

Lessons From the Flannelgraph

Only A Boy Named David

I grew up hearing about and reading the stories of the great figures of the bible. Taught by my parents at home and then wonderful Sunday School teachers at church each Sunday, those great stories and great characters as well as the great truths of the bible became real to me.

When I was a boy, one of the tools used by my Sunday School teachers week after week was the flannelgraph. She would tell the story and as she did she would place these cut out figures on the board to illustrate the story. I can remember coming home with some of the cut outs and teaching my own lessons. Remember the story of the friends taking the roof off and lowering their paralyzed friend into the house so Jesus would heal him? Amazing how a shoe box could be transformed into a house with a removable roof with a few cut out figures glued to the sides of the box. And amazing how those cut out figures could make a story come alive for a boy sitting in a basement classroom in First Assembly in Muskogee, or Carbondale Assembly in Tulsa.

Those stories of Old Testament characters like David and Goliath and Samson and Delilah, like Gideon and his band of 300, Joseph and his coat of many colors, those stories continue to challenge and inspire us, with or without cut out pictures and a flannelgraph.

(You really can't find that stuff anymore) but for the next few Sundays, we are going to look at some Old Testament heroes as we share Lessons From The FlannelGraph. This morning: Only A Boy Named David.

Turn with me to **1 Samuel 17** and let's look at this amazing story. The bible tells us that the Philistines were invading part of the land that now belonged to Israel. There were continual battles and encroachments into the territory. This particular battle occurred in the Elah Valley, with the Judean hills on the East and the coastal plain and the Mediterranean to the west. The Philistines were gathered on the hills to the south and the Israelites were on the hills to the north with the valley of Elah between them.

Verse 4 describes the champion of the Philistines, a giant named Goliath from Gath. Over nine feet tall, he wore a bronze helmet, a coat of armor made of bronze that weighed over 125 pounds. He had a bronze javelin slung on his back. The spear he carried was like a weavers rod with an iron tip on it that weighed 15 pounds. You could describe him as a formidable foe.

Goliath proposed simplifying the battle. “There is no point in all of you fighting and dying. Send out a man to fight me. If he kills me, we will be your subjects and if I kill him then you will be our subjects and serve us.” “This day I defy the ranks of Israel!”

Verse 11 tells us that **“On hearing the Philistine’s words, Saul and all the Israelites were dismayed and terrified.”** I know the feeling don’t you? The giants in our life have a way of terrifying us. They are so huge, so overwhelming. Lined up against us, blocking our way, we just feel hopeless. What can I possibly do against such odds? And verse 16 tells us that this went on for forty days! Every morning and evening Goliath would come to shout his insults and issue his challenge.

It’s interesting that he came twice a day, morning and evening. Perhaps it was during the regular time of Jewish prayer, as they began to declare each morning and each evening, “Hear O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is One.” As they prayed and reminded themselves of the Mighty God they served, the enemy would come to terrorize and to call into question God’s faithfulness and whether he would deliver them out of this hopeless looking situation. “Where is the God who will deliver Israel from the Philistine Champion?” That was the question Goliath was asking. “Is your God really able to deliver you?” Maybe the giant in your life has been asking you the same question lately. If so, be encouraged. God sends Israel a deliverer and what an unlikely deliverer! A shepherd boy named David.

Verse 12 gives us some background on David. The youngest of eight sons of Jesse (Yishai), David had come to check on his three older brothers who had joined Saul’s army and were there at Elah. The families of the soldiers typically helped by supplying food so Jesse sends David to the front lines with supplies and to make sure the brothers were all right.

As David arrived at the Israelite camp, Goliath stepped out from the Philistine battle line and began to shout his usual defiance of Israel and once again the men of Israel fled in fear. I suppose everyone with a brain ran, including David at this point. David was probably pretty happy to not be a soldier at this moment. “Look at the size of that guy”. But then something interesting happens. David overhears a conversation.

Look at verse 25. **Now the Israelites had been saying, “Do you see how this man keeps coming out? He comes out to defy Israel. The king will give great wealth to the man who kills him. He will also give him his daughter in marriage and will exempt his father’s**

family from taxes in Israel.”

It sounds like a sweet deal. Great wealth, a place of prominence, you'll be the husband of the princess, and you'll and your family will never pay taxes again! Of course it doesn't matter how sweet the deal is if you are dead. But, if you could manage to kill Goliath....hmm...what was it they said you would get? The wheels started turning, so in verse 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?” They repeated to him what they had been saying and told him, “This is what will be done for the man who kills him.”

David sounds braver and more spiritual now. Now what will be done for the fellow who kills this giant? Oh yeah? Well, just “who is this uncircumcised Philistine that he should defy the armies of the living God?” Come on, we can't let this joker do this! Now, tell me again, what did you say would be done for the guy who kills this giant?

I'm not trying to make David sound like a mercenary but I think something happened when they began to talk about the prize to be awarded. There was a shift in perspective. You see, when you start focusing on the prize rather than the problem, your attitude begins to change. You begin to see things you hadn't seen before. He's not just a giant, he is an opportunity. He's not just a challenge, he may be the means to the destiny God has for me. When you stop focusing on the enormity of the problem and start contemplating the greatness of God's provision, you start seriously considering solutions and options. Before, David ran like everyone else. But now he begins to consider the weaknesses of a giant.

Let's see...the downside, he's ten feet tall and wearing 125 pounds of bronze armor. The upside, I could out maneuver him and I could certainly out run him if I had to. Downside, he's wearing a bronze helmet and he has an armor bearer carrying a shield out in front of him, however, upside I see one vulnerable spot right there in the middle of his forehead, right between his eyes.

David knows if God is with you nothing is impossible, no giant is invincible, no situation is hopeless. Friends, the word of God tells us that with man it may be impossible, but with God all things are possible. Your circumstances aren't impossible. That giant you are facing isn't invincible. Your situation may look hopeless, but God still specializes in doing things we think

are hopeless and impossible.

David is thinking about taking on Goliath when his oldest brother Eliab hears him talking with these soldiers and jumps all over him. “Who do you think you are? You’re only a shepherd. Go back home and take care of those few little scrawny sheep and leave the fighting to the real men.” Of course, the real men were all too frightened to fight Goliath.

There will always be an Eliab around to tell you you don’t measure up. There will always be someone around to tell you why you might as well give up and go home, that it can’t be done, that you can’t make a difference, that you can’t succeed, that you can’t change, that the circumstances can’t change. There is always someone to remind you of the statistics on what happens when an underdog faces a giant.

David could have listened to Eliab and said, “You’re right, what was I thinking. I’m going home.” He could stay and listen to all the negative talk and all the voices of fear and doubt. He could have calculated the risk and decided to stay with shepherding. He could have kept on focusing on the size of the problem – “How much do you think that sword weighs? How far do you think he can throw that spear? I wonder, about how fast do you think a man that size can run?”

But look what David did. His response to Eliab is exactly like a little brother to an older brother. “Now what have I done? Can’t I even speak?” Verse 30 tells us that David turned away from his brother and now, for the third time at least, David turns to another group of men and asks the same question. “What did you say would be done for the man who defeats this giant?” And once again, he hears the same answer. You will have great wealth, you will marry the king’s daughter and you and your family will never have to pay taxes.

Then David said, “**Let no one lose heart on account of this Philistine; your servant will go and fight him.**”

David found out what would be done for the man who killed the giant. After you find out the prize, then you ask the question, **Is it worth the risk?** David had to weigh the cost, the risk versus the prize, but after he did, he decided it was worth risking it all.

Imagine him asking, “how much wealth do you think the person will get? And you’ll get to marry a princess, eh? Which one? What does she look like? Remember the Andy Griffith episode where Barney and Andy are fixing Gomer up with Thelma Lou’s cousin, Mary Grace.

Gomer keeps asking, “Is she pretty?” “Well, she’s nice.” “But is she pretty?” “Well, she’s just so nice.”

I can hear David asking “Is she pretty?” “Well, she’s nice.” “But if I’m going to fight a giant and risk my life, I need to know how pretty. Is she worth the risk and the battle? Is it worth it?”

Folks we are in a battle. There is a giant out there shouting at us. The devil is a terrorist and he wants to frighten us and discourage us and defeat us. He wants us to focus on how big and bad he is and lose sight of our awesome and faithful God. He wants us to look at the problem instead of the prize. He wants us to lose heart and give up and go back to our old life. He wants to convince us it’s not worth all the sacrifice to serve the Lord. He will keep telling you it’s just too costly to serve Jesus. So maybe you need to ask like David did, “What will be done for the person who remains faithful and risks it all to serve the Lord? Is it worth surrendering your life to Jesus?”

For those who choose to serve the Lord, he forgives your sin and takes away the guilt and shame. He gives us abundant life here and now and he prepares a place for us in heaven, he keeps us in peace, he gives to us a new name, a new body, a new life, an eternal hope, an eternal home, an eternal destiny. What will be done for us if we will keep on serving the Lord and obeying him? We will rule and reign with him in his heavenly kingdom. What will be done for the man or woman who remains faithful and serves the Lord? He will receive the crown of life from the Lord himself and the apostle Paul said, **“No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him.” 1 Corinthians 2:9.** It’s beyond wealth and marrying a princess and not having to pay taxes. It’s beyond anything we can imagine. It will be worth it all when we see Jesus.

We need to finish this story. David tells Saul he will fight the giant. Saul tells him he’s too little, too young, too inexperienced, but David shares his resume with Saul. “I’m a shepherd, but I’m tougher than I look. I’ve killed a lion and a bear and this Philistine will be just like one of them today, but not because I’m so tough but because he has defied the armies of the living God. **“The Lord who delivered me from the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine.”** “See, I just don’t think this loud mouth ought to be able to keep on defying the God of Israel and the army of Israel.”

David's confidence didn't stem from his ability compared to the size of the problem, it came from his relationship with God. It came from his assurance that God was and is and will be faithful to those who choose to serve him and trust in him. You see it doesn't matter if it is a lion or a tiger or a bear or a ten foot tall giant or thirty foot tall giant, or if it's a tumor or a blood clot or depression or addiction or Alzheimers or cancer or a bad heart or diabetes or bankruptcy or unemployment or eviction or marital trouble or heartbreak or death and loss or anything else because the Lord who delivered us from the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear can deliver us from the hand of whatever this is that is coming against us!

Goliath was 10 foot tall, but from heaven's perspective, he really wasn't all that big. Israel was running in fear, but heaven was so confident that instead of sending soldiers, heaven sent a shepherd boy. Saul offers his armor to David but all David knew to do was to trust in the Lord, not in suits of armor or swords or spears.

Some of you are trying to figure out a way to defeat the giants in your life when all you need to do is put your trust in God. You're running to all kinds of new things, trusting in this one and that one - how about trying what you know? How about calling on God and trusting him? How about submitting your life to Christ and really serving him and obeying him? He can bring down every giant you are facing if you'll trust him.

David heads down into the valley as Goliath walks toward him. Verse 40 tells us David 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.

When Goliath saw that David was just a boy, the bible says he despised him. What am I, a dog that you come at me with sticks? He cursed David by his gods and said come here and I'll feed you to the birds!" And David responded, **"You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the Lord Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. This day the Lord will hand you over to me and I'll strike you down and cut off your head. Today I will give the carcasses of the Philistine army to the birds of the air and the beasts of the earth and the whole world will know that there is a God in Israel. 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 and he will give all of you into our hands."**

David ran quickly toward Goliath, reached into the bag, took out a stone and put it into the

sling, and let it go and struck the giant in the forehead. The bible says the stone sank into his forehead and he fell face down on the ground. David ran over, pulled out Goliath's sword and cut off his head with his own sword.

The Philistines panicked when they saw that their champion was dead and the Israelites charged after them and God gave Israel a great victory that day.

“Only a boy named David, only a little brook, only a boy named David, but five little stones he took.” All those gathered knew exactly what David had said, that God doesn't need a sword or a spear to deliver us - he can use whatever he chooses, including a sling shot, for the battle is the Lord's and he will give the enemy into our hands.

I don't know what you are facing today. I don't know how big the giant is that is shouting at you and cursing you and defying you and your God. I don't know how limited your resources are, but I can't imagine that your resources are any less than David's. Talk about the odds being against you. A boy facing a man of war. A boy facing a giant. A sling shot facing a sword and spear and javelin. But David came in the name of the Lord Almighty. He came not in his authority but in God's authority. He came not in his own ability, but in God's anointing. He came not in his own name, but in the name of the Lord of Hosts and for the glory of the Lord. “You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the Lord Almighty.”

That giant you are facing - he is nothing against the name of the Lord. That giant will fall before you as you come against him in the name of the Lord. Only a boy named David, but a Mighty God was with him that day and he is with us as well. Victory is ours!

I'm looking for someone today that all you have is a sling shot and you are facing a heavily armed giant. I'm looking for someone that the cards are stacked against you, all the odds are against you, everything looks hopeless. You are outmanned, outgunned, overwhelmed, don't know which way to turn. You are just the kind of person the Lord likes to meet up with because as you commit your life to Christ and your ways to him, he will deliver you and then the whole world will know that it is not by sword or spear that the Lord saves, for the battle is the Lords!

Ready to see the giants come down in your life? Believe and trust the Lord.