

SUNDAY, JUNE 20, 2021
4TH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST
NATIONAL INDIGENOUS PEOPLES SUNDAY

Call to Worship

Leader: The psalmist writes: I will give thanks to you, God, with my whole heart.

People: I will proclaim to all your marvelous deeds.

Leader: I will be glad and rejoice in you;

People: and sing praise to your name, O most High.

Prayer of Adoration

Almighty God, sustainer of life, we come before you to refresh our souls. May this be a time for us to bask in your glory and embrace your assurances. O God, giver and mover of life, we come to energize ourselves for action in your world, to replace feelings of inadequacy and fear with the strength that only you can give us, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Hymn 490 God of grace and God of glory

Prayer of Confession

Merciful God, source of hope and deliverance, we confess that we often fail in our service. You have called us to follow Jesus, but we look out for our own interests first. You call us to love our neighbours, but we see neighbour differently than you. You call us to do justice and care for the vulnerable, but we prefer to stand back and hope others do that work. Forgive us and open our hearts and minds to others, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Assurance of Pardon

L: Friends, hear the good news! God was in Christ, reconciling the world to God's Self.

P: God no longer holds our misdeeds against us.

L: Friends, believe the good news!

P: In Jesus Christ, we are forgiven.

Hymn 441 Can a little child like me

Mission Capsule - National Indigenous Peoples Day

June 21 is **National Indigenous Peoples Day**. This is a day for all Canadians to recognize and celebrate the unique heritage, diverse cultures and outstanding contributions of First Nations, Inuit and Metis peoples. The Presbyterian Church in Canada acknowledges the responsibility that our church, governments and all Canadian's have to continue working for healing and

justice with Indigenous people. Presbyterians Sharing supports nine ministries that operate in and with Indigenous communities in Canada. These ministries meet physical and spiritual needs by providing meals, counselling, temporary housing and employment assistance. They also strive to heal hearts through art and music therapy, worship services that incorporate Indigenous beliefs, and more.

Readings

1 Samuel 17: 1, 4-11, 16-19, 23-24, 32-49 David and Goliath

Psalms 9:9-20 I will tell of God's marvelous deeds.

2 Corinthians 6: 1-13 Now is the acceptable time, the day of salvation.

Mark 4: 35-41 Jesus stills a storm.

Hymn 744 Will your anchor hold

SERMON: DAVID AND GOLIATH!

The story of David and Goliath is probably one of the most recognized stories in the entire Bible. It is known by children and adults, and has an air of excitement about it since it pits a giant against a small person.

As the story opens, the lines are drawn for a military battle between the Philistines and the Israelites. Team Israel is a small and ragged group led by King Saul. They are gathered upon a hill top. From that position the Israelites look across a short valley to another hill top where the Philistines are camped.

As the Israelites look across the valley, they see a giant of a man whose name is Goliath. He stood some ten feet tall and when he put his full armor on, he not only looked like a tank but also weighed like one. He had to defend his title against all comers. There were mangled remains of the runners-up all over the country side. When he tried to think something out, it was like struggling through a hip-deep bog. When he tried to explain something, it was like pushing a truck uphill.

Goliath was a force to be reckoned with, and the Israelites knew that. They had never before seen such a person, and as he stood across from them with a spear in his hand that was as long as a flag pole, Saul and the Israelites **“were terrified and lost all hope.”**

David, the youngest son of Jesse, was back in Bethlehem tending the sheep. Once in a while he would take rations down to the battle ground, but return to his pastoral duties. One day Jesse sent him down with rations for the troops which included a number of his older brothers. When he arrives he finds they are trying to keep their spirits up, but they are gripped by fear, fear of that giant Goliath.

David mingles among the troops and he hears some of them speaking about who might end up trying to kill the giant. They all agree that whoever takes this on will receive great rewards from King Saul, maybe even the hand of his daughter. David, while speaking with some of the men, is overheard by his brother Eliab. Eliab rushes over and gives David a dressing down for being there, and tells him to get back to looking after the sheep.

Saul, the King, hears about all of this and summons David. When David comes before Saul, he encourages Saul not to give up hope and says that he will fight this giant. Saul insists David is much too young and inexperienced. When Saul realizes that he is not going to change David's mind, he tries to fit David with heavy armor. David can hardly move with all this weight and so he tosses it aside. All this time David hears the insults that come from Goliath's mouth. Indeed for almost forty days this battle has been about words, words ridiculing and belittling the Israelites.

David takes his shepherd's staff, picks up five smooth stones, puts them in the pocket of his shepherd's bag, and with his sling he moves in the direction of Goliath. When Goliath sees David coming his way, he mocks him, saying:

“Am I a dog that you come after me with a stick?”

David does not reply with insults, but with the name of God. **“You come to me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come to you in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel.”**

So while Goliath inflates himself with insulting words, David simply speaks of God. This is the main lesson that the people of Israel draw from this story. They are God's people, claimed in God's promise to Abraham and Sarah, marked in God's covenant, released from slavery in Egypt, and led out of chaos by God's Torah (law) instruction. God is bound to them, and David knows this. Now before the two opponents meet, David has a short meditation on judgement, and within minutes he takes a stone from his pocket, puts it in his sling, and after whirling the sling around lets the stone fly toward Goliath. The stone hits Goliath on the forehead and he falls to the ground. David then picks up Goliath's sword and with difficulty, because of its weight, swings it around as the Philistines flee the area.

And so David versus Goliath, Bethlehem versus Rome, Indigenous peoples versus the colonists, Martin Luther King Jr versus the Klu Klux Klan, the marginalized people versus the power brokers, the heavily armored ones who control and abuse.

How does the little guy win? How did David pull this off? It was not by relying on insults or simply words, and certainly not by armor and weapons. David uses his wits, agility, and God's blessing. While Goliath is good at flinging insults, he's not so good at seeing his own weakness or his own faults.

David has already told King Saul that as a shepherd he has had to defend the sheep against wild animals, and, therefore, he can defend Israel against this giant Goliath. So what is it that we might learn from this story?

We might possibly learn about the importance of courage. It is often the case that courage is understood as something we already possess which comes to the fore when tough times arrive. Courage, however, is closer to what you earn when you've been through the tough times, and you find they weren't so tough after all.

Rev. Fred Shuttlesworth, a Baptist minister in Birmingham, Alabama, in the 1950's and 60's fought hard for racial equality. He, along with Martin Luther King and Ralph Abernathy, brought forth the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. One night in the 1950's Shuttlesworth's home was bombed by the Klu Klux Klan. When a policeman hauled Shuttlesworth from the burning house he said: **"Reverend, I know these people. They are vicious. If I were you, I'd get out of town."**

Fred Shuttlesworth quickly replied: **"Well, officer, you're not me, so go back and tell your Klan brothers that if the Lord saved me from this I'm here for the duration. The light is just beginning."**

It was not many months later that Fred Shuttlesworth took his daughter for enrollment in an all white school. He was met by white men with screams, brass knuckles, clubs and chains. They beat him and smashed all the windows in his car. He was taken to hospital for his injuries. Later, on returning home, and on his first Sunday in the pulpit, he said: **"I have only forgiveness for those who attacked me."**

We live in a brutal world. This is a world where hate, anger and insults are still hurled by people who consider themselves giants. But what can they do to us if the God of David is with us?

The Apostle Paul asks, **"What can separate us from the love of God...."**

What might we accomplish if we are faithful, persistent, agile, resourceful and clear about what God wants this world to become? By God's grace, let us get on with it!

Prayers of the People

O God, as we consider the world around us, we are most grateful that you are near, and that your presence will not fail us, no matter the challenges we face. Help us this day to trust that you will not give up on situations which we find overwhelming.

O God, hear our prayers for all who are suffering from any kind of illness, who are coping with waiting for medical services, who are recovering from surgery, for all who are burdened by the loss of a loved one, by the loss of a job, or some other significant loss.

On this Father's Day weekend, we pray for all fathers and for the worthy memory of good fathers who worked hard to keep home and family together. Lord, in our families, let us seek peaceful accord in decision-making, respect in discipline, and honor, regardless of our differences. May our love for you be mirrored in our affection for one another, through Jesus Christ.

Hear our prayer for the work of our church and government in seeking truth and reconciliation with Canada's Indigenous peoples. May your Spirit encourage this work. Bless all congregations in their faithful work in the communities they serve. Open our eyes to new possibilities to serve together, as we now pray together saying... Our Father...

Hymn 590 We have this ministry

Commissioning/Benediction.

O God, as we go from here, sent by your Word to be people of faith and friendship, go with us, that we might find you in all our sisters and brothers, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.