

# Let No One Despise Our Youth

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] despise your youth. And I want to use it entirely out of context in that when Paul wrote to Timothy, he meant, let no one despise your youthfulness. Just because you're young, demand that people hear you nevertheless. But I want to use it to us as a congregation here at St. John's and say of all the youth of our parish, let no one despise them because of the place they have in our life. And in order to make my point clear to you, I would be grateful if you would listen while I read to you the story of one of the most famous youths of scripture. And it's in 1 Samuel 16 and begins on page 253 in your pew Bible. 1 Samuel 16, page 253 in your pew Bible.

1 Samuel 16, page 253 in your pew Bible. 1 Samuel 16, page 253 in your pew Bible. The Lord said to Samuel, how long will you grieve over Saul, seeing I have rejected him from being king over Israel? Fill your horn with oil and go. I will send you to Jesse the Bethlehemite, for I have provided for myself a king among his sons. Samuel said, how can I go? If Saul hears it, he will kill me. And the Lord said, take a heifer with you and say, I have come to sacrifice to the Lord. And invite Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will show you what you shall do. And you shall anoint for me him whom I name to you. Samuel did what the Lord commands and came to Bethlehemite. The elders of the city came to meet him trembling and said, do you come peaceably? And he said, peaceably, I've come to sacrifice to the Lord. Consecrate yourselves and come with me to the sacrifice. And he consecrated Jesse and his sons and invited them to the sacrifice. And when they came, he looked on Eliab and thought, surely the Lord's anointed is before him. The Lord said to Samuel, do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him.

For the Lord sees not as man sees. Man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart. And Jesse called Abinadab and made him pass before Samuel. And he said, neither has the Lord chosen this one. Then Jesse made Shema to pass by, and he said, neither has the Lord chosen this one. And Jesse made seven of his sons pass before Samuel. And Samuel said to Jesse, the Lord has not chosen thee.

Samuel said to Jesse, are all your sons here? And he said, there remains yet the youngest, but behold, he's keeping the sheep. And Samuel said to Jesse, send and fetch him, for we will not sit down till he comes here. He sent and brought him in. Now he was ruddy and had beautiful eyes and was handsome.

[ 3 : 3 0 ] And the Lord said, arise, and the Lord said, arise, anoint him, for this is he. And Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the midst of his brother. The spirit of the Lord came mightily upon David from that day forward. And Samuel rose up and went to Ramon. Then will you turn to chapter 17, which is on page 254. And chapter 17 continues the story.

The Teletel tells about the Philistines gathering their armies for battle. And they were gathered at Soko, which belongs to Judah, and camped between Soko and Azekah in Ephesh-damun. And Saul and the men of Israel were gathered in camps in the valley of El Elah and drew up in line of battle against the Philistines. And the Philistines stood on the mountain on the one side, and Israel stood on the mountain on the other side, with a valley between them. And there came out from the camp of the Philistines and the Philistines, a champion named Goliath of Gath, whose height was six cubits and a span. He had a helmet of bronze on his head. He was armed with a coat of mail, and the weight of the coat was 5,000 shekels of bronze. And he had greaves of bronze upon his legs, and a javelin of bronze flung behind his shoulders. And the shaft of his spear was like a weaver's beam, and his spear's head weighed 600 shekels of iron. And his shield-bearer went before him. He stood and shouted to the ranks of Israel,

Why have you come up to draw up for battle? Am I not a Philistine? And are you not servants of Saul? Choose a man for yourselves, and let him come down to me, if he is able to fight with me and kill me.

Then we will be your servants. But if I prevail against him and kill him, then you shall be our servants and serve us. And the Philistines said, I defy the ranks of Israel this day. Give me a man that we may fight together. When Saul and all Israel heard these words of the Philistines, they were dismayed and greatly afraid. Well, that's the sort of background of the story that I want to talk to you about. Because the solution to that problem, which was there so carefully drawn before you, was to be found in a young man. And I want to tell you a little bit about the young people of our parish. First, I want to tell you that all of them that are 16 years of age and over are entitled to full membership in the vestry, and that we should and will immediately begin to work at putting them on our parish list. I am also deeply aware, having been in this parish for a year, that there seems to me a surprising number of families who, in the course of raising their family, have lost the child.

[ 7 : 04 ] And that tragedy has scarred the lives of many families in this parish. And the whole of their understanding of faith, for better or for worse, clings to that dreadful experience in their lives.

I wanted you to hear this morning from Jonathan Bayless of the 17,000 students that went to the Urbana Missionary Convention between Christmas and New Year's this year.

And the change, because the three sources of, or the two sources of change, apparently in our world, are students or the discontented poor. And among them, anybody who changes the world has got to work.

And there are great affinities between students and the discontented poor. And the change which comes in our world can be precipitated for the most part by one or other of those groups.

I wonder how many of you are aware, for instance, of the primary function of Regent College at UBC. And we have a number of Regent students and staff at the church from time to time.

[ 8 : 25 ] But the purpose of that college, which I think is unique, perhaps in the world, when it started 10 years ago, was to take young men and young women who had completed their university training for doctors or lawyers or teachers or whatever they may be, and to give them a solid year of biblical and theological training so that they would be effective disciples of Jesus Christ in whatever of the various professions they chose.

And I think that you should know and understand that, because it's a significant thing which is happening on our doorstep. The other thing I want to say about the youth in our parish is that it remains true that for many of us, mature in years, the only possibility for faith for us might very well come through our children.

And that perhaps is acted out in the baptisms this morning. When these two tiny children have brought their parents and their godparents again and their families to renew before God the solemn covenant of baptism.

Let me show you what the story of David tells us about not despising our youth. First, did you notice that the old man Jesse didn't bother to bring his youngest son before Samuel because he discounted completely the possibility that the youngest son in a family of eight boys would be of any significance at all?

If you're one of the youngest in the family, you may take some comfort from that. And Saul saw the eldest brother, Eliab, and he said, Surely this is the one.

[ 10 : 28 ] And the Lord said, No. They had to wait for their dinner while somebody went out across the hill to find the shepherd boy and bring him in so that he could be anointed as the one whom God had chosen.

And I think that it's typical of our society and of the social structure of our church that there is a very great danger of overlooking the Lord's anointed among us in terms of the young people in our parish and ignoring the privileges and rights and responsibilities that they have among us in this congregation.

It says, The Lord looks on the heart and we humanly look on the outward appearance. It's a strange thing, but it seems to me that many of the young people of this parish are treated as something barely short of the gods.

They have the mountains to ski in and the seas to sail upon and the best institutions for learning in the world at their disposal.

They have everything. And they are a very privileged group indeed. And in terms of them, David didn't seem to have been recognized, almost totally ignored.

[ 11 : 59 ] And I don't know whether that proves anything, but it does mean that he was wonderfully and peculiarly trained by God. So that the education of David, he was a competent musician, he

was a good shepherd, he was a neglected younger brother.

Somebody had neglected to teach him to be afraid. And so when bear and lion attacked his little flock, he attacked them and rescued from their jaws the lambs of the flock that had been stolen. This was the education of this man. And when, as we read today, that he was anointed by Samuel, it says that the Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon David from that day.

And really what we're looking at in terms of baptism and confirmation is that we are claiming for our children that they will be taught of the Holy Spirit from their earliest days. that the Holy Spirit may come mightily upon them and that they will grow up without fear to be the disciples of Jesus Christ.

[ 13 : 26 ] To follow, if you want, the pattern of David's education. When it happened in the course of time that David came out to visit the armies of the living God, which were the armies of Israel, where his three older brothers were in the service of King Saul.

And he brought them from his father, ten loaves of bread, ten cheeses, and a supply of parched grain for their food.

And he saw the armies of the living God lined up against the armies of the Philistines. And he heard Goliath come out and throw this rebuke and challenge in the face of the armies of the living God. He filled from the bottom of his heart with righteous indignation and determined that somebody should do something about it and he would be very happy if it was him.

Well, unfortunately, this met with considerable opposition. And the person that it met with opposition from first was his older brother. And, of course, older brothers can be a menace.

[ 14 : 42 ] But sometimes the church acts as a kind of older brother to the young people in the parish. And instead of allowing them to be and to become what God purposes they should be and become, we try and hold them in place.

And Eliab said to David, I know why you're here. You're here because you want to see the battle. Who's looking after those sheep that you're in charge of?

Who's caring for them? Back to your responsibilities, boy. We don't need the likes of you around here. And so the armies of the living God were brought to a complete halt before this terrible man who stood and threw the challenge at them for 40 days in a row.

And sometimes the church comes to the place where the opposition against us seems so formidable and so dreadful and so often and fills us with such fear and despair that we're unwilling to go ahead.

And who's going to come among us as the champions to lead us through to the fulfillment of the responsibilities that we have even as the army of the living God, which is the church of Jesus Christ.

[ 16 : 10 ] Who's going to do it? If it isn't the young people in the parents whom we are in danger of despising. Well, that was the jealousy of Elias who tried to frustrate David's purpose.

So David went to Saul and you should read what happened to him there because he was brought before Saul because of this boast he made that he would be prepared to go out and meet Goliath. And so he came before Saul and Saul accepted the fact that he was an extraordinary young man and that he seemed prepared to go out and face Goliath.

And so Saul said, all right, you may. But look what Saul did to him in chapter 17 and verse 38. Saul clothed David with his armor.

He put a helmet of bronze on his head, clothed him with a coat of mail. David girded his sword over his armor and he tried in vain to walk.

[ 17 : 24 ] And in a sense, sometimes we do that to our young people. Crash a great helmet down upon their head, coat them with armor, put a sword at their side and a shield in front of them and they're not able to move.

You remember that lovely picture in the film called The Graduate where this young man was endowed with all the diving equipment in the world and he had it on his feet and on his body and on his head and on his back and on his shoulders and he had so much he could hardly move.

So we think that in some way we can wrap around people the things which may protect them but which in fact can cumber them so that they can't do the thing they have to do.

If David had gone ahead with that helmet and that coat of mail and that shield and sword out to face Goliath, he would have been squashed like a fly.

And so often the kind of preparation that we try to give to our young people for life encumbers them rather than enables them to do the thing that they are called upon to do.

[ 18 : 49 ] The kind of armor that they need is the kind of armor that starts inside, that's born inside them, not something we can lay on them as we talk of these days.

So that there is this strange reality that Saul clothed David in this armor and David couldn't even walk with it on. And so he put it all aside and went out to face Goliath.

And you know the end of the story. If you don't, it's in 1 Samuel 17. But let me tell you that there is a very real thing in which all the young people, all of us, at some stage in our life, in effect, have to face Goliath.

And in a sense, we have to in some way be prepared for that. And the preparation for that is not something that is added on to us, but something that comes from inside.

An anxious parent may seek to add to the outside all the armor by which to protect their young from the assaults of a Goliath.

[ 20 : 16 ] But the battle has got to be fought inside. And the shepherd boy who spent so many lonely hours out in the wilderness of Judea looking after his sheep against the attacks of wild animals was wonderfully prepared when he was filled with the Spirit of God to do this job.

And he went out and killed Goliath. And somehow, we can't do anything. We are in again like the armies of Israel, and we, in a sense, have to let our young people go out and face Goliath.

And what have they got to do it with? What kind of interior armor do they have? What kind of faith and courage do they have?

What kind of infilling of the Holy Spirit do they have? It is true for us as a church that we will be led by the children in our midst, by the young people in our midst.

We want very much not to despise them, but to recognize how important they are to the purposes of God among us, and to be willing to be taught and to be led by them.

[ 21 : 44 ] Could I just conclude the sermon this morning by asking you to repeat again what you have already said in the words of the psalm which you read this morning so that we could, would you stand and I'll give you the reference.

On page 360 in your prayer book you find Psalm 27 and in those first three verses you have David giving expression to that spirit which was in him and which I long should be in all of us as we seek to be the army of the living God in our world, in our culture, and in our society.

Could we read in unison the first three verses? The Lord is my life and my salvation. Whom then shall I fear?

The Lord is the strength of my life. Of whom then shall I be afraid? When the wicked came upon me to eat up my flesh, even mine enemies and my foes they stumbled and fell.

Though an host of men were laid against me, yet shall not my heart be afraid. And though there rose up war against me, yet will I put my trust in him.

[ 23 : 15 ] Can we sing hymn number 354? Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Massyd practical sports bipartite at Nintendo except isto i would radioind, in the sea of freedom and chill, Merezum libertarsis abundant Allah since wants to continue to believe Vaughan Mackcons, will a sea of victory He hassembly-MR.

Amen. Amen.

[ 25 : 36 ] Amen. Amen.

Amen.