

Rappahannock Christian Church – 2/6/11

Dr. Kenneth Wilbur

Communion Meditation

I received inspiration for what I'm going to say from the prayer of one of our Elders last week. He prayed that this observance at the Lord's Table would be a moment of recommitment and rededication for us. You know, at the beginning of the year we make New Year's resolutions; well, this is like a "New Week's resolution." Here we resolve that during the week to come our faith in Jesus Christ is going to be the foundation of who we are and what we do.

So as we take the Bread and the Cup today, and we think about the gift of Jesus Christ and what He has done for us, the very least we can do is to rededicate ourselves to Him. Let me read the instruction from the Apostle Paul recorded in 1 Corinthians.

1 Corinthians 11:23-26 – The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, “This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me.” In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.” For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

Big, Hairy, Ugly

This morning's Scripture is an excerpt from a very well known story. It is one I'm sure every one of you knows from your Sunday School days. It's the story of David and Goliath. I won't be reading all of it here, but here's the really crucial portion from:

1 Samuel 17:45-51- 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. This day the LORD will deliver you into my hands, and I'll strike you down and cut off your head. This very day I will give the carcasses of the Philistine army to the birds and the wild animals, and the whole world will know that there is a God in Israel. 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.”

As the Philistine moved closer to attack him, David ran quickly toward the battle line to meet him. 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.

So David triumphed over the Philistine with a sling and a stone; without a sword in his hand he struck down the Philistine and killed him.

David ran and stood over him. He took hold of the Philistine's sword and drew it from the sheath. After he killed him, he cut off his head with the sword.

So the sermon title, Big, Hairy, Ugly, could refer to a Super Bowl linebacker. -- But no! This is not a Big, Hairy, Ugly linebacker. I wonder too, is this evening's Super Bowl contest going to be a David vs. Goliath contest? -- No, I doubt it. The teams are pretty well matched, aren't they?

But you see this story is so well known that "David vs. Goliath" has even become a common idiom in our language!

In this story, David is just a boy. He's not old enough to be in the army, but he convinces his dad to let him go to take food to his brothers. He is excited to see the battle. What teenager wouldn't be? While he is there he sees this great giant taunting his people. No one wants to go out to face the giant, but David, who is only small, volunteers to go and fight.

Do you remember what Saul does? Saul tries to give him some protection. He gives him a set of heavy armor. But it's way too cumbersome for David. He takes it off. He goes forth with God as his protection, and he is able to kill the giant.

I want us to move very quickly to go beyond this story as simply an exciting tale...

First I need to explain something. It's important to understand why this story is recorded in the Bible. Yes, it's exciting. Yes, it gets our attention, but that's not all. Years and years ago, in the time when this story took place, everyone knew that David was not King Saul's son. David usurped Saul's throne and established a new dynastic line. Part of why this story is told is because it "legitimizes" David (and his descendants) as kings in Israel. The story shows that David was a courageous man of faith and a strong and resourceful warrior. He was worthy to become king! He was the one God wanted to be the shepherd of His people.

The story also tells us that Goliath taunted the armies of Israel and defied God. But the God of Israel is the Living God! The creator of heaven and earth! He cannot be defied. He cannot be mocked. God, the Holy God, is the one who raises up and casts down. His hand controls the fate of individuals and nations. He puts kings on their thrones. He guides, he opens or closes doors, he wins or loses battles for His people.

The story makes these statements about God, but it also makes statements about those who TRUST in God. If YOU are faithful and loyal to God, He will win YOUR battles, just like He did for David.

I suppose that, in telling the story, the writer is saying:

1. To the kings who rule in Israel, "O King, where is your faith? Who do you think you are? Who keeps you on your throne? How do you rule? Is it in your own strength?" Well, it shouldn't be! You should rule in the strength of the Lord! Power is not in horses or chariots or in the number of fighting men you can muster. Power and success come from following the will of God!"
2. To the ordinary Israelites, "O Israelite, when you are faced with challenges, obstacles, tragedy, discouragement -where is your faith? In whom do you trust? When all around are calling on you to forsake God, don't do it! Put your trust in the Lord, and you will be rewarded, just the way that David trusted in the Lord and won a mighty victory over Goliath!"

Let's bring the story up to our own day. What does this story say to us as Christians?

In the Old Testament age, God promised His people wealth and prosperity, health and long life if they would faithfully serve Him. But we are in the New Covenant era. We live on the other side of the cross. Jesus says that His Kingdom is not a political state. "My Kingdom," He says, "is not of this world." The Kingdom of God is not a political state anymore. Life in the Kingdom of God is not played out on a piece of turf in the Middle East, as it was in the days of David. Moreover, blessings in Jesus' Kingdom are not measured in health, wealth, long life, or victory in battle. Blessings are spiritual, as the Kingdom of God is spiritual.

Paul reiterates this. “We wrestle not against flesh and blood,” he says, “but against the spiritual powers of the earth.” (Ephesians 6:12)

Nevertheless, our battles DO parallel the story of David. Goliath was a big, strong, hairy, terrifying enemy. He can represent ANY hard, frightening, seemingly overwhelming event or circumstance. What such challenges do you face today?

Maybe we can have the church itself in mind when we ask this question. The Church faces a daunting task in this day and age. We are supposed to be calling for faith in an age of disenchantment, disillusionment and skepticism and doubt. This is a very difficult assignment! HOW do we represent faith and hope in our world? How will we demonstrate hospitality, community and compassion in our community?

We can also apply the story of David and Goliath to ourselves as individual believers. How can we gain victory over the giants of our doubt, fear, shame, weakness? These are the Big, Hairy, Ugly things that we all face! Perhaps we have physical giants of illness and pain, addictions or financial difficulties. These things that seem too big for us are our Goliaths.

But God promises us victory in these battles. God does not promise us tons of money or perfect health. God says He will give us the spiritual resources to live above them, to give thanks to God for every new day and to help others see and experience the Way of Christ.

Listen to this. The quote is anonymous, but it expresses what I am trying to say: "It is never a question with any of us of faith or no faith; the question always is, 'In what or in whom do we put our faith?'"

Where is our faith? Is it in armor that we can put on, that we can control? Do we trust in our own size, strength, wealth, beauty? In what, or in whom, do we put our faith?

I hope that, like David, is it in the Living God!

Benediction

Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, for ever and ever. Amen. – Ephesians 3:20-21