

The Festival of the Holy Trinity – Pr. Faugstad sermon  
1 Samuel 17:32-50: “The LORD Saves Not with Sword and Spear.”  
June 14/15, 2025 | Saude, Jerico, & Redeemer Lutheran Churches

**In Nomine Iesu**

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1. Lord, keep us steadfast in Thy Word; / Curb those who fain by craft and sword  
Would wrest the Kingdom from Thy Son / And set at naught all He hath done.

2. Lord Jesus Christ, Thy pow’r make known, / For Thou art Lord of lords alone;  
Defend Thy Christendom that we / May evermore sing praise to Thee.

3. O Comforter of priceless worth, / Send peace and unity on earth.  
Support us in our final strife / And lead us out of death to life. *Amen.*  
(*Evangelical Lutheran Hymnary* #589)

*Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen. (Rom. 1:7, etc.)*

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*The sermon text for today is written in the seventeenth chapter of the First Book of Samuel. We read selected verses in Jesus’ name:*

And David said to Saul, “Let no man’s heart fail because of [Goliath]. Your servant will go and fight with this Philistine.” And Saul said to David, “You are not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him, for you are but a youth, and he has been a man of war from his youth.” But David said to Saul, “Your servant used to keep sheep for his father. And when there came a lion, or a bear, and took a lamb from the flock, I went after him and struck him and delivered it out of his mouth. And if he arose against me, I caught him by his beard and struck him and killed him. Your servant has struck down both lions and bears, and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be like one of them, for he has defied the armies of the living God.” And David said, “The LORD who delivered me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine.” And Saul said to David, “Go, and the LORD be with you!” / Then Saul clothed David with his armor. He put a helmet of bronze on his head and clothed him with a coat of mail, and David strapped his sword over his armor. And he tried in vain to go, for he had not tested them. Then David said to Saul, “I cannot go with these, for I have not tested them.” So David put them off. Then he took his staff in his hand and chose five smooth stones from the brook and put them in his shepherd’s pouch. His sling was in his hand, and he approached the Philistine. / And the Philistine moved forward and came near to David, with his shield-bearer in front of him. And when the Philistine looked and saw David, he disdained him, for he was but a youth, ruddy and handsome in appearance. And the Philistine said to David, “Am I a dog, that you come to me with sticks?” And the Philistine cursed David by his gods. The Philistine said to David, “Come to me, and I will give your flesh to the birds of the air and to the beasts of the field.” / Then David said to the Philistine, “You come to me with a sword and with a spear and with a javelin, but I come to you in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. This day the LORD will deliver you into my hand, and I will strike you down and cut off your head. And I will give the dead bodies of the host of the Philistines this day to the birds of the air and to the wild beasts of the earth, that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel, and that all this assembly may

know that the LORD saves not with sword and spear. For the battle is the LORD's, and He will give you into our hand." / When the Philistine arose and came and drew near to meet David, David ran quickly toward the battle line to meet the Philistine. And David put his hand in his bag and took out a stone and slung it and struck the Philistine on his forehead. The stone sank into his forehead, and he fell on his face to the ground. / So David prevailed over the Philistine with a sling and with a stone, and struck the Philistine and killed him. There was no sword in the hand of David. <sup>(ESV)</sup>

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*These are Your words, heavenly Father. Sanctify us by Your truth, Your Word is truth. Amen. (Joh. 17:17)*

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In Christ Jesus, the seemingly overmatched Challenger who conquered our fierce and giant enemies without sword or spear, dear fellow redeemed:

*"You shall have no other gods" (Exo. 20:3).* This is the First Commandment recorded in the Hebrew Scriptures. All the other Commandments follow after the first one. Because there is no other god than the LORD, we should respect His name (Second Commandment), listen to His Word (Third Commandment), honor the authorities He has placed over us (Fourth Commandment), and so on. That all makes good sense. But how can we know that the God we fear, love, and trust is actually the true God?

If you were standing on the battle line with the Israelites as they faced the Philistines, you might have guessed that the Philistines had stronger gods. For forty days, morning and evening, a great Philistine champion named Goliath stepped forward and challenged the Israelites to send someone to fight him one on one. Goliath said, *"If he is able to fight with me and kill me, then we will be your servants. But if I prevail against him and kill him, then you shall be our servants and serve us"* (1Sa. 17:9).

No one was willing to face him, not even the warrior-king Saul. Whenever Goliath stepped forward, the Israelites cowered in fear (vv. 11, 24). None of them believed they could defeat him. No matter how much Goliath ridiculed their God and appealed to his own gods, they would not take courage and fight him. They did not trust the LORD to deliver them from their enemies.

But then David came to visit his older brothers. David was too young to join the Israelite army, but his father sent him to bring food to his brothers and their commander. While he was there, he heard Goliath's taunts and immediately responded, *"who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God?"* (v. 26). David's bold statement was repeated to Saul, and David soon found himself standing before the king.

For all Saul's military successes in the past, he was not willing to fight Goliath. He did not trust in the LORD to deliver Israel. What a contrast there was between the faithlessness and fear of this seasoned military man and the faith and courage of this young shepherd-boy! We older Christians experience something similar when we hear the clear confession and cheerful faith of Jesus' little lambs and feel ashamed at our own doubts and weakness.

So young David went forward to meet fierce Goliath. David had nothing with him but a staff and five smooth stones for his sling, compared with Goliath's heavy bronze armor, javelin, and

spear with a shield-bearer in front of him. When Goliath saw David, he *"cursed [him] by his gods,"* and promised to *"give his flesh to the birds of the air and to the beasts of the field."* David for his part replied, *"I come to you in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. This day the LORD will deliver you into my hand."*

But what made David so sure? How did he know that by the power of his God, he would defeat Goliath with his gods? Our culture today says that there is no way to be certain that one person's god is any better than another person's god. Or it is commonly said that all of us really worship the same god, though we may refer to him (or it) by different names and follow different religious books. The problem is that people think of gods in human terms, as though we humans have made up the idea of gods to help ourselves cope or to hold on to some kind of hope.

Any Christian who reads his Bible cannot say that all religions worship the same God. The consistent teaching of the Bible is that the true God is to be distinguished from the gods of all other peoples and nations. The Athanasian Creed, which we recite every year on this Sunday, very clearly states what the Bible teaches about God: *"[W]e worship one God in Trinity and Trinity in Unity, neither confusing the Persons nor dividing the substance.... [W]e are forbidden by the true Christian faith to say that there are three gods or three lords.... Whoever will be saved is compelled thus to think of the Holy Trinity"* (ELH, pp. 29-30).

The God revealed in the Bible is one God but three distinct Persons—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. He is not like any other gods. He does not operate like other gods. He is not limited in any way like other gods are. The gods created by man's imagination will naturally have limitations and imperfections. The God who made all things, including us, does not have such limitations and imperfections. He is all-powerful, all-wise, all-holy, present everywhere. He cannot be weakened or defeated. There may be men and demons who pretend to be gods, but the LORD our God is the only true God.

Now if that is really the case, then why does it seem like we Christians are not always on the winning side of things? Our churches which teach the pure Word of God are often smaller than other churches that openly compromise His Word. Our culture is becoming more and more secular, and Christianity in our country does not appear to have the impact it once did. Churches are closing. Moral standards are disintegrating. Lawlessness is increasing, and the love of many grows cold (Mat. 24:12).

We in the church may feel like we face a whole army of Goliaths as we look around us in the world. This makes us cower in fear, go silent, and take whatever measures we think are necessary to stay good with the world. At the heart of our fear and our failure to speak the truth is our lack of faith in the true God. We have doubts—what if God does not keep us safe from our enemies? What if we lose everything we value in this life? What if God is not as powerful or as loving as He says He is?

I suspect the Israelite soldiers were not very optimistic when they saw a boy with a sling make his way toward Goliath. I wouldn't be surprised if they were preparing to make a run for it instead of preparing to fight. The disciples of Jesus ended up the same way. They made a show

of their willingness to fight to the death for Him, but in the end, they ran away scared. The disciples were not ready to die.

But Jesus was. Jesus, with a crown of thorns on His head and a cross on His shoulders, looked no more prepared to do battle against sin, devil, and death than David looked prepared to fight Goliath. Jesus looked weak, pathetic, powerless to do anything against His enemies. The people mocking Jesus at the cross cursed Him in the name of their gods and eagerly anticipated “[giving] his flesh to the birds of the air and to the beasts of the field.”

On Good Friday, no one thought that Jesus was winning. No one understood that He was making satisfaction for all sin and destroying the kingdom of the devil. No one anticipated His victorious resurrection that coming Sunday. They were looking at Jesus all wrong. They were judging by outward appearances. What they needed was faith in His Word. Jesus told them that all this would happen, and He told them why. He said He would suffer, die, and rise again for the salvation of all sinners.

Like David facing Goliath, Jesus did not flinch; He faced sin, devil, and death head on. *“For the battle is the LORD’s,”* He said, *“and He will give you into our hand.”* He put His trust in His heavenly Father, and His trust was not disappointed. His Father accepted His sacrifice on behalf of all sinners and raised Him from the dead on the third day.

This means you are forgiven for all the times you cowered in fear when the enemies of the LORD ridiculed His Word and His people. You are forgiven for sitting in silence instead of speaking the truth. You are forgiven for your compromises, weaknesses, and doubts. Jesus shed His blood for all these sins. But that does not mean we should be comfortable and content with our fears, silence, and doubts.

Just like the Israelites took courage when they saw what David did to Goliath, we take courage when we see what Jesus did to our great enemies. After David killed Goliath and chopped off his head, the Philistine army fled, and the Israelites pursued them all the way to their city gates. We wield a different kind of weapon and wear a different kind of armor. By faith in our conquering Lord Jesus, we are clothed in His truth, righteousness, peace, and salvation, and we carry with us His powerful Word.

This is how the LORD conquers. This is how the LORD saves. **“The LORD Saves Not with Sword and Spear.”** He saved you by offering up His holy body and blood in your place and rising from the dead in victory. He brings this salvation to you through His Word and Sacraments. These means of grace may look like nothing to the world. Your enemies may laugh at you and ridicule you and call you out in the name of their gods for believing what you believe. But they will not prevail. Jesus is here with His powerful gifts of grace to strengthen and keep you in the saving faith, and to prepare you to face your terrible enemies in the power of His name.

In the end, every one of the world’s Goliaths will have fallen on their faces in defeat, and every little David, preserved in the faith by the Word of the LORD, will have the victory.

*Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost; as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, forevermore. Amen.*

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