

“And a child shall lead them” 1 Samuel 17:40-49

In Isaiah 11:6 we have a beautiful picture of what life will be like when the kingdom of God is fully established on earth. There we have a picture of a wolf and a lamb laying together, a lion and a calf together, and a child leading all of them... safely.

“And a child will lead them.” We have so much to learn from our children. Yes, they can get things wrong at times, but sometimes they get things very right. For instance, listen to some of the comments made by children to their parents:

When a 5 year old was asked by his mother how his day was, he replied, “It was awesome!” When asked what made it so awesome he said, “Because I wanted it to be.”

A 3 year old said to her mother, “It’s okay if she’s not kind to me. I can show her how.”

A 7 year old, when asked by her mom how her new outfit looked, responded, “Mom, it doesn’t matter how it looks. How does it make you feel? That is what matters.”

Finally, a four year old said this, “you might be scared, but sometimes being scared is worth it.”

That is some pretty good wisdom from some pretty young minds.

That last saying might have been said by one of the best-known characters of the Old Testament; David. “You might be scared, but sometimes being scared is worth it.”

Most people have heard the story of the shepherd boy who took on the giant and won with just a sling and a stone. This morning we are going to look at that story once again and see how this young man sets a good example not only for his day, but for us as well. In particular, we will see that a child can be a leader.

We turn today to 1 Samuel 17:40-49. The whole chapter is needed to tell the full story of what happened that day, but these verses give us the heart of the story. They tell us of the battle between David and Goliath.

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The Philistines were a constant threat to the Israelites, and there were many battles recorded in scripture between Israel and these people. In this battle they brought a great champion named Goliath who threw out this challenge, “I will fight any of your soldiers one on one. The winner wins for the whole army. Beat me and our whole army surrenders to you. Lose, however, and your whole army must surrender to us.”

There was no one in the Israelite army who wanted to take on Goliath and risk losing for the whole nation. The king, whose name was Saul, was a head taller than all the other soldiers there, but even he was not ready to take on the giant.

So what did the adults do?

It tells us that for forty days the armies lined up and faced each other and shouted threats to each other, but did nothing. Then Goliath would show up, utter his challenge and threats and the Israelite army would cower.

So the picture here is of the adults facing each other and making lots of noise but doing nothing.

Then along comes David. David has three older brothers in the army and he was sent by his father to see how they were doing. David arrives and sees the armies line up as if they will fight. David is described as a boy, and he is likely in his teens. He is excited about the possibility of seeing the armies fight.

But they do not fight. They line up, make a lot of noise, and then Goliath shows up. No one will respond to the challenge of the giant. David watches as the adults do nothing.

So here is the first lesson: while the adults did nothing but talk, David took action.

Adults can talk a problem to death and still do nothing. They have to figure out all the angles and possibilities before they launch into a project. Watch how government tackles a problem – years of studies and still no action.

Teens, on the other hand, have a tendency to start doing things before they have thought out the consequences. True, their brains are still developing and not all their actions are good actions, and they do not always think through all the consequences of what they do. But they are not afraid to do something...

Val Chouinard lost her mother to cancer. Adults say, "Isn't that a terrible thing. Cancer is so bad!" But what did Val's granddaughters do? They started a fundraiser to raise money for cancer research. The girls were young, but they realized talking about cancer does nothing. They did something. Good on them.

One day Lise and I walked with our son on the waterfront, chatting away and enjoying the beautiful view. Suddenly our son, who is a grown up, but young, disappeared. We wondered where he went. He had seen a young man about his age asking for money, so he went back to talk to the boy, and do what he could to help. Sadly the adults had barely seen the young man.

Yesterday some of the youth showed up to help us move a lady in the community who needed our help. They were willing to do something when there was a need – not just talk about helping.

David saw the adults do nothing, so he offers to fight the giant. He would not stand around and listen to the giant taunt the armies of God. He would do something.

Children and youth in the church do not want to simply sit and listen to the adults talk. They want to be involved. They want to do something. This morning we have a wonderful worship team of young ladies who are not content to sit back and do nothing. They want to help.

Thank you! In many churches the teens are the ones bringing new people to Jesus while the adults simply talk about doing that. They bring their friends to youth group, to church services, to camp, to Jesus! Some of the bravest people in the church are the youth and children, ready to stand up for Jesus!

And a child will lead them...

The second thing we can learn from David is to be who God made you to be. Do not let someone else decide who you are. You may be different from everyone else, but that is okay. You are different for a reason. God has a plan for your life just as you are.

When David volunteered to fight the giant, the king offered him his armour. This armour would have protected him from head to toe. The soldiers wore armour into battle so that they could be protected from the arrows and blows of the enemy.

David tried on the king's armour, which did not fit him. Also, he was used to fighting, but without armour. He had fought a bear and a lion while protecting the sheep, and he wore no armour. He was used to fighting with a sling and a staff, so guess what he chose to take into battle? A sling and his staff. David knew that he was a shepherd boy, and he had good skills as a shepherd boy. He was not one of the king's soldiers – yet. He would face the giant as David the shepherd, not pretending to be something he was not.

It is true that teenagers and children are still discovering who they are, what they are good at and what things they really enjoy. But there are things they do enjoy, and are good at. Go ahead and use these things for God. You like to sing? Sing for God. You are good at making things? Find things you can make to help others? You enjoy cooking? Help out at home.

Maybe many of your friends do not attend church – yet – but you do not have to be like them. Be a part of the church. Put Jesus first in your life. Let your faith in Jesus be the most important thing to shape who you are and what you do. Don't worry if you do not always fit in, that you are not like everyone else. David was nothing like his brothers but he was the one who was used by God to bring victory. David was okay being David.

And a child will lead them....

Most important is the fact that David put God first. While all the adults were looking at Goliath and saying they were not big enough to face him, David looked at Goliath and said God was far bigger!

David said to Goliath, **“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!”**

Even at a young age David knew that God was bigger than any problem he was going to face. While the adults were looking at how small they were compared to the giant, David saw how small the giant was compared to his God!

David won the battle that day not because he was a better soldier – he wasn't a soldier. It was not because he had a trick up his sleeve, the slingshot. It wasn't because he was stronger than Goliath. No, David won that day because he had faith in his God to help him. He trusted that God would be there to protect and help him. This boy was a man of faith.

It does not matter how young you are, you can trust God to help you. When you feel afraid, or lonely, or lost you can trust God to help you like David did. Children and youth, you can show the adults what it means to really trust God.

Did you know that Joan of Arc went to the king of France because she felt God told her to? She was fifteen years old when she bravely sought audience with the man who would be king of France, to tell him that he had to fight for his country and his crown. She would end up going with the soldiers to battle, a test to see if she really heard from God, and the armies won a great victory.

David was maybe 18 years old when he fought Goliath, but because he trusted God, he set the example for a whole army – the whole nation.

When our son Peter was very young he came down with a terrible fever. Lise and I bundled him up and started to drive to the hospital. On the way there Peter, weak from his fever, quietly said, "Can't we just pray?" We did and the fever broke before we got to the hospital.

And a child shall lead them.

God still desires children and young people who will put Jesus first in their lives. God desires young people who will be examples in their homes, in their schools, in their community, of people who love the Lord.

Read your Bibles every day. Pray to God every day – many times. Learn songs of praise to Jesus. Tell others about Jesus and invite them to church. Pray for and with your friends. Help them pray to invite Jesus in their lives. It is time to put away our devices and shut off social media and be people again. It is time to be true friends. It starts by being true to Jesus.

David sets a good example for us today.

He did not want to just talk about helping, he did something.

He did not try to be someone else. He was okay to be the person God made him.

He chose to trust God, to put God first, and he overcame the giant in his life.

The Apostle Paul wrote the following to a young friend of his named Timothy:

"Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith and in purity." (1 Timothy 4:12)

Children. Youth. God ahead. Show the adults what it looks like to be 100% committed to Jesus. Go ahead – be the child that leads us to Jesus....