

The Lord Almighty

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[0 : 00] Good morning everyone. This morning we are continuing our theme looking at names for God, of which I am sure you have already realised there are many.

And a couple of weeks ago in youth group we were chatting about the meaning behind a name. We talked about how a name tells you about who a person is, it speaks to their identity.

We reckon that when someone is called Dr Something it usually means they're pretty smart. Or we call teachers Sir or Miss because most of the time that commands some sort of respect.

And we all thought about how nicknames signify a friendship or a personal relationship with a person. Perhaps names like Mum, Dad, Granny, Grandad, Aunty or Uncle provoke some sort of emotional response within you.

And we can probably all agree that when your parent calls you by your full name, you know you've done something wrong. Although that was more my brother than me.

[1 : 07] This morning we're looking at a name for God that is found in the story of David and Goliath as Deb has just read for us. Where David calls God the Lord God Almighty.

The Lord God Almighty is the English translation of the Hebrew name El Shaddai. And when we unpack that we find that it means God who is mighty.

Or the God who is the overcomer, the overpowerer. Simply put, it means that our God is God above all things. He is the God who has the victory over and through everything.

Now before we unpack our Bible passage from this morning, I want to take a moment to talk about the significance of this name for God.

The Lord God Almighty. See, this isn't the first or the only time that El Shaddai or the Lord God Almighty is used in the Bible. In fact, it's used over 40 times in the Old Testament alone.

[2 : 10] The first time El Shaddai is used is actually by God himself when he introduces himself to Abraham. In Genesis 17 verse 1, God speaks to Abraham who is 99 years old, soon to be renamed Abraham.

Married to Sarai who had become Sarah and without a son. And God says, I am God Almighty or El Shaddai. Walk before me faithfully and be blameless.

Then I will make my covenant with you and will greatly increase your numbers. See, right at the beginning of the Bible, we see the faithful, promise-making, promise-keeping character of El Shaddai.

And the Lord God Almighty then becomes a name that's used by God and by his people right the way through the Bible. All the way through to Revelation. And in Revelation, we can read of John's vision of eternity.

John was one of Jesus' disciples. He called himself the disciple Jesus loved because he was clearly very secure in his identity in Jesus. And we read in chapter 4 verse 8, the chorus, For eternity, day and night, we will sing the declaration that God is the Lord God Almighty.

[3 : 36] That he is the one who is mighty and above everything. And as I was spending some time pondering on this in preparation for this morning, I thought, gosh, there is something so significant about this name, isn't there, that we would sing it for eternity in heaven.

So what is that significance? And I think perhaps it's found in our passage from this morning, from our story of David and Goliath. It's a long passage, so believe it or not, we did cut it down this morning.

But if it's okay with you, I'm going to retell it in my own words. See, David and Goliath is one of those children's storybook Bible stories that I grew up with.

And my understanding of it was that there was this little shepherd boy called David who went and fought a tall, big giant called Goliath with just a slingshot. And even at a first glance, it's pretty

impressive, isn't it?

But there's so much more to it than that. See, contextually, David was a Philistine. The opposition to the Israelites. And Goliath was this 9'11", or 3-metre tall giant.

[4 : 48] And he was the one to defeat. The agreement was that if the Israelites killed him, the Philistines would become subject to the Israelites. But if Goliath won, the Israelites would become subject to the Philistines.

And for 40 days, Goliath came and stood his ground before the Israelites, waiting for someone to challenge him. And for 40 days, no one came forward.

Meanwhile, David, the scrawny shepherd boy, the youngest of Jesse's family, recently anointed to be king of Israel in the future, was tending to his family flocks in the wilderness, whilst running back and forth to the battleground to see what was going on.

One day, his dad sends him with some bread and cheese, which is clearly an excellent battle snack, to find some news from the front line about how his brothers were getting on.

And whilst he was there, David asked what would happen to the person who defeated Goliath. He gets his answer, which, by the way, includes marrying the king's daughter, great wealth and being excluded from paying taxes in Israel.

[5 : 57] And aside from an argument with his big brother about his motivation for being there, David is inspired. He heads back to Saul, the current king and David's boss, and he says that he, the little shepherd boy, will fight Goliath.

Saul protests, reminding David, in case he'd forgotten, that he is young and inexperienced. But David pulls out the big guns in verse 34, saying, Your servant has been keeping his father's sheep. When a lion or bear came and carried off a sheep from the flock, I went after it, struck it, and rescued the sheep from its mouth. When it turned on me, I seized it by its hair, struck it, and killed both the lion and the bear.

The uncircumcised Philistine will be like one of them, because he has defied the armies of the living God. The Lord who rescued me from the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear will rescue me from the hand of this Philistine.

In this moment, David recognised that being a shepherd in the wilderness, fighting off bears and lions, had been his training ground for this very purpose. And he knew that Goliath's weakness was that he had defied and rebelled against the living God, and that the Lord God Almighty would be on the side of his faithful servant David.

[7 : 18] Saul gives David his coat of armour, but after trying it on and walking around on it, he finds it's too heavy, it doesn't fit. So he decides to go to battle in his own clothes, with his slingshot for a weapon.

When he gets back to the battleground and approaches the giant, Goliath doesn't think very much of David or his slingshot, and says, Am I a dog that you come at me with sticks? But David reveals his true weapon in verse 45.

And I think this is a great verse for us to remember in our own spiritual battles. He says, You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the Lord God Almighty.

David goes to battle in the authority of the name of the Lord God Almighty, and he has total confidence in the power of God. In verse 47, David declares, All those gathered here will know that it is not by sword or spear that the Lord saves, for the battle is the Lord's.

With just a slingshot, David brings down Goliath, kills him and wins the battle. David might have been the smallest of the bunch. He might have been young and inexperienced. He might only have had a slingshot as his physical weapon.

[8 : 40] But he was fully armed with his spiritual weapons, because he had total confidence in the knowledge of exactly who God is, and he won the battle.

I think this is such an important story for us to hear today. As I was writing for this morning, I was reminded of a song from Elevation Worship called Same God, and it talks about the way that God moved for some of the heroes of faith in the Bible, how he moved then and how he still moves for us today.

And there's a lyric that says, I'm calling on the God of David who made a shepherd boy courageous. I may not face Goliath, but I've sure got my own giants.

And we know, don't we, all too well that we face giants in this life. Those things that feel huge, insurmountable, completely impossible.

Maybe it's a particular project that we've got to do that feels endless and impossible. A particular relationship that feels really hard work. Maybe it's our sin or our shame or something that feels like it's chaining us up, holding us back.

[9 : 56] It could be spiritual battle that makes life and faith feel just really like a battle. Maybe it's our mental or physical health that is preventing us from living life to the full.

Whatever the giant, whatever the time or the season where we face those giants, the good news of the gospel is that we can choose to fight in the name of the Lord God Almighty.

With him as our authority and our weapon against the enemy. Because God is the same today as he was with David. And he will be for all eternity.

God is still the Lord God Almighty who fights our battles. Now, I know that Harry Potter references in church are a little bit risky.

So, please forgive me if you're not a fan. I am a fan and I think there are some great gospel messages in Harry Potter. Like the fight against good and evil and love will always win and we're not called to fight on our own.

[11 : 01] And my parents and I have been re-watching the films recently. And we recently, the other week, watched film five, The Order of the Phoenix. And I'm really sorry for any spoilers.

But in this film, Voldemort, who is the enemy, he represents all that is bad and evil. He's come back in full power and he is on a mission to kill Harry Potter.

Who represents all that is good and love. And Voldemort, by the end of the film, has killed off Harry's godfather, his only remaining wizarding family.

And he has all but overpowered the good wizarding world. And Harry, at the end of the film, just as it's closing, he's been deep in reflection about this fight with Voldemort that they have ahead of them.

And he says to his friends, even though we've got a fight ahead of us, we've got something Voldemort doesn't have. Something worth fighting for.

[12 : 01] And Harry Potter references aside, we have something worth fighting for. We have someone worth fighting for.

And I think it gets even better than that. Because God doesn't just stand on the sidelines cheering us on from the side, telling us that we can do it. Because he fights for us.

I'm reminded of Moses in Exodus chapter 14. Where he and the Israelites are faced with the Red Sea.

And they're not quite sure how they're going to get across. And he speaks to the Israelites and says, Perhaps today we could say in faith, The giants we see today, we will never see again. Because the Lord God Almighty will fight for us. We need only be still. We need only trust in him. Because the Lord God Almighty always has and always will fight for us.

[13 : 12] Before we wrap up this morning, something that really caught my attention about this passage is that when David goes to Saul and says that he's going to go and fight Goliath, two things happen.

First, Saul says something I think probably went along the lines of, Are you mad? You're small, you're too young, and you have no idea what you're doing in a battle. And the second thing is that after David convinces Saul that God will protect him, Saul gives him an ill-fitting coat of armour. And as we've already mentioned, once David had tried walking around on it, he takes it off, he goes in his own clothes with his slingshot. God is a much better advocate than Saul is, thankfully. Because when we face giants and battles, unlike Saul, God gives us encouragement that we can do it. He fights with us, and he gives us an armour that fits us.

One that we can walk in, one that we can do life in. We find details of that armour in Ephesians 6. It's made up of a belt of truth, a breastplate of righteousness, boots of peace, a helmet of salvation, a shield of faith, and the sword of the Spirit, which is alive and active, and sharper than any double-edged sword.

[14 : 36] And prayer, always prayer, persistently and faithfully. And recently I've been learning that another part of the armour that God gives us is people.

People who support and encourage us as we face our giants. People who tell us that we can do it, that nothing is insurmountable, that nothing is impossible with God.

People who pray with us and point us to the Lord God Almighty. They're people who remind us that giants might come against us with sword and spear and javelin, depression, anxiety, fear, and so many other things.

But we fight in the name of El Shaddai. Maybe those people are your close friends, your partner, your home group, your parents.

Those people are God's gift to you. They are part of the armour that God gives you to protect you from the giants, because when the Lord God Almighty fights for us, he has us protected on every level, every side.

[15 : 43] I started this talk by saying that a name tells us something about a person. I'm pondering on the significance of the name El Shaddai. So to conclude, perhaps you would agree with me, that the Lord God Almighty is our powerful weapon against the enemy and against the giants he puts in our way.

And not only that, but the knowledge of who he is can give us great confidence, great comfort. As we remember, verse 45, the enemy comes at us with sword and spear and javelin, but we fight in the name of the Lord God Almighty.

And the Lord God Almighty is just that. He is above and mightier than all things. He has the victory over sin and shame and death.

He has the victory over the enemy and all the giants he puts in our way. And so forevermore, he is worthy of our song. Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty who was and is and is to come.

Amen.