

Don't Be Afraid

[1 Samuel 17: \(1a, 4-11, 19-23\), 32-49](#)

[Psalm 9:9-20](#)

[2 Corinthians 6:1-13](#)

[Mark 4:35-41](#)

I've mentioned this before, but some things bear repeating.

The most common phrase in all of scripture isn't "do this" or "don't do that" — the most common phrase in all of Scripture is:

"Don't be afraid!"

And today, that phrase finds its voice in each of today's readings.

"Don't be afraid!"starting with young David, who shows up to slay the giant, much to the amusement of his own King, and, much to the amusement of the giant.

This really is an action adventure story that in some ways leaps right off the pages of a comic book.

Take David getting dressed up for the battle!

That scene immediately takes me back to the day my daughter Elaine had to buy winter clothes when she went off to college in Boston some years ago.

She was born and raised in Hawaii, so you could only laugh as she pulled on a heavy coat and big rubber soled boots, and, taking a few painful steps, declared she could not move another inch!

Well, that's what's happening with David today!

Once he convinces all the doubters that he's ready to fight, out come the shoulder pads and bullet proof vests, the AK 47 and the desert boots.

And as the story tells us, the poor lad can hardly move!

So off comes the gear and he's back with slippers and shorts and nothing else, except a string and some rocks.

He doesn't belong to Saul or to the Pentagon, he belongs to God.

Don't be afraid!

Off he goes and well,, you know how the story ends.

Don't be afraid!

It continues with Paul, and what a fantastic reading that old bald headed missionary gives us today!

You know, Paul probably didn't write his letters - he most likely dictated them, with someone else taking it all down.

We know that because you can almost see him pacing the floor, arms waving, finger pointing, voice cascading:

"we have commended ourselves in every way: through great endurance, in afflictions, hardships, calamities, beatings, imprisonments, riots, labors..."

Don't be afraid!

That's the melody of the tune Paul is singing:

Don't be afraid!

Here is the once proper Pharisee who discovers that following this upside down God inevitably brings his followers to face every kind of muck and mayhem!

What kind of a God is this, who turns human wisdom on it's ear, who exalts the lowly, who humbles the Donald Trump in all of us?

Jesus tells us what kind of God this is.

The God who knows that great wisdom comes only at great cost — because God, through Jesus, pays that price, so that we too may live daily lives that are filled with ".....purity, knowledge, patience, kindness, holiness of spirit, genuine love, truthful speech, and the power of God....."

Don't be afraid!

Because we don't enter the arena of our struggles alone, but we carry with us "weapons of righteousness for the right hand and for the left; in honor and dishonor, in ill repute and good repute."

You see, the church is not simply an older version of the Rotary Club — a gathering of likeminded folks intent on doing good — but instead of chips and dips indulges in bread and wine.

We do not eat bread and wine at this gathering, we eat instead the body and blood of the Lord of all that is: he becoming us as we become him.

An old timer told me this story from his acolyte days some 80 years ago, when some of the consecrated cup spilled on the ground.

It happened right here at St. Elizabeth's.

Rather than reaching for the purificator to clean it up, the priest got down on his hands and knees — and licked it off the floor.

When the horrified youngster asked why he did that, the equally horrified priest — horrified that the boy knew so little that he had to ask the question, replied that this is not mere wine my boy, it is our Lord's blood!

And so it is.

We are not a gathering of people intent on trying to do something nice for some folks in our community, nor are morals or clean living at the top of our list.

We are the body and eyes and mouth and ears and feet and hands of Christ in this world that is dying for the kind touch of compassion, for the gentle breeze of forgiveness, for the assurance that life is not a 9 to 5 job or just a few years of good times before we die, but that we have embarked on a grand adventure that God herself began billions of years ago.

We are key players in this unfolding mystery that is the magnificent creation of God, on our way to a destiny that is beyond our present ability to even conceive

"Treated as impostors, yet we are true; as unknown, and yet are well known; as dying, and see-- we are alive; as punished, and yet not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing everything."

Don't be afraid!

So it is with the gospel lesson too.

For weeks Jesus is teaching us about seeds that are tossed everywhere and seeds that grow of their own accord and seeds that begin as small as small can be, but that contain within their smallness a destiny that gives comfort and shade to many.

He asks us again and again: "Do you understand?!"

And we say yes, of course we understand!

We get it!

Don't be afraid!

Except when we get in the boat to cross over, (as in to "cross over" from fear to faith), as Jesus falls asleep from the exhaustion of trying to teach us, that's when the storm comes up and we are deeply afraid!

We have learned up here — but we have not yet made it part of where we live — in here!

We wake him up, and after he silences wind and waves, turns that eye to you and me and asks: "Have you no faith?!"

Which brings us to the crux of the matter — for today — and for many months to come.

We live in the richest nation on earth, in one of the wealthiest states in that nation.

Yet night after night, thousands of our sisters and brothers, some as young as a few days old, some in their 90's, sleep on sidewalks and tents and in over crowded bed bug infested shelters and the question that raises it's ugly head is what is the

Body of Christ going to do about this assault on human dignity — which is also an assault on God?

The problem is huge, where can we begin?

We can begin with this:

Don't be afraid!

Don't be afraid as we gather ourselves together to talk with friends living on the streets.

Don't be afraid as we organize these friends, with us tagging along, to move their tents to the front lawn of City Hall.

Don't be afraid as we work to create a tent city under the very noses of the politicians who seem to have more than enough time to bicker, but not the good sense to start building homes.

Don't be afraid to say to all who will listen that we not only have rights to free speech and free religion, we also have the right to decent, safe and sanitary housing.

Don't be afraid!

We can no more sit idly by in the face of this catastrophe than Christians in past years could sit idly by during the nuclear arms race or during the struggle for civil rights.

Housing for every person who wishes it is today's civil rights imperative.

Don't be afraid!

Come, let us cross over from fear to faith!

Let us join with our sister churches as we move headlong into confronting the moral imperative of our day — and don't be afraid!

+amen

