitations and his sins, despite all logic, hopes, and fears lives a life after God’s own heart. We will also face monsters, but if God is for us – and God is – nothing can stand against us. Let us seek after God’s heart and go forth into battle, standing on the promises of God.