

Facing Giants

1 Samuel 17

As we begin our pondering on the word of God this morning, I want to ask you something:

- Is there an area in your life where you feel helpless?
- Is there a habit, behavior or feeling that you allow to rule over you because you feel weak and incapable of doing something about it?

If you have said “yes” to any of these questions, I have good news for you...

1. You are not alone...
2. In the Lord, you are not feeble and helpless... Christ is with you, being your strength.

In today’s account, we see that the Israelites were struggling with a strong, life-long opponent: *the Philistines*. The history of the animosity between the Philistines and the Hebrews could be traced back to the exodus. At that time, the Israelites took the longest route to the land of Canaan in an attempt to avoid going through the land of the Philistines (Exodus 13:17). As the biblical history develops, we learn that for a very long time the Philistines were the bullies who suffocated life out of the Israelites.

In the account of David facing Goliath, we learn that the Israelites were really intimidated by Goliath. The Bible says, “...*Saul and all the Israelites were dismayed and terrified*” (1 Samuel 17:11). A fretful feeling seized the hearts of the Israelites every time the giant defied Israel. Yet, in the midst of their fears, they knew that the confrontation with the giants could no longer be avoided.

Many times, we avoid facing big conflicts because of the consequences of the altercation. However, the Bible says that there is a time for everything. I believe there is a time to avoid and there is a time to face the difficult situations that come our way. This was the time for the Israelites to face the giants. The running away was over.

This account invites us to meet our own personal giants face to face. Many times, we try to avoid the giants in our lives because we imagine the magnitude and difficulty of the confrontation and its consequences. I am talking about the giants of:

- Abusive relationships...
- Addictions
- Low self-esteem and insecurities
- Insatiable hunger for the approval of others
- Self-victimization
- Apathy, lazy thinking, lack of responsibility, and mediocrity
- Selfishness
- Hostile feelings and attitudes toward people who think, look, behave, and believe in ways different than yours...

Many times, we rather being subjugated by these giants than facing them. Sometimes, we rather being the fearful slaves of these giants rather than struggling with them and finding our way to

freedom. We avoid facing these giants because we fear the pain that may result from the confrontation. Yet, many times avoiding pain creates more pain. Many times, we avoid facing the giants because the challenge calls us to change.

In fact, the point this story is trying to emphasize is change. This idea is presented to us in the text in more than one way. For instance, the Bible says, “***For forty days the Philistine came forward every morning and evening and took his stand***” (v. 16). You may be wondering, how in the world does this phrase denote a moment of transition, a period of change?

In most cases, the number forty seems to be used in the Bible to represent a period of trials that produces change. You may remember that at the time of the flood, it rained for 40 days and 40 nights (a period signifying the shift to a new start). The Israelites were in the desert 40 years to allow time for the emergence of a new generation. Moses spent 40 days on Mount Sinai, and Elijah walked another 40 days there (after these periods of time their lives were not the same). Forty days was what it took the 12 spies to explore the Promised Land at a time when the Israelites were preparing to enter a new stage. Jesus fasted for 40 days before the change from his private life to his public ministry life took place.

When the Bible says that Goliath challenged the Israelites for 40 days, the Bible is not only saying that the defying took place for a long time. Forty days is also giving us the idea that Goliath’s challenge is going to lead to a major transition.

One of the major shifts we see in this story happens in the life of David. When we look at the text carefully, we realize that the passage (1 Samuel 17) seems to introduce David for the very first time. Yet, David had been introduced a chapter ago (1 Samuel 16). So, one of the big changes we see in the story is David going from insignificance to recognition. In 1 Samuel 16, we see David as the forgotten shepherd boy and the overlooked musician at the service of the king. However, the passage of 1 Samuel 17 is presenting to us David the warrior. There is a change taking place...

Moreover, the change is not only for David. We see change for the Israelites as a nation. At the beginning of the chapter, we see that the Israelites were a club of scary cats. However, by the end of the chapter, we see the Israelites full of courage. There is a change taking place...

Dear church, we all face challenges. As individuals, as well as a community of faith, we have to face giants. That may not sound like good news. Yet, there is good news. The challenges we face are full of opportunities.

Every time we tackle the giants, we arise from the battle changed, transformed. Every time we come face to face with the giants in our lives, and we do so in the name of the Lord Almighty, we come out of the battle as refined, whole, and liberated people. We arise from the battle with renewed meaning and replenished purpose.

There is something in the text that has really stuck with me. Goliath went out every day, for forty days, and challenged the Israelites with these words, “***Give me a man***” (v. 10). I believe the giants of our times are challenging us with words very similar to those of Goliath: “*Give me a man... Give me a woman.*” How are you going to respond?

Your giants are expecting you to tackle them. It is time to accept the challenge. It is time to face that situation, that behavior, those feelings that are trying to keep you captive.

We have to respond to the challenges put before us in a positive and healthy way. Our personal reality, our experiences at home, work and church, will only change when we face our giants with determination, courage, and fortitude. We are going to have a 180-degree turn in our lives when our openness and willingness to accept change surpasses our fears of change. So, we have to stand up and face our giants!!!

You may feel you don't have the potential, that you lack training, experience, and strength. Many people feel their skills make them poor candidates for the service of God. Please, do not limit yourself by leaning only on your strengths, wisdom, and experience. We are not capable enough to defeat the giants in our lives by ourselves. However, when we are on God's side nothing prevails against us.

David heard the challenge of Goliath and responded to it. Goliath wanted a man to face him and David was ready to fulfill the request of the giant. Then, something interesting happened when David was preparing to fight the man of unequal size.

Then Saul dressed David in his own tunic. He put a coat of armor on him and a bronze helmet on his head. David fastened on his sword over the tunic and tried walking around, because he was not used to them. "I cannot go in these," he said to Saul, "because I am not used to them." So, he took them off (1 Samuel 17:38-39).

For some reason someone had the idea that David had to follow the protocol of the soldiers; that he should meet the standard, comply with the tradition. I guess that people were expecting David to wear the armor because all men of war did. If David would have followed the tradition, he would have never defeated the giant.

I imagine that when David took off the armor there was someone who said: "This is not how you fight. This guy is not a real soldier. No one has done it that way before. Oh boy, this guy is destined for failure!" However, David knew that the success of that mission didn't depend on the tradition. David knew that success only comes from God.

Here is another remarkable thing that took place at the time of the battle. This is what happened:

As the Philistine moved closer to attack him, David ran quickly toward the battle line to meet him. 1 Samuel 17:48

David took the initiative. David was proactive. Being proactive not only means taking the initiative, but it also means that we are responsible for our own lives, our own behavior, our own decisions. Being proactive means recognizing our responsibility to do something and giving our best to make things happen. If we want real change we must be proactive.

Many times, the changes we experience are only our reactions before certain circumstances. Usually, our reaction time is not the best one; we react too late when there is not much to do. Having a proactive attitude is vital if we want to bring real and positive change.

Church, the fearsome giant of today is crying out: “*Give me a man/woman.*” My prayer is for us to become people that are not intimidated by the size of the challenge and the required change. Together we can make the decision to face the giants of our times.