

## David and Goliath

Today we've reached the last in our series on children in the Bible and we're going to get to our last character in a minute. But this child stands out from the rest. This child is less an example to follow and more a sign post to the glory of God.

We're going to look at the background first and the problem that stand in front of us...

(Dress up a giant) (One side of church the Philistines)

A giant... Goliath, standing 9 foot tall, a terrifying beast of a man. He is the champion of the Philistine army. The Philistines were almost certainly a Greek people, they knew warfare. This is a man you don't want to take on. Bronze armour, iron pointed spear – this is the battle tank of the ancient world.

(Dress up a king) (other side of church the Israelites)

On the opposite hill to the Philistines were the people of Israel led by King Saul. This man was chosen to be king because he looked and smelt like a champion. He's taller and stronger than everyone else but when he and the rest of the people see Goliath, his is as dismayed and terrified as his people. Israel has no champion now, Saul has bottled it.

This whole story points to the problem of the whole human race. We face a giant and we are helpless in the face of it. It is the same thing that has plagued humanity from almost the beginning of time – sin and death. We are powerless on our own to deal with these things. A humanist would say that the answers to the problems humans face in this world lie within ourselves. But I look at the world and I see the human race struggling again and again and again. Humanity has made a mess of the world, we live in a society of fractured relationships, of chasmous inequality, of fear and struggle. And no-one in their own strength can conquer death. It lurks waiting for all of us.

Goliath stands for this unconquerable problem for humanity.

We need a hero and Israel needed a new one.

And so it is onto this stage that David walks. David is a boy, the youngest son of Jesse, the one that all the rest of his family overlooked. He's a nothing isn't he? He's not a warrior, he's not in the army, he doesn't look like a hero, he doesn't smell like a hero. He's just a shepherd. But, as we learn from elsewhere David's story, God looks at the heart and not the outside packaging. David is a lad of faith – he trusts God and he believes in the sovereignty of God's plans. When he arrives on the battlefield to deliver his brother's pack lunches and sees Goliath, he isn't scared, he's just wondering why everyone else is.

"I'll fight Goliath", he says. His brothers tell him to stop being ridiculous, King Saul has no faith in him, but David talks Saul into letting him do it, "I've killed bears, I've killed lions and this uncircumcised Philistine is just the same. God has delivered me before and he'll deliver me now." David is a boy after God's own heart.

He turns down Saul's armour and he goes out with his sling and five smooth stones. A problem like this requires a different solution to the ones people normally think of.

David v Goliath – it's the analogy for the complete mismatch. How could a young boy kill a giant?

Except when we think that way, we miss something. Is David the underdog? No! People just underestimated him... If Goliath is the battle tank of the ancient world, David is the equivalent of the man holding the antitank missile. If there's one thing we've learnt from the war in the Ukraine, it's that tanks are sitting ducks in the wrong situation. Goliath may be a killing machine, but so is David. A sling in the right trained hands was lethal.

One stone takes down the lurking menace and with-it Israel is freed. David is the saviour and he signposts us the greater saviour and the greater rescue.

One stone, one cross. Jesus didn't look like a champion, he didn't smell like a champion. When he was hanging on the cross, it looked like a picture of utter defeat. But that would be to underestimate Jesus. With that act of dying and then rising three days later, Jesus broke the chains of sin and death – that giant that has lurked over humanity.

As we come into this time of Lent, whatever we're facing, remember that we have a champion that stands beside us. We don't have to fight our battles alone because Jesus has fought the ultimate battle and one. Let's use this time of reflection over Lent we recommitting ourselves to Jesus, to recognise afresh the victory he has won, and to dedicate ourselves anew to taking his message of hope into a world of fear.