

“The Bigger They Are, The Harder They Fall”

David and Goliath. Jesus calming the storm. Could there be two more appropriate texts to reflect on the Sunday prior to General Assembly? Could there be two words from God that better speak to what we’re facing in every aspect of our society than David slinging that stone and Jesus rousing from his rest to say, “*Peace be still?*”

I laughed out loud when I first read these texts Sunday night. I laughed and gave thanks. “God is good. All the time. All the time. God is good.”

We’re all in this boat together. The challenges that dominate the agenda of the General Assembly dominate the headlines, and I am thankful to be in a church that takes the needs of the world seriously. “We are sent to serve,” and if we aren’t paying attention to what the world needs we can’t do any good. I’m thankful to be the teaching elder in a church that has sent Sally Walters, Nancy DiGiacomo, Peg Lewis, Paul Lucia, Chris McCarraher, and Rev. Ray Brubaker to serve at the Assembly. I’m sure they can tell stories about the storms that tossed the Presbyterian Church at their Assemblies, and we’re still here.

We’re still here, and we we’re still paying attention. We’re paying attention to what’s going on in the economy. We’re paying attention to Syria and other troubled parts of the world. We’re paying attention to gay marriage. And we’re paying attention to the peace process between Israel and the Palestinians.

Which brings us back to David and Goliath; Goliath was a Philistine; the word has come to mean someone who is crude and uncultured; the Greek word for Philistine is *Palaistinoi* from which we get Palestine and Palestinian.

We’re never that far from David and Goliath. Whatever challenge we face in the church and in our lives, “*the battle belongs to the Lord.*” Our time of trial is our opportunity to stand the Valley of Elah and hear Jesus say, “*Peace be still.*” The bigger they are, the harder they fall.

But there is one nagging detail to which we must attend; a challenge to which we are invited to rise: Namely, if we want to win like David, we can’t fight like Goliath; and we like Goliath; we like our 7 foot tall super soldier who can charge into battle bearing 126 pounds of state-of-the-art bronze armor, a 15 pound spear with an iron blade; he is the ultimate warrior; he is the incarnation of earthly power. We’re in good hands with Goliath.

We Presbyterians have a lot of Goliath in us. We in the American Church have a lot of Goliath in us. We like to throw our weight around. We’re important and we want everyone to know it! We’re Americans! Just look at our shiny armor!

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David can't wear that armor. Saul tries; the scene is comical; the runt of the litter staggering around under big-boy armor; “I cannot walk with these; for I am not used to them.”¹

David isn't used to Goliath-like armor, but he is used to walking. He's also used to winning. He's faced lions and bears, and God saved him. David is used to putting himself in God's hands when he's in harm's way. His previous battles have taught him that *“The LORD, who saved me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear, will save me from the hand of this Philistine.”*²

David doesn't fight Goliath on Goliath's terms using Goliath's weapons. He doesn't go forth as a mighty warrior; he runs into the valley as a shepherd, a servant of the king. He walks by faith and not by sight.

We can't win like David if we fight like Goliath. We can win; we will win, when we look away from the storm that is Goliath to the One Who is always with us, who says to us, *“Peace be still.”* “Sling your stone.”

Here are some stones I'm taking with me to General Assembly. I invite you to put them in your pouch for the Goliath's you face:

Zechariah 4:6 (NRSV) “This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel: Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, says the LORD of hosts.

Philippians 4:13 (NRSV) ¹ I can do all things through him who strengthens me.

Psalms 46:10-11 (NRSV) “Be still, and know that I am God! I am exalted among the nations, I am exalted in the earth. The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge.”

Take on your Goliath. Sling your stone. *“The battle belongs to the Lord.”* The God who saved you from the trials you've known will save you from the trials to come. Walk by faith through the storm, and you will hear your Savior say, *“Peace be still.”* Sling your stone, and rejoice in the Lord, for the bigger they are the harder they fall. Amen.

¹ *The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version*. 1989 (1 Sa 17:39). Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers.

² *The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version*. 1989 (1 Sa 17:37). Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers.