

1 April 2004
Lent 5 Midweek

St. Athanasius Lutheran Church
Vienna, VA

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Shadows of our Saviour
“David – Against All Odds”

Text: 1 Samuel 17; John 10:11-18

No one in their right mind would have bet on David in this battle. The oddsmakers in Las Vegas probably wouldn't have even posted a betting line on this one – the outcome was a given. . . . Goliath was a soldier, hardened and tested in battle. David was a shepherd, who played a harp. Goliath was over nine feet tall. David was still a boy. Goliath wore armor to protect himself. David wore no protection. Goliath had the weapons of war – sword, spear, and javelin. David had a sling. Goliath had hatred and anger in his heart, venom to drive him in this fight. David had only faith. . . . It was a mismatch.

But you all know how it turned out!

David is the final “Shadow of our Saviour” we will consider this Lent. There are more. The Old Testament is full of pictures and shadows of our Saviour, giving hope to God's people as they looked forward to their Messiah. In fact, when you read the Old Testament with that in mind, trying to find Christ – you find Him all over the place! And so here too, in David. And how this shadow shows us our Saviour can best be summed up in David's own words – the words he spoke to Goliath just before their clash: ***“All this assembly [will] 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.”***

It is not by sword or spear that the Lord saves. Indeed it is not. For as we heard, God delivered the people of Israel and defeated the Philistines by using a small stone, **a most unlikely weapon**. . . . In the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus told His disciples to put away their swords – those were not the weapons of God. God instead delivered His people by using a cross, **a most unlikely weapon**. . . . And still for us today, the message is the same. Our battle is not with swords, or by force or coercion. God instead delivers us by using words, by using water, by using bread and wine – **most unlikely weapons**. And while those weapons look weak, they are in reality all very powerful. Very powerful for the battle that we are in.

For make no mistake about it, we are in a battle. Satan is coming out everyday to face us, to challenge us, to threaten us. And He wants to destroy us. And, in fact, he is much more powerful, much more menacing, and much more dangerous than Goliath . . . though perhaps it may not seem so, since we don't have a nine foot giant standing before us and threatening us with angry, fearful words! But Satan is more dangerous because he is unseen – and so his attacks are often surprises, after he lulls us into a false sense of security. He is more menacing because his weapon, sin, is not only around us but also *within* us. And he is more powerful because his might is not only in physical strength, but in his crafty and subtle and alluring words and ways. . . . With Goliath, at least **you knew!** You saw him! You couldn't miss him! But not so Satan and sin, so often silent and unspoken and unrecognized, and sometimes even *welcomed* by us!

But if we could see through the eyes of God; if we could see the reality of the spiritual battle that is raging all around us . . . I think it might indeed look like this mismatch.

But we know how this battle turned out as well!

Because a single warrior stepped up and fought for us as well! He also had no spear, no sword, and no armor. He stepped into the battle unarmed, was nailed to the cross, and with His hands and feet fastened in weakness, fought this battle for us. And as we will see and remember this coming week, He won! . . . Now, as I said before, David winning the battle and Jesus winning that battle seemed against all the odds. But they knew something that we all too often forget: that ***“it is not by sword or spear that the Lord saves; for the battle is the Lord's.”*** No matter how weak our weapons may look, no matter how the battle may seem to be going, no matter what our minds may try to convince us of otherwise, no matter what the wisdom of this world may say, no matter what! The battle is not ours – it is the Lord's!

And the Holy Gospel we heard gives us a beautiful picture of that – although you may not have ever thought of it this way before – in Jesus as the Good Shepherd. (Which, by the way, is another parallel between David and Jesus, for David also was a shepherd.) For in John, we heard those comforting words, ***“I am the Good Shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me . . . and I lay down my life for the sheep.”*** Now that doesn't sound like a battle picture until you consider the opposite – imagine the sheep trying to fight! They can't! They don't have anything to fight with! Sheep don't have sharp teeth, they don't have sharp claws, they can't run fast – in fact, they're pretty easy targets! . . . And yet, dear fellow sheep – how often do we do that very thing? How often do we, foolishly, try to fight against Satan ourselves? Try to do things on our own? Try to overcome with our own power and ingenuity and strength. . . . But when we do, we will lose. It is a mismatch.

But today we see in David the “Shadow of our Saviour” who has come to fight for us. Who defeated sin and Satan for us on the cross and in His resurrection, and is still here fighting for us today. Out in front of us, defending us, and watching over us. For **“the battle is the Lord’s”** and in Him, we do know the outcome!

And this coming week we will follow that battle again, as we follow our Saviour to the cross. Yet we will not merely watch – we will also be given His weapons, and use them in the fight. We will hear His Word, we will receive His forgiveness, we will remember our Baptism, we will eat and drink the body and blood of our Saviour. And with all of those weapons, **Satan is struck down yet again!** Struck down not by us, but by our Saviour and His weapons. For against them, though they are most unlikely weapons, Satan cannot stand. Against them he must fall, just like big ol’ Goliath!

And so as we come to the end of this Lenten season and enter into Holy Week, as you once again journey to the cross, think back to all the “Shadows of our Saviour” we have considered: Isaac, Joseph, Gideon, Samson, and David. Think back, think about them and their lives, and then consider your own life. And know that just as God delivered them, so He will deliver you. . . . That deliverance may come in many ways, some perhaps quite unexpected. It may even come through death. But it will come. You will not be defeated. You cannot be defeated! **“For the battle is the Lord’s,”** and He has already won!

In the Name of the Father, and of the (+) Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

The Word of God, From Days of Old
Tune: Rockingham Old (HS #853)

5. David

The Word of God from days of old
The story of our Saviour told;
That in our sin and misery
Our hope and life our faith might see.

For Judah’s lion wins the strife
And reigns o’er death to give us life.

Tis' He whom David did portray
When he did strong Goliath slay.

Though weak and poor the cross doth look,
Like five smooth stones a shepherd took;
The pow'r of God gave victory
And vanquished is our enemy.

Fulfilled is all that David told
In true prophetic song of old;
That triumph over death and sin,
Our Saviour, Christ, for us would win.

To Thee, eternal Three in One,
Let homage meet by all be done
Whom by the cross Thou dost restore,
Preserve, and govern evermore.