

Suttons Bay Congregational Church  
1 Samuel 17:32-49

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Rev. Robin Long Sanderson

32 David said to Saul, "Let no one lose heart on account of this Philistine; your servant will go and fight him."

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."

34 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 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."

Saul said to David, "Go, and the LORD be with you."

38 Then Saul dressed David in his own tunic. He put a coat of armor on him and a bronze helmet on his head. 39 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. 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.

41 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. 44 "Come here," he said, "and I'll give your flesh to the birds of the air and the beasts of the field!"

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 the LORD Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. 46 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. 47 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."

48 As the Philistine moved closer to attack him, David ran quickly toward the battle line to meet him. 49 Reaching into his bag and taking out a stone, he slung it and struck the Philistine on the forehead. The stone sank into his forehead, and he fell facedown on the ground.

"I'm going to marry Chad Boettcher". At least that's what I told myself when I met him the summer before our senior year of college. Ours was to be an idyllic life. He wanted to be a politician and I would make an excellent politician's wife—we were a match made in heaven. The summer we met we went on a road trip to Washington D. C. with a group of friends from school. As we were sight seeing, I stood outside the White House, imagining us as the first couple—I would be an Eleanor Roosevelt kind of a first lady, active, involved, and passionate about my causes. I was so sure that he was a sure thing that I started doing strange, out-of-character things like buying hideous sweaters with American flags embroidered on them and taupe colored pumps because every politician's wife wears taupe colored pumps. I even went so far as to consider attending a Lutheran Seminary in Minnesota because Chad was from Minnesota and, as soon as he was old enough, I was sure he'd be the junior senator from that state. I talked on the phone with my best friend Joni often that summer, going on and on about

Chad and my plans for our future. I wondered aloud to her if I was good enough for him and what I could do to make him fall in love with me—aside from the patriotic clothing and taupe pumps, of course. I couldn't wait for her to meet him once she got back to campus in the fall. And finally they did meet, with me observing from the sidelines in my American Flag sweater vest and sensible taupe shoes. Later that evening when we were back in our apartment I asked Joni what she thought of Chad and looking from my eyes to my sweater vest and back into my eyes she confessed, "I don't know what the big deal is. He's nice enough and everything. But I don't think he's worth—gesturing towards the gold star-shaped buttons on my sweater vest—*this*."

Her words stopped me dead in my tracks. All summer I had been trying to shape, mold, and remake myself into what I thought Chad was looking for in a woman. I was nearly obsessive in my desire to please and impress him. And Joni was right, I was making way too big of a deal out of the whole thing. In fact, I was becoming someone I really wasn't in my pursuit of Chad. I had been demeaning myself, settling for what was less than best for me, and quite frankly dressing very poorly all in an effort to impress someone who was making none of the same gestures to me. Indeed, a few months later I was to find out that I wasn't what Chad was looking for in a woman when he invited me to his dorm room for a chat during which he told me I was a good friend but that's all I was because he wasn't interested in a woman like me, or any woman for that matter. And so it was that Chad came out to me that night and I'm happy to report that he now has a successful career working at MTV and seems happy living in New York City with his partner.

Have you ever done something like that? Have you ever tried to make yourself into someone or something that you're not, in order to impress or please someone else? Does the promise of approval or the threat of condemnation from someone or something on the outside significantly alter who or what you are on the inside? Do you sometimes feel like who or what you are isn't enough? Are you outsourcing your power and self-esteem to folks on the outside?

I think most of us are. We think that if only we had more money or skills or a better job or a bigger house or beige pumps then we would be okay, then we would pass muster and be respected, liked, or accepted. We live with this constant sense of needing more and many of us are rarely content with where we're at because of this notion that where we're at isn't far enough toward where we think we ought to be. It becomes a vicious cycle and we become so wrapped up in it that we forget ourselves in the process. We lose track of what, who, and most importantly whose we are.

But not David. We usually think of the story of David slaying Goliath as a story of the underdog beating the world champion. But I ask you, on this reading of the story, to focus on the lead up to the defeat of Goliath. David approaches King Saul and volunteers to fight Goliath. Saul responds that there's no way a kid like David could begin to fight the infamous Philistine warrior Goliath. David disagrees and cites some convincing evidence of his life as a shepherd during which he's had to kill lions and bears with his own two hands in order to protect his flock. David assures Saul that if God has saved him from lions and bears then surely God will save him from that lousy, no good Philistine, Goliath.

Saul relents and agrees to David's request to fight Goliath. But first he insists that David put on his--Saul's own--tunic and coat of armor for protection. Saul even gives him his own helmet and sword. All suited up, David takes a deep breath and turns to head for battle but he can barely move. He's not used to all of that armor. I imagine that this scene is pretty funny; the brave, young fighter David wobbling all over like a Weeble, looking for all the world like a little child all bundled up in a snow suit *a la* the little brother in the movie *The Christmas Story*. David recognizes how ludicrous he is in all of that armor and begins to shed it saying to Saul, "Forget it. I'm not used to wearing all of this stuff. Take back your helmet, armor, and even this sword." And with the arrogance of youth, or perhaps a firmly rooted faith in God, he declares, "I'm sticking with my sling shot." And so he goes to the stream and searches out five smooth rocks, much like we might go hunting for Petoskey Stones, and then he heads off to kill Goliath.

Saul tried to put on David what he himself considered the markers of a fine soldier. However, David knows that he is not a soldier. He is a shepherd and he has the skill and cunning of a shepherd. When he stood on a battlefield facing the enemy it wasn't the first time he wielded a sling shot. I imagine that he had shot at hundreds of predators during his long hours on the hillsides protecting the animals. David knew what he could do and so that's what he did. David knew that his power didn't come from those outside things like swords and shields, but rather it came from within him, from his experiences and know-how.

But more important than knowing what he was—namely a shepherd with a mighty good aim—David knew Whose he was. His faith in God is seemingly unwavering. He wasn't there to kill Goliath for himself, he stepped up to kill Goliath in the name of God. Now this kind of language can be pretty scary these days—killing in the name of God brings to mind terrorists, radical fundamentalists, or the criminally insane. But David's was a different time and place--the customs and social mores of which we don't understand. This kind of gruesome killing is barbaric to us, not the kind of behavior we think of a loving and merciful God condoning. And so for our purposes here this morning let us consider more why David did what he did rather than what he actually did. David's confidence to stand on a hill just yards from his adversary came from God as is revealed in the lecture David gave Goliath before he killed him . . .

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. 46 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. 47 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 is talking about what he's going to do on behalf of God, not what he's going to do to earn personal acceptance or glory. David had courage and wisdom and confidence because he knew he was a beloved child of God. He didn't need the armor, the rank, or even the maturity of the armies of Israel, he needed his God given talent and experiences and his knowledge of Whose he was. And with that knowledge he could rest secure. He didn't need to outsource his power, giving it into the hands of people or things he thought he needed in order to have power.

And oh, that we could do the same; that we would stop looking outside ourselves for acceptance, solutions, and love. Our source of power comes from within us, from the Spirit that God blew into us when we were given life. Yes, we are called to share that Spirit, but not to give it away, leaving ourselves with nothing but a sense of defeat, a cheesy sweater, and a pair of taupe pumps. God wants better for us. God wants us to approach life with the confidence of David—with the knowledge that we've been given the gifts we need to live the life we've been called to lead. To live not for others or even for ourselves, but to live for God—living, loving, working, and serving with the certain confidence that we are all beloved children of God with a right to be here. It's an end to outsourcing and the embracing of the God-given power, love, and talent that lies within each one of us. Thanks be to God.