

The Gospel of David

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[0 : 0 0] please sit down well now let's turn back to the long story that Athena read so well for us as Dan said David and Goliath this is one of the best known and best loved perhaps the most famous story from certainly from Samuel maybe even in the whole of the Old Testament and it has huge entertainment value doesn't it those of you who were here two weeks ago James Wagner played the part of Goliath and we're never going to let him forget it it was fantastic the question for us is what do we do with this passage I mean how is it relevant to us today I must say the Sunday school children did a great job and part of me felt my heart sinking I've got nothing to say however let me just pose these questions to you should we take with this story should we take a kind of a psychological approach you know David was the little guy Saul was the big guy you've just got to believe in yourself you've got to you can do anything you want if you try hard enough don't let your size get you down don't let your family order get you down you youngest ones in the family stand up and take responsibility for yourselves is that how we should read it or should we do a spiritual interpretation you know with faith God can give you anything you ask for whatever problem you have in your life is your spiritual Goliath might be debt it might be doubt it might be some big decision or sickness or sin and all you need to do is to choose the right five smooth stones

I have heard sermons like this preached in churches I belong to not St John's you might be happy to hear where the five smooth stones the first one I heard was they were faith repentance prayer hope and giving to missionary causes they were the five smooth stones and the idea is that if you keep throwing your five smooth stones at the giant he'll eventually fall I warn you about that approach because it will always lead to despair it doesn't work and the problem with allegory or a spiritual interpretation or a psychological or moralistic approach to the text is that it puts me at the center and when I read the Bible with me at the center I always identify with the wrong person if I read the Bible around me who am I going to identify with in this story I'm going to identify with David and my opponent is Goliath and I know you know this but I never tire of saying it the Bible's not about you it's not about me the Bible is about God and about God's Messiah and if you make the Bible into some sort of moral handbook like the maker's manual or a collection of spiritual stories which help me get through the day I'm always going to miss the point so what is the point well I want to ask two questions that go to the heart of the story what is God doing and why is he doing it and the answer to the first what is God doing is this God is establishing his Messiah now I know we did chapter 16 the last chapter before Christmas it's a long time ago there have been a lot of calories consumed since then but what you need to know is the chapter 16 and 17 form one story first half is chapter 16 the second half is the story we look we've just heard read today and if you can remember back that far in chapter 16 what happened God chose David as his Messiah you remember God sent the prophet Samuel and Samuel chose David who was the youngest of eight sons the least impressive the smallest and he anointed him in the Hebrew he Messiah'd him or as we would call it he Christed him remember that and then the spirit of the Lord fell upon him the problem was there was already a king Israel their first go at kingship had been a complete flop

Saul was not a good king you remember way back in chapter 8 the people of Israel asked for a king so that they could be like all the other nations we want to be like the Philistines they said to God and God gave them exactly what they asked for he gave them a very impressive king Saul but he never represented God he never trusted God but David does and David is the man of God's choosing and then immediately after David is anointed as the Messiah the Christ we have the story of David and Goliath that's the context and I just you appreciate this it's very awkward isn't it it's very awkward we've got two kings on the scene awkward for David and awkward for Saul and from here all the way to the end of 1 Samuel where Saul dies we've got this very awkward situation David the anointed king Saul the current ruling king it's an impossible circumstance for David and through this whole section up to the end of 1 Samuel what God is doing is he is establishing and shaping and raising up a Messiah a true Messiah who will represent God to his people and represent his people to God a Messiah who's going to save his people not by the sword not even by the sling but by suffering you see this you see in chapter 17 you just flip back to the beginning in verse 4 Goliath is introduced as a champion a champion from Gath three times Goliath is referred to as a champion and that doesn't refer to his physical might the word champion is literally the man in between he steps out of his army and he is the representative of the Philistines when he says am I not a Philistine in the Hebrew it's am I not the Philistine I'm the embodiment of the threat to the people of Israel he literally represents the Philistines the enemies of God and he challenges

Israel to single combat and just as he represents the Philistines the enemies of God to God's people David now comes as the Messiah to represent God's people the chosen man of God he is God's man in between and when David first appears he's not impressive he's not big enough or tough enough to fight in the army his three old three big brothers they're off fighting in the war but he's back looking after the sheep and he's doing um you know errand duty daddy dad Jesse sends him off with uh a smelly package of 10 cheeses and a couple of sandwiches and says come back and tell me how your brothers are getting on and when David arrives at the front line he's just in time I'm sure he timed it this way he's just in time to hear the taunts and the abuse and the threats of Goliath and while all of God's people are cowering and trembling for the first time we hear David's words verse 26 have you seen this man who has come up the men say to him that's verse 25 and David said verse 26 what shall be done for the man who kills this Philistine and takes away the reproach from Israel for who is this uncircumcised Philistine that he should defy the armies of the living God these are the first words of David in the Bible and it's the first time anyone in the chapter refers to God he's amazed he's appalled that Goliath can get away with saying these things I mean how can you guys let this continue he says to his people Goliath hasn't defied just anyone he's defied the armies that belong to the living God and at this point the people of Israel ought to rise up and say yes that's right finally there's a man who can represent God to us and represent us to this Philistine but what happens verse 28 Eliab the eldest brother heard he spoke to the men and Eliab's anger was kindled against David he said why have you come down who did you leave those few sheep in the wilderness this is way above your pay grade David I know your presumption and the evil of your heart for you have come down to see the battle what's going on this is the first rejection of God's Messiah and it comes at the hands of those closest to him comes at the hand of his brothers the irony is that Eliab thinks he knows what's in David's heart but he's just looking on the outward on the appearance and the bigger irony is that here are his brothers they take Goliath's side against the Lord's anointed and they humiliate him in front of everyone and this is a trailer of what is coming in the next chapters that David the Messiah must suffer to enter into his kingdom in fact from here until 2 Samuel 5 the story is of the suffering of God's Messiah but David's not done yet he won't let the unbelief of his brother change things and in verse 31 Saul King Saul hears for David sends for him and we have this little conversation which is absolutely beautiful one of the commentators says that David preaches the gospel to Saul and it's full of irony you know here's the here's the king of Israel but the true Messiah steps forward and shows him what he should be doing verse 32 David said to Saul let no man's heart fail because of Goliath your servant will go and fight this Philistine that's exactly

what a Messiah is supposed to do God's anointed the Christ he is to save his people by representing them that's why these two chapters belong together and although he's humanly weak because he represents God he knows it's going to come to victory now Saul doesn't believe him either and so David explains the one thing that everybody seems to have forgotten that because God is the living God every enemy of God is the same size he says look when I worked as a shepherd a lion had come or a bear come and try and take the sheep and well I deal with it and God's people are no different than that verse 36 he says I've struck down lions and bears and this uncircumcised Philistine you may wonder why he keeps being called the uncircumcised Philistine it's a reference to the gods that Goliath follows but he's going to be like one of them because he's defied the armies of the living God he's not boasting look he puts it in perspective in verse 37 it's the Lord who delivered me from the paw of the lion the paw of the bear he will deliver me from the paw of the Philistine and in a touch that is so it shows just how like the Philistine Saul is he tries to foist his armor onto David you ever wonder why he did that I don't think he's concerned for David's life I think he's ready to send David on a suicide mission I think he thinks well if I even if I just get him in his armor and David comes out of this alive and perhaps by some miracle Goliath has a heart attack of throwing that great big shaft of his then people will see he's in my armor and I'll get the credit but David goes just as he is just with a shirt is that right Dan yeah I thought the way you asked that question was a little worrying what did David wear let's go back to the passage he chooses five smooth stones and he goes up to

[12 : 56] Goliath he has a sling in one hand and a staff in the other and finally after 42 verses they meet Goliath massive mocks David verse 43 am I a dog he looks at his staff you know you've got a toothpick there young man he says the Philistine cursed David by his gods and David's response is magnificent it's so full of God so God-centered verse 45 you come to me with a sword and a spear and a javelin is probably a scimitar I come to you in the name of the Lord of hosts the God of the armies of Israel whom you divide this day the Lord will deliver you into my hand and I'll strike you down cut off your head and I'll give you the dead bodies of the host of the Philistines this day to the birds of the air to the wild beasts of the earth that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel and that all this assembly may know the Lord saves not with sword and spear the battle of the Lords and he will give you into our hand the first time in the Bible that phrase is used I come to you in the name of the Lord I come in the name of the Lord David is not speaking in his private capacity as a very skilled fighter he comes as the representative God full of the Holy Spirit he's God's man in between there's so much more at stake in this dust-up between one Israelite and one Philistine

David can see the issue is so that all the earth will know that there is a God in Israel that it's God the Lord who saves and delivers not by sword not by human ability but through the weak the very weakness of his representative his Messiah David knows the glory of God rests on the Messiah God the living God and from now on through the rest of history until Christ comes again the way God saves is through his chosen king and then it only takes two verses for the action to be over David slings a stone it makes an impression on Goliath that was a joke and he fell on his face and the writer can't help pointing out that the Lord saves without sword and spear and David has to borrow Goliath's sword to chop off his head and when the Philistines see it they run and Israel pursues and routes them and God saves the people of Israel by his Messiah and this great victory is won by David and this is absolutely crucial for us if we want to understand Jesus see what the books of 1 and 2 Samuel are in the Bible not to give us lots of interesting historical stuff to think about the books are there because God is preparing us for his Messiah God is preparing the world for his son Jesus Christ he's forming our ideas of what a Messiah should be by establishing David as the Messiah and that deliverance on that day was a little deliverance and it points forward to another day as Dan said to the children a day of cosmic deliverance this chapter so clearly points us to the person of Jesus Christ son of David who also suffered to enter his kingdom who also confronted the power of death in all its arrogance and all its taunting in his death on the cross and we know from the new testament that in on the cross Jesus defeated death freed us from the power of death because Jesus is the fulfillment of all that God was doing through David and I can't leave this without saying that God's Messiah comes into his kingdom through suffering and that God's Messiah was a stumbling block to Israel and remains a stumbling block to the world today just as it was preposterous for young David to go up against the Goliath it remains preposterous to the world the God's answers to all the troubles in the world is the death of one Jewish man on a cross 2000 years ago however

I need to get to the second point which is much shorter but I just want to remind you what is God doing he's establishing a Messiah why is he doing it secondly he's doing it to form a people for himself this is easy to miss it's so familiar but what we need to see is how closely God is identifying with his people here in fact the whole chapter is not about two individuals if you just go through the chapter Israel Philistine Israel Philistine Israel Philistine over 50 times these two groups these two peoples are spoken about and we know the Philistines don't we we've met them before these are the ones who served the God Dagon do you remember chapters 4, 5 and 6 when the ark went missing into the temple of Dagon if you haven't read it it's a great story this is important I'll tell you why this is important the Bible does not present to us a God who is way up there beyond the clouds with us down here living our lives and from time to time God looks down and sees how we're getting along and if it's really needed he makes some minor adjustments no from the beginning

God calls a people to himself and he gives himself to his people so that he might dwell with them he speaks about his relationship as a husband to a wife so closely is he identified that his reputation and his honour rest on his people and the people of Israel God chose not because they were special because they were better or smarter or more impressive but simply because he set his love on them and their whole identity just as our whole identity is this that we are children of the living God because the world sees God as they see his people if you want to know what God is like if you're not a Christian spend time with the people of God you see this changes absolutely everything Israel's very identity is as a group of people who have the living God with them their real problem is not this nine foot monster the real problem is that they've got spiritual amnesia in chapter 17 and that they've forgotten they belong to the living God and they've forgotten that the living God lives amongst them and I think that's why when we're first introduced to Goliath we're given such detailed knowledge you know 57 kilogram coat of mail nine foot nine in height we're seeing it through the eyes of Israel we're seeing it as though they were Philistines they're just looking on the outward appearance but we've already just heard in chapter 16 that God does not look on the outward appearance this is very important later in the Old Testament

God says it this way my thoughts are not your thoughts neither are my ways your ways declares the Lord as the heavens are higher than the earth so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your ways see Israel wanted to be like the Philistines they just wanted to be like the people round about them they were living like a people that did not belong to God God never came into their reckoning in this chapter until verse 26 when David first speaks his name they're so terrified of this Goliath guy that they flee before him but David comes onto the scene and sees things from the heart of God and he says look you take Goliath and you take all the problems and seductions and issues and circumstances and difficulties in the world you put that on one side of the scale and you put God on the other side of the scale it's just it's like a speck and Mount Everest they don't even come close and one of the biggest reasons why the people of Israel are thinking like Philistines has to do with King Saul if you were with us last week we raised an Ebenezer we had a glass jar and we put our prayers into it if you weren't here sorry you missed a wonderful and moving week that was in chapter 7 sad news was the very next chapter chapter 8 in 1 Samuel

[21 : 42] God's people reject him they say we want a king like the other nations we want to be like the other nations and you may wonder why God took it so personally the reason is because when he brought them to himself at Sinai he said to his people if you keep my covenant you shall be my treasured possession among all the peoples for all the earth is mine and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation there is this thing in our hearts as there was in Israel's hearts where we keep saying we don't want to be different we don't want to be your people we don't want to have to trust in an invisible God and Israel was saying we want to pull out of the covenant we just want to be Philistines and they turn their back on their identity and they're back on God and so God gives them the king of their choosing Saul the tallest man in Israel head and shoulders above everyone else and Saul's job was to go out and fight the Philistines and to save his people from the Philistines and he fails precisely because he does not trust the living God and when Goliath appears you can't help thinking this can you who should go out and fight Goliath the Lord would be Saul he's the biggest guy they've got but instead

Saul offers a bribe to anyone who will fight him for him I think what I'm trying to I think what I'm trying to get at is we need to see that there is a spiritual conflict going on for the people of God in this chapter it's not just man against man it's not even just army against army it's army the army of the living God the people who belong to God and I think Goliath himself understands that because Goliath curses David in the name of his gods and I think the reason I'm saying all this it's very important for us today to identify with the right person in the story you see if we if we identify with David then we confuse Goliath with a toothache or a bank account or some difficult circumstance but in this story

Goliath wields the power of death and slavery against the people of God Goliath he's not an anti-Semite he's an enemy of the people of God because they're God's people he's one instance of the force that defies the living God the power of death and once God takes us to be his people he identifies with us so closely that his enemies become our enemies I'm sorry if that's news to you you might be a new Christian this is something you've got to get used to it's not that Christians have got a martyr complex but because there's only one living God when he identifies with us his enemies become our enemies that's why David says you've defied the Lord of hosts that's why David says God will deliver you into my hand so that all the earth will know there is a God is it God in Israel if the whole battle belongs to the Lord that's why it's not sorted out by sword or spear it's going to be decided by God so let me leave this with you

I think this chapter chapter 17 is the story of the whole Bible in miniature the whole story of God with us what's God doing he's establishing his Messiah why because he's forming a people around this Messiah and these two things go together because in the end God gives his Messiah to his people as their greatest gift and he gives his people to the Messiah also as a gift and when the New Testament opens it identifies Jesus as the son of David and when Jesus came it was the act of God identifying with us he became one of us God in the flesh he is ours and we are his and you could not have a closer and clearer identification Jesus came to be one of us he was baptized for us he lived for us he died for us he rose again and then he died in his death he faced

God's greatest the enemy of God's people and he rose again and now he sent us his Holy Spirit the Spirit of life and he doesn't just identify with us now by his Spirit he lives within us and last week when we did our Ebenezer I sat here and the most moving part for me with all the notes written with prayers of thanks and prayers of faith for the future and commitments for the future the best moment for me was when the children were putting all those prayers into the jar that was up here at the front it was a great testimony to the living God because if God is not the living God and if he doesn't dwell amongst us that was a complete waste of time but the setting up of this jar was an act of great weakness and dependence and it's a statement that God has given us his son Jesus Christ who died for us and rose again and he is gathering us around him and one day he will come and take us to be with him and until then he has promised

[27 : 36] I will be with you plural until the end of the age so let's kneel and pray shall we we offer praise dear Lord we bow before you to affirm that you are Lord our king our master and that only in you are true rescue true safety true peace and true love found we pray with David in his psalm oh Lord I have come to you for protection don't let me be disgraced save me for you do what is right turn your ear to listen to me rescue me quickly be my rock of protection a fortress where I will be safe you are my rock and my fortress for the honor of your name lead me out of this danger pull me from the trap my enemies set for me for I find protection in you alone

I entrust my spirit into your hand rescue me Lord for you are a faithful God the good news about your son Jesus Christ and your words Lord transform us empower us and sustain us through trials and tribulations and we give you praise Lord in your mercy we confess Lord that far too often it is dismal news about the world and its tragedies or it is words spoken in our hearing that feel hurtful or unjust that afflict us inflame us fuel our doubts plant despair deep within us we confess that too often at such times we choose to forget you ignore your word and ignore our Messiah we turn to you again or perhaps we are turning to you for the first time thanking you that your all powerful love is welcoming patient kind long suffering totally adequate for whatever we are facing and that in you refuge can always be found no matter how far we have strayed and no matter how threatening the storm around us thank you that through the Holy Spirit you give us discernment so that events of this world need not lead us to doubt but instead our knowledge of your strong arm of safety and protection fills our minds and our hearts and gives us your peace

Lord in your mercy we pray Lord for the world we give thanks for the earth's incredible beauty and daily reminders of your design and your hand and your merciful interventions at the same time we ask you to mercifully bring renewal in the turmoil on the planet where there is war may you give shelter to the innocent where there is calamity may you give healing and nourishment to the injured where leaders gather and meet may you be present to guide and govern them in a manner that promotes peace and safety for the weak and permits the spread of the good news of your kingdom throughout the world where missionaries and pastors serve may your hand be present especially for those serving in trying conditions may you give protection and special guidance from among us here at St. John's we pray for these missionaries who have responded to your call please be close at this time to Catherine Gannett with North American

Indigenous Ministries in Campbell River be close to Sharon Thompson with Wycliffe Bible Translators who has returned from Burkina Faso and to Brian McConaughy with Ratanak International in Cambodia Lord in your mercy we give thanks to you dear God that here at St. John's Vancouver we are regularly fed and shepherded by faithful leaders with your word and your care we ask your hand of protection sustenance strength and wisdom on David Dan and Aaron please also be with Eric and the interns be with Terry and all the musicians be with David Little and the youth be with James and the many he reaches out to weekly and be with all those who have responded to your call in Sunday school activities may your word and your love imparted to us all through your many servants here at St. John's equip us each such that we might each grow in you and endure in our faith enduring both during those good times that might deceive us into thinking we do not need you and during troubling times that might make us wonder if you are there we are led and nourished as well dear Lord by each other and we pray for each other for those in front of us behind us to the left to the right and those unable to be here today we rejoice in the truth that the Apostle Paul taught us thank you Lord that you have so composed this church your body giving greater honor to the part that lacked it that there may be no division in the body that the members may have the same care one for another if one member suffers all suffer together if one member is honored all rejoice together we pray for each other with Paul's words it is our prayer that love may abound more and more with knowledge and all discernment

Lord in your mercy here in St. John's we ask your healing hand on those who are ill and on those who face ongoing difficult emotional physical or financial situations we ask specifically for healing and recovery for these by name we pray for Rowena for Derek for Mel for Merv for Susan and for Jane and we ask that the light of your truth and the depth of your love may brighten and touch those we now raise before you privately in silence through you Lord may we be strengthened with all power according to your glorious might for all endurance and patience with joy giving thanks to you our heavenly father who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of all believers in light you alone Lord have delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of your beloved son in whom we have redemption the forgiveness of sins we offer our praise dear Lord and bring these our requests through Jesus Christ our Lord

[34 : 57] Amen Father Jesus for all to the sea of Him will be God for all California