

Royal Kingdom

THE YEAR OF THE BIBLE

Sermon 2: The Power of God's Presence

1 Samuel 17

Dr. Matt Cassidy --- May 31, 2020

Good morning, Grace. Three thousand years ago a delivery boy is bringing his cargo to his last stop. He's bringing it to the southern wall of a fortified city, and that city was supposed to belong to the people of Israel. He's pretty tired because this is the last stop on a long day. He started his morning off having to walk eighteen miles with his arms full. And now he's returning with bulky, heavy, cumbersome cargo – the spoils of war. Over his left shoulder is a giant's sword and in his right hand is the head of that giant.

The city is Jerusalem, the boy is David the shepherd. And he drops that head at the foot of that wall and says --- and he said it first – “I'll be back.”

This is no Veggie Tales story. This is the story of David and Goliath and it's a great day to tune in and listen and watch.

Somebody commented on my social media page this week, “... and then you became a televangelist.” That hurt! I'm a televangelist now! Let's end this COVID thing, right?

Introduction to the Story of David

Anyway, today we're going to study David, a man who, at this season of his life, becomes like Christ in all of life. This is a man who has a heart for God. This is a man who is going to teach us how to thrive in any and all circumstances. And how did he do it? Well, he did it by following along with our Bible survey in many aspects. He's going to do what Moses said to do in Deuteronomy and what Joshua says to do in Joshua. And look what happens in his life.

In Deuteronomy, remember that we read that you have to remember to remember the Father's loving actions in your life so that you'll obey Him. And then in Joshua, God commands Joshua, “Have I not commanded you to be strong and courageous?” And how do you get this strength and courage? To remember “YHWH your God is with you wherever you go.” And David is fulfilling those promises. He is living by faith with those things to be true.

David serves us here more than just being a hero. He serves us as a model for how we can live our lives in any context in any culture in any circumstance and thrive. What makes David so different? The Bible says that in contrast to all of Israel, his heart is attuned to the heart of God. He understands the greatness and the tenderness of God. He has grasped the thoughts of God. His emotions are tied to the passions of God. And his courage is directly related to his conviction that God is always near him. That's who David is. His heart is filled with Him.

And how did David get this heart that is so filled with the wonder of God? Well, he literally writes a love song in Psalms to the revelation of God – revelation in nature and revelation in the written word. He says this about YHWH's revelation:

Psalm 19:7-8

The law of YHWH is perfect, refreshing the soul.

The statutes of YHWH are trustworthy, making wise the simple.

The precepts of YHWH are right, giving joy to the heart.

The commands of YHWH are radiant, giving light to the eyes.

Can you hear how it's a love story? If you read the Bible with an open heart and are willing to change your values, it alters your whole identity. It changes the way you think about all things. You start attaching yourself to the presence and the power and the majesty of God. And it alters you.

And that's why you saw on the announcements that we're offering a men's Bible study, a women's Bible study, the youth Bible studies are firing up for the summer. Go online, sign up for those. They have the potential to alter your life.

What David does here – and here's the key – David saturated his mind, his soul, his will, with the Word of God. But it wasn't information. He was developing an intimate relationship with the Father God. He was forgotten by his dad, but he is remembered by the Father in heaven. And it's a relational connection. And the story of David and the giant is the story, honestly, of the power of being fixated on being upwardly focused. Because of David's upward focus, he is not consumed with what people think about him as a shepherd boy, or his own personal safety.

His mind is on fire with the passions of God. And his identity – David’s identity, how he defines himself, is based on the promises of God. He’s not going to be sulking and victimized by his rank in his family or the way he’s treated by his father, or what other people are going to say about him being a shepherd boy. He’s going to know this: that his heavenly Father never leaves him, never forsakes him.

He writes two songs of love, about how well the Father in heaven knows him, how He wove him in his mother’s womb. That’s how David is. That’s what gives him all this power.

So, in summary, when we read this story together, we want to see that it’s a story of dramatic contrast between values and faith and where people put their hope, where they find safety and security, and that leads to their identity. That’s what the story’s about.

Does Anyone Want to Kill a Giant?

And I’m asking you this morning – Does anybody here want to kill a giant? Does anyone want to kill a giant?

Because in this story the giant is literal. But the purpose of this giant is to show us that we’re going to encounter things that are stronger than our strength, that cannot be outmaneuvered with our intellect. No matter how much money we throw at it, it will not go away. That’s what a giant is. A giant is something that is brought into your life that proves to you that you can’t fix this and you’re going to need courage. And that courage comes from finding your identity in who God is and what He said about you and that He is near. He is always near.

When David sees this giant, he’s going to see this bigger plan, that the giant has been placed here in the providence of God so we might be able to see how to defeat it. And the giants in our lives can be a memory that we will not let go of, or a relationship, or hardships in life, or a bent. And instead of facing that, we acquiesce to it. We surrender to its taunting and it becomes an idol. An idol just tells us what to do. A false god tells us what to do and we obey and we submit to that.

And that’s what we see in this giant. The giant becomes an idol to everyone in the audience that is part of this except for David. And giants don’t go away. They stay for days or decades. They taunt you or you kill them. That’s the story of David and Goliath.

And the character of Saul and all the Israelis in this story --- Saul personifies the coward in us. And why is Saul so cowardly? I'm going to say it again. Because he has faith, hope, in, for example, size and strength. He's the strongest and the biggest guy, and then someone bigger came. He had his hope in his finances. He's the king. And he throws money at someone taking care of this giant Goliath, and no one wants any piece of that.

But the bigger point is that he's put his faith in those things, in the power or his strength or the technology that's available. And it's not working. This idol has come to call them out.

The Challenge

Here's what the story is. It's in 1 Samuel chapter 17. And they're in this place called the Valley of Elah. And at one hilltop there's the Philistine army and at the other hilltop is the Israeli army. And what's going on here is this demonstration of what real power is.

Nowhere in ancient Hebrew will you find such an exceptional attention to physical detail, particularly in the context of describing war materials.

--- Robert Alter

Robert Alter, the famous Old Testament scholar, says this about the description that we're about to read. He says, "Nowhere in ancient Hebrew will you find such an exceptional attention to physical detail, particularly in the context of describing war materials." In other words, again, Goliath is representing this idol of power and strength. And weapon technology, wisdom – whenever you hear any kind of word about metal, like bronze or metal itself, you're supposed to be thinking, *Wow, that's advanced weapon technology.*

So, as we describe Goliath coming out to the fifty-yard line, he's going to start chanting and calling out the Israeli army. As you hear this description, you're supposed to be hearing this: Behold, Goliath, the very definition of power and strength. Let's read it.

1 Samuel 17:4-7

A champion named Goliath, who was from Gath, came out of the Philistine camp. He was over nine feet tall. ⁵ He had a bronze helmet on his head and wore a coat of scale armor of bronze weighing about 125 pounds; ⁶ on his legs he wore bronze shin guards, and a bronze javelin was slung on his back. ⁷ His spear shaft was like a weaver's rod, and its iron point weighed sixteen pounds His shield bearer went ahead of him.

“A champion named Goliath, who was from Gath, came out of the Philistine camp. He was nine feet tall. He had a bronze helmet on his head and he wore a coat of scale armor of bronze weighing about 125 pounds; on his legs he wore bronze shin guards, and a bronze javelin was slung over his back. His spear shaft was like a weaver's rod, and its iron point weighed sixteen pounds. His shield bearer went ahead of him.” He's a human tank with infantry leading the way.

1 Samuel 17:10-11

Then the Philistine said, “This day I defy the ranks of Israel! Give me a man and let us fight each other.” ¹¹ On hearing the Philistine's words, Saul and all the Israelites were dismayed and terrified.

And Goliath calls the men of Israel out and he gives this speech and says, *Hey, looks like you guys are all dressed for war. You guys all look like you're in the military. Why don't you come down here and fight me, winner take all?* It's like a movie scene, and musically it's this dramatic, threatening music.

And then – this is so beautiful in its storytelling – suddenly, end of scene, cut somewhere else and there's butterflies in the field and the music is softer and we hear a reintroduction to a young man named David. And we hear this – suddenly, this reintroduction, eighteen miles away.

1 Samuel 17:14-15

David was the youngest ... ¹⁵ but David went back and forth from Saul to tend his father's sheep at Bethlehem.

And it says, “And then David was the youngest. But David went back forth from Saul to tend to his father's sheep at Bethlehem.”

Here it's mentioning the shepherd boy. He's also the delivery boy and he's running back and forth from Bethlehem to Saul. And whenever you read the words “shepherd boy” it's the antithesis of power and military technology. The shepherd is the lowest person on the scale of rank and status. And David will be mocked by nearly every character in this storyline – by Saul, by his brothers, by the people around him, and later on, even by Goliath. And here's the thing – David doesn't care. His identity is not wrapped up in what other people view his title as shepherd boy to be, because he sees himself as the shepherd of YHWH. God has providentially put him in this lowly position and he's fine with that.

1 Samuel 17:16

For forty days the Philistine came forward every morning and evening and took his stand.

After that reintroduction of David, it goes back to the storyline and we learn more about what's going on in the battlefield. It says in verse 16, “For forty days the Philistine came forward every morning and evening and took his stand.” Forty days, two times a day. Giants don't leave. They don't go away. They stay there and mock you and tell you the way you ought to live your life, or you kill them. That's giants. That's what it's like to have a false idol in your life.

Every breakfast he kicks sand in their face. And then he comes back for dinner and says, *Here, you want some seconds?* Forty days. What that means is that from this day, forty days forward, is just after the Fourth of July. And so, Goliath walks in on your Fourth of July parade and grabs your child's hot dog and eats it in one bite and then stomps on that American flag, and

we think, *Well, but look how big and powerful and strong and fortified he is.* Giants become idols and they tell us how to live. And they don't go away.

Day Forty-One: David's Response

1 Samuel 17:26

David asked the men standing near him, "What will be done for the man who kills this Philistine and removes this disgrace from Israel? Who is this uncircumcised Philistine that he should defy the armies of the living God?"

And then, day forty-one, something changes because someone is bringing some bread and cheese -- a shepherd boy. He is literally the smallest human being in this story. See the contrast? And he brings the food to his brothers and the passage says, "And Goliath did his usual defiance and called the Israeli army out and all the soldiers run." And these are David's first words spoken in the Book of Samuel. Here's how he's thinking without thinking: "And David asked the men standing near him, 'What will be done for the man who kills this Philistine and removes this disgrace from Israel? Who is this uncircumcised Philistine that he should defy the armies of the living God?'"

This giant kicks sand in David's face one time and David said, *Uh-uh. We're not doing this. I'll shut him up.*

Now here's the point of today's lesson. That sudden burst and immediate response that David had towards this giant who is mocking God – it didn't just happen. You can't get to that value and that expression of courage overnight. It is a consequence of a lifetime of meditating on the Word of God, not just to learn information, but to find out the nature of this Father's love and remembering the Father's loving actions. And it's a complete commitment to the nearness of God.

And so, what's happened is that this is the result of David's heart being in complete sync with God the Father's heart. He has marinated his soul in the Word of God and the revelation of God and this is what it looks like.

Let me give you an example of that. It's kind of a famous story of Ansel Adams, one of America's premiere photographers. And Ansel Adams was driving across New Mexico in November of 1941 after a very exhausting multi-day assignment. He was taking photographs. And as he was crossing the northern desert of New Mexico, he looked out his driver's side window, and his eyes saw what only his eyes could see. He was traveling with his son, his station wagon is loaded down with equipment, and he immediately screeches to a halt, pulls over on the side of the road and starts telling his son, "Hurry, hurry, hurry! We've got to get the tripod and the camera up on the roof. We've got to take this picture. We're running out of sun."

And Ansel Adams did what only Ansel Adams could do. Without even having a light meter, he takes a picture of what is considered his most famous photograph: "Moonrise Over Hernandez." I'd love to show you that picture. But apparently – Jonathan said – if we post it, we'd be sued. And I said, "No, Jonathan, you'd be sued." So, we're going to show just this picture.

Here's what the curator of Ansel Adam's work said about this particular event. He said, " 'Moonrise Over Hernandez' I think is probably one of the most famous photographs in the twentieth century and continuing on into this new century. It's one of the examples of what Ansel liked to call 'chance favoring the prepared mind.' The camera was second nature to him. No time to use the light meter and he guesstimates the exposure based upon his knowledge of the moon reflecting 250 candles per square foot was all he needed." There was only time for one photo, and that photo was taken. And only Ansel Adams could do it, because it was chance favoring the prepared mind.

I want you to know this – this story is a story of David where chance was favoring the prepared soul. Sovereignty is favoring the prepared soul. He sees this whole event as part of a providential act of God, brought to him so that everyone could see the power of the living God. He sees what only he could see, because he's the only one that has dedicated himself to knowing the heart of God. Everyone else is blinded, and they're blinded by this idol of power is strength and technology and bulk. And David is not drunk on that.

And so, David consoles the men and the king and he says, “Not to worry. No one should lose heart, because your servant will take care of this Philistine.”

1 Samuel 17:33

Saul replied, “You are not able to go out against this Philistine and fight him; you are only a boy and he has been a fighting man from his youth.”

And here’s Saul’s response, because of his worldview, because of his idol worship. He says this: “ ‘You are not able to go up against the Philistine and fight him; you are only a boy, and he has been a fighting man since his youth.’ ” There’s his hope, there’s his value, there’s his faith. It’s in power and strength and technology. And that’s why Saul says what Saul says.

1 Samuel 17:34-37

But David said to Saul, “Your servant has been keeping his father’s sheep. When a lion or a bear came and carried off a sheep from the flock, ³⁵ 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 it. ³⁶ Your servant has killed both the lion and the bear; this uncircumcised Philistine will be like one of them, because he has defied the armies of the living God. ³⁷ YHWH who delivered me from the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine.”

And then here’s David’s response. Listen carefully, especially in light of Deuteronomy and Joshua. “But David said to Saul, ‘Your servant has been keeping his father’s sheep.’ ” And they all laughed. *Yeah, we know you’re a shepherd boy, okay?* And then the story continues. “ ‘When a lion or a 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 it. Now, your servant has killed both the lion and the bear; this uncircumcised Philistine will be just like one of them, because he has defied the armies of the living God. And YHWH who delivered me from the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear will deliver me from the paw of this Philistine.’ ”

How to Kill a Giant?

1. Remember the Right Stories

Anybody want to kill a giant? Anyone want to know how this happens? He did what we've been told already. He remembered to remember the right actions of the loving Father that we found in Deuteronomy. *YHWH delivered me from the lion, YHWH delivered me from the bear. It's the providence of God that this giant is in front of me. This didn't just happen. I've been practicing my whole life.*

How to Kill a Giant?

2. Remember: God Is Near

The second thing he did is he learned from Joshua. "Haven't I told you to be strong and courageous, for YHWH your God is with you always?" That's why he says, *YHWH was with me with the bear, YHWH was with me with the lion, YHWH is with me right now.* And that's why David has what only David has, that we can have too.

1 Samuel 17:40

Then he took his staff in his hand, chose five smooth stones from the stream, put them in the pouch of his shepherd's bag and, with his sling in his hand, approached the Philistine.

The story continues. The Israeli army is scattered in fear. Everyone's in a panic. The monster Goliath is at the fifty-yard line calling people out. And David here is doing what David does. He's a shepherd boy. When you listen to me read what he's doing, listen to all the shepherd terms. Because this lowly David, this lowly shepherd, is doing what God had made him to do. It says, "And then David took his staff in his hand and he chose five smooth stones from the stream, put them in his shepherd's bag and, with his sling in his hand, approached the Philistine."

1 Samuel 17:41-43

Meanwhile, the Philistine, with his shield bearer in front of him, kept coming closer to David. ⁴² He looked David over and saw that he was only a boy, ruddy and handsome, and he despised him. ⁴³ He said to David, “Am I a dog, that you come at me with sticks?” And the Philistine cursed David by his gods.

And here’s what the fight looks like. “Meanwhile, the Philistine, with his shield bearer in front of him, kept coming towards David. The giant looked over and saw that David was just a boy, ruddy and handsome, and he despised him because of that. And the giant said to David, ‘Am I a dog that you would throw sticks after me?’ And the Philistine cursed David by his gods.”

David is going to kill more than a giant. He’s going to kill a value system where people are putting their faith in hope, where they’ve attached their identity to size and strength and technology. And so, Goliath calls David out by name and says, *Hey, shepherd boy, you come out here and I’ll kill you and I’ll deliver your body to the birds in the air and the animals of the field.*

1 Samuel 17:45

David said to the Philistine, “You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you in the name of YHWH Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied.

And then David says this. This is where his faith is. “David said to the Philistine, ‘You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you in the name of YHWH Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied.’”

And he says this. *I’m going to say this really fast. As a matter of fact, I’m going to tell you it’s going to take me longer to tell you what I’m going to do to you than to actually do it to you. So listen, giant, here’s what’s going to happen next.* “This day YHWH will hand you over to me, and I will strike you down and I will cut off your head and I will feed the carcasses of all the Philistine army to all the birds of the air and the beasts of the field.”

1 Samuel 17:46-47

“... and the whole world will know that there is a God in Israel. ⁴⁷ All those gathered here will know that it is not by sword or spear that YHWH saves; for the battle is YHWH’s.”

And then – this is how all the God stories end – this is how all the giant-killings end. Listen to this. This is his value, his worldview. This is truth. And then he says this: “ ‘The whole world will know that there is a God in Israel. All of those gathered here will know that it is not by sword or by spear...’ ” Don’t have faith in those things. “ ‘... that YHWH saves; because the battle belongs to YHWH.’ ”

Here’s what the headline looks like: *YHWH kills giant with a boy with a rock*. Yeah. That’s what God stories look like. That’s what giant-killings look like.

The story continues. “As the Philistine moved closer to attack him, David ran quickly toward the battle line to meet him. Reaching into his bag, his pouch, he pulls out a stone, he puts it into his sling, he swipes it and throws it at the giant. He hits the giant in the forehead. He falls face down.”

1 Samuel 17:50

So David triumphed over the Philistine with a sling and a stone; without a word in his hand he struck down the Philistine and killed him.

And for the tenth time we are told this. “So David triumphed over the Philistine with a sling and a stone; without a sword in his hand he struck down the Philistine and killed him.” And then David stood over that giant. And it says, “He took the giant’s sword out of his scabbard,” because it hadn’t been used, and he cuts the giant’s head off with the giant’s sword.

Anybody here want to kill a giant? In this passage it’s literal. In our lives, YHWH is looking far and wide across the earth to strengthen those who are fully dedicated to Him. He’s looking for someone that could be a leader without getting drunk on the power of that and not making that position an idol. He’s looking for people to be able to serve other people and not

needing attention drawn to them. He is looking for dads to mentor dads and show them how they could be part of killing the giant of anger and impatience. He's looking for moms to care about and nurture younger moms and show them they don't have to live in subjection to shame or worry. That's what He's looking for. He's looking for some giant-killers. And the attributes of a giant-killer are remembering to remember the actions of a loving Father so that you can obey Him, and to remember that God is near. YHWH will never leave you or forsake you, and that causes you to be courageous; courageous enough to fix a marriage or to go into a counseling room or to take responsibility, or to find out what truly motivates you so that you don't have to act out all the time. Are there any warriors in this house? I'm asking. Any warriors in this house tired of eating sand, kicked in your face, day after day, decade after decade?

Conclusion

David brings the head back to Saul and says, *Hey, are there any other fears that you have? Any other idols you need killed? Because I am just a shepherd boy, I'm just a delivery guy, but I have four stones left. And I've got a big day. I still have to walk back and drop off this last delivery and then get home, where I'm going to hang this sword over my mantel next to my lion head, right in front of my bearskin rug. And I have to do all of this, King Saul, before the street lights come on. So, you got anything else that needs to get done around here?*

It says in the Bible that David is the boy that was forgotten by his dad but remembered by his father YHWH.

Application

2 Chronicles 16:9

For the eyes of YHWH search far and wide throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to Him.

“And YHWH's eyes search far and wide throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to Him.”

Do you know what? I've got a great story of a giant-killer that happened in my lifetime, right here, across the street. Come with me across the street. I want to show you where it happened.

[Video cuts to Matt's office in the Grace 360 building across the street.]

Well, hey. This is where it happened. This is the giant-killing. There are blood stains still on the floor in here. Here's what happened. I was meeting with some friends and a young lady, a young mother with three boys, and we were meeting up here at night. And she'd been experiencing domestic abuse for years, and now it had turned to domestic violence. And as we were consoling her and counseling her, you could hear what was motivating her to stay in the situation she was in. She put her safety in her bank account; she put her security in her savings. And then you could see she had her identity in her neighborhood, her zip code, where she lived. She had a big, brand-new house, her kids were going to the right Christian school, all things were good, all things were peaceful. Except there was a giant kicking sand in her face twice a day. And it had become an idol. And she would do whatever it costs to serve that idol.

It was really strange because I don't know what it happened, but all of a sudden, I just got up and came over here – it was at night and we just had these lights on – and I turned more lights on. And when I turned the lights on, it was like the lights came on in her soul. I said, “What are you thinking? This is a giant for you to kill. What if God alone were your refuge? What if you identified yourself, who you are as a human being, as a princess to the King of kings. How would that change how you think, what you feel, and what you choose to do?”

Well, she came in a scared young lady and she left a warrior. She gave her husband multiple opportunities to repent, but he didn't. And she did and lived what she feared the most. She moved out of the big house into an apartment. She went out and got a job, entry level. And then her boys were raised in a public school. But do you know where she lived? She lived in the abundant life neighborhood. She lived in freedom.

And here's the best part. She taught those boys what it's like to be a giant-killer. That's what it looks like, friends. And David is more than an idol. He's a role model for us. She saw the presence of God in her life, and that chased out all the fears, and she became courageous. She

remembered the stories of the Father's loving actions in her storyline, and that gave her the strength to obey.

Listen, I tell you that story for two reasons. One is to tell you what it looks like to be a giant-killer and how you and I can do this as well. But also, since COVID-19, domestic violence has gone up eighteen to thirty percent, depending upon what part of the country you're living in. And I want to ask you if you're experiencing domestic abuse. It leads to domestic violence. If you've experienced domestic violence, you've already experienced months or sometimes years of abuse. And I want you to do something about it. I want you to start in the right direction. You could call the many hotlines, you can call the police. Sometimes friends are helpful to just support you, but very few friends are able to handle the sophistication and the complication and the cycles of psychology that are involved in domestic violence that has preceded by a long time of domestic abuse. So, friends are good for supporting you, but maybe not for advice. You could call one of our pastors or call the main switchboard and we'll have one call you, and our pastors will refer you to professionals. But do this: do what's right. And show the world that God, with a boy and a rock, kills giants covered in swords and spears and shields. The battle belongs to YHWH. Let's do that together.

Let's pray that God would help us see the giants that maybe have become idols in our lives so that we can show the world that the battle belongs to YHWH. All right, let's pray.

Lord, we are grateful for this wonderful story of this woman who was set free because she realized that all the things she'd been reading all those years were purposeful in making her able and equipped to handle the drama that she was in that very moment. Lord, I'd ask for the members of Grace, that they would find --- if they're being subject to an idol, that they've surrendered their security and their safety, maybe their significance, and maybe even their identity in something other than being Yours, I'd ask that You would remind them of the good deeds that You have done for them so that they might obey.

I'd ask that You would remind them that You are ever present, and that presence would cause them to be strong and courageous. God, I'd ask that we be a church of giant-killers. I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Thank you, Grace. We'll see you again next week.

