

5<sup>th</sup> Sunday  
after  
Pentecost  
24 June 2018

**The Collect: Year (cycle): B Proper 7**

Celebrant: The Lord be with you.

*People: And also with you.*

Celebrant: Let us pray.

[May we read in Silence?]

**O** <sup>a</sup> Lord, <sup>b</sup> *make us* have perpetual love and reverence for your holy Name, <sup>c</sup> for you never fail to help and govern those whom you have set upon the sure foundation of your lovingkindness; <sup>d</sup> through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

<sup>1</sup> **N.B.** The Collect is a general prayer, applicable to the whole of God's household, the Church, representing the spiritual necessities of all, and therefore offered by all in common. The structure of this collect: <sup>a</sup> invocation, <sup>b</sup> the actual petition, which constitutes the body of the prayer . . . continued on page 11

# Readings

Year B Proper 7  
24 June 2018

## Track 1

1 Samuel 17: (1a, 4-11, 19-23), 32-49	Sacred Violence	2
or 1 Samuel 17:57-18:5, 10-16		6
Psalms 9:9-20	Nature and character of God revealed <sup>A</sup>	7
or Psalm 133	Together in unity	8
2 Corinthians 6:1-13	Reconciliation	9
Mark 4:35-41	Wind and sea calmed	10

## Track 2 [See insert, Track 2 Readings]

Job 38:1-11 Psalm 107:1-3, 23-32  
2 Corinthians 6:1-13 Mark 4:35-41

## Track 1

**OLD TESTAMENT:** 1 Samuel 17: (1a, 4-11, 19-23), 32-49 or 1 Samuel 17:57-18:5, 10-16

<sup>2</sup> INTRODUCTION: The Septuagint [*name given to the Greek translation of the Jewish Scriptures; has its origin in Alexandria, Egypt and was translated between 300-200 BC*] itself does not contain verses 12-31, 41, 48b, part of 51, and 55-58. That shorter version is probably more original, although the omission of 41, 48b and part of 51 may be accidental.

This chapter seems to be unaware that David had been anointed by Samuel and presents David as a mere boy who could not function as a soldier. In contrast, in 16:18 and 21, he is called a man of war and was Saul's weapon-carrier. Later, in 2 Samuel 21:19, we are told that Elhanan killed Goliath, perhaps indicating that this feat of a minor figure from Bethlehem was later ascribed to David (see also 1 Chronicles 20:5).  
- continued on pg. 12

## 1 Samuel 17: 1a

**N**ow the Philistines gathered their armies for battle; they were gathered at Sō'-cōh, which belongs to Judah, and encamped between Socoh and Ā-zē'-käh, in Ē'-phēs-dām'-mīm.

<sup>4</sup>And there came out from the camp of the Philistines a champion named Goliath, of Gāth, whose height was six cubits and a span [*nearly ten feet in modern measurement* <sup>a</sup>]. <sup>5</sup>He had a helmet of bronze on his head, and he was armoured with a coat of mail; the weight of the coat was five thousand shekels of bronze. <sup>6</sup>He had greaves of bronze on his legs and a javelin of bronze slung between his shoulders. <sup>7</sup>The shaft of his spear was like a weaver's beam, and his spear's head weighed six hundred shekels of iron; and his shield-bearer went before him.

<sup>8</sup>He stood and shouted to the ranks of Israel, 'Why have you come out to draw up for battle? Am I not a Philistine, and are you not servants of Saul? Choose a man for yourselves, and let him come down to me. <sup>9</sup>If he is able to fight with me and kill me, then we will be your servants; but if I prevail against him and kill him, then you shall be our servants and serve us.' <sup>10</sup>And the Philistine said, 'Today I defy the ranks of Israel! Give me a man, that we may fight together.'

<sup>11</sup>When Saul and all Israel heard these words of the Philistine, they were dismayed and greatly afraid.

<sup>19</sup>Now Saul, and they, and all the men of Israel, were in the valley of Elah, fighting with the Philistines. <sup>20</sup>David rose early in the morning, left someone in charge of the sheep, took the provisions, and went as Jesse had commanded him. He came to the encampment as the army was going forth to the battle line, shouting the war cry. <sup>21</sup>Israel and the Philistines drew up for battle, army against army.

<sup>22</sup>David left the things in charge of the keeper of the baggage, ran to the ranks, and went and greeted his brothers. <sup>23</sup>As he talked with them, the champion, the Philistine of Gath, Goliath by name, came up out of the ranks of the Philistines, and spoke the same words as before. And David heard him.]

<sup>32</sup>David said to Saul, 'Let no one's heart fail because of him; your servant will go and fight with this Philistine.' <sup>33</sup>Saul said to David, 'You are not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him; for you are just a boy, and he has been a warrior from his youth.'

<sup>34</sup>But David said to Saul, ‘Your servant used to keep sheep for his father; and whenever a lion or a bear came, and took a lamb from the flock, <sup>35</sup>I went after it and struck it down, rescuing the lamb from its mouth; and if it turned against me, I would catch it by the jaw, strike it down, and kill it. <sup>36</sup>Your servant has killed both lions and bears; and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be like one of them, since he has defied the armies of the living God.’ <sup>37</sup>David said, ‘The Lord, who saved me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear, will save me from the hand of this Philistine.’ So Saul said to David, ‘Go, and may the Lord be with you!’

<sup>38</sup>Saul clothed David with his armour; he put a bronze helmet on his head and clothed him with a coat of mail. <sup>39</sup>David strapped Saul’s sword over the armour, and he tried in vain to walk, for he was not used to them.

Then David said to Saul, ‘I cannot walk with these; for I am not used to them.’ So David removed them. <sup>40</sup>Then he took his staff in his hand, and chose five smooth stones from the wadi, and put them in his shepherd’s bag, in the pouch; his sling was in his hand, and he drew near to the Philistine.

<sup>41</sup>The Philistine came on and drew near to David, with his shield-bearer in front of him. <sup>42</sup>When the Philistine looked and saw David, he disdained him, for he was only a youth, ruddy and handsome in appearance. <sup>43</sup>The Philistine said to David, ‘Am I a dog, that you come to me with sticks?’ And the Philistine cursed David by his gods.

<sup>44</sup>The Philistine said to David, ‘Come to me, and I will give your flesh to the birds of the air and to the wild animals of the field.’ <sup>45</sup>But David said to the Philistine, ‘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, whom you have defied. <sup>46</sup>*This very day the Lord will deliver you into my hand, and I will strike you down **and cut off your head***; and I will give the dead bodies of the Philistine army this very day to the birds of the air and to the wild animals of the earth, so that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel, <sup>47</sup>and that all this assembly may know that the Lord does not save by sword and

spear; for the battle is the Lord's and he will give you into our hand.'

<sup>48</sup>When the Philistine drew nearer to meet David, David ran quickly towards the battle line to meet the Philistine. <sup>49</sup>David put his hand in his bag, took out a stone, slung it, and struck the Philistine on his forehead; the stone sank into his forehead, and he fell face down on the ground.

<sup>50</sup>So David prevailed over the Philistine with a sling and a stone, striking down the Philistine and killing him; there was no sword in David's hand. <sup>51</sup>*Then David ran and stood over the Philistine; he grasped his sword, drew it out of its sheath, and killed him; then he cut off his head with it.* When the Philistines saw that their champion was dead, they fled. <sup>52</sup>The troops of Israel and Judah rose up with a shout and pursued the Philistines as far as Gath and the gates of Ekron, so that the wounded Philistines fell on the way from Shaaraim as far as Gath and Ekron. <sup>53</sup>The Israelites came back from chasing the Philistines, and they plundered their camp. <sup>54</sup>*David took the head of the Philistine and brought it to Jerusalem; but he put his armor in his tent.*

<http://bible.oremus.org>

## The Word of the Lord *Thanks be to God*

**or** 1 Samuel 57-18:1-5, 10-16

**57-58**

On David's return from killing the Philistine, Abner took him and brought him before Saul, with the head of the Philistine in his hand. <sup>58</sup>Saul said to him, 'Whose son are you, young man?' And David answered, 'I am the son of your servant Jesse the Bethlehemite.'

**18: 1-5**

When David had finished speaking to Saul, the soul of Jonathan was bound to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul. <sup>2</sup>Saul took him that day and would not let him return to his father's house. <sup>3</sup>Then Jonathan made a covenant with David,

because he loved him as his own soul. <sup>4</sup>Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that he was wearing, and gave it to David, and his armour, and even his sword and his bow and his belt. <sup>5</sup>David went out and was successful wherever Saul sent him; as a result, Saul set him over the army. And all the people, even the servants of Saul, approved.

**10-16** The next day an evil spirit from God rushed upon Saul, and he raved within his house, while David was playing the lyre, as he did day by day. Saul had his spear in his hand; <sup>11</sup>and Saul threw the spear, for he thought, ‘I will pin David to the wall.’ But David eluded him twice.

<sup>12</sup>Saul was afraid of David, because the Lord was with him but had departed from Saul. <sup>13</sup>So Saul removed him from his presence, and made him a commander of a thousand; and David marched out and came in, leading the army. <sup>14</sup>David had success in all his undertakings; for the Lord was with him. <sup>15</sup>When Saul saw that he had great success, he stood in awe of him. <sup>16</sup>But all Israel and Judah loved David; for it was he who marched out and came in leading them.

The Word of the Lord  
*Thanks be to God*

### *Track 1*

**THE RESPONSE:** Psalm 9:9-20     *Confitebor tibi*  
or Psalm 133 [Alternate: Psalm 107:1-3, 23-32]

INTRODUCTION: *Learning to Read the Psalms* asks two questions of the reader: 1) Who is the speaker and to whom is the psalm addressed? 2) Is this psalm a response of the author to a specific situation, i.e., what are the emotions of the psalm? 3) And thirdly, a suggestion: Read the psalm aloud, as if you were the psalmist laying bare his heart.  
<http://www.js.emory.edu/BLUMENTHAL/Teaching%20Psalms.htm>

PSALM 9:1-8

1 I will give thanks to you, O LORD, with my whole heart; \*  
I will tell of all your marvelous works.

- 2 I will be glad and rejoice in you; \*  
I will sing to your Name, O Most High.
- 3 When my enemies are driven back, \*  
they will stumble and perish at your presence.
- 4 For you have maintained my right and my cause; \*  
you sit upon your throne judging right.
- 5 You have rebuked the ungodly and destroyed the wicked; \*  
you have blotted out their name for ever and ever.
- 6 As for the enemy, they are finished, in perpetual ruin, \*  
their cities plowed under, the memory of them perished;
- 7 But the LORD is enthroned for ever; \*  
he has set up this throne for judgment.
- 8 It is he who rules the world with righteousness; \*  
he judges the peoples with equity.

**Psalm 9:9-20**      *Confitebor tibi*

- T**he Lord will be a refuge for the oppressed, \*  
a refuge in time of trouble.  
10 Those who know your Name will put their trust in  
you, \*  
for you never forsake those who seek you, O Lord.
- 11 Sing praise to the Lord who dwells in Zion; \*  
proclaim to the peoples the things he has done.
- 12 The Avenger of blood will remember them; \*  
he will not forget the cry of the afflicted.
- 13 Have pity on me, O Lord; \*  
see the misery I suffer from those who hate me,  
O you who lift me up from the gate of death;
- 14 So that I may tell of all your praises  
and rejoice in your salvation \*  
in the gates of the city of Zion.
- 15 The ungodly have fallen into the pit they dug, \*  
and in the snare they set is their own foot caught.
- 16 The Lord is known by his acts of justice; \*  
the wicked are trapped in the works of their own hands.
- 17 The wicked shall be given over to the grave, \*  
and also all the peoples that forget God.

<sup>18</sup> For the needy shall not always be forgotten, \*  
and the hope of the poor shall not perish for ever.

<sup>19</sup> Rise up, O Lord, let not the ungodly have the upper hand; \*  
let them be judged before you.

<sup>20</sup> Put fear upon them, O Lord; \*  
let the ungodly know they are but mortal.

**or**

**THE RESPONSE**      **Psalm 133**      *Ecce, quam bonum!*

INTRODUCTION: *Learning to Read the Psalms* asks two questions of the reader: 1) Who is the speaker and to whom is the psalm addressed? 2) Is this psalm a response of the author to a specific situation, i.e., what are the emotions of the psalm? 3) And thirdly, a suggestion: Read the psalm aloud, as if you were the psalmist laying bare his heart.  
<http://www.js.emory.edu/BLUMENTHAL/Teaching%20Psalms.htm>

**O** h, how good and pleasant it is, \*  
when brethren live together in unity!  
2 It is like fine oil upon the head \*  
that runs down upon the beard,

3 Upon the beard of Aaron, \*  
and runs down upon the collar of his robe.

4 It is like the dew of Hermon \*  
that falls upon the hills of Zion.

5 For there the Lord has ordained the blessing: \*  
life for evermore.

**THE EPISTLE:**                      2 Corinthians 6:1-13

<sup>2</sup>INTRODUCTION: Paul's theme of reconciliation, begun in 5:11-21, continues in 6:1-13, as Paul appeals to the estranged Corinthian congregation to be reconciled to God and to himself. In the ancient world, responsibility for initiating the mending of a ruptured relationship was understood to rest with the injuring party. In political contexts, this work was normally entrusted to an ambassador. Paul sees that in



Christ, God completely overturns conventional expectations. God, the injured party, takes the initiative to heal the ruptured relationship and reconcile the world to himself. Paul understands his own calling to be that of an ambassador for Christ, through whom God entreats the injuring party to be reconciled to God (2 Corinthians 5:18-21).

**A**s we work together with him, we urge you also not to accept the grace of God in vain. <sup>2</sup>For he says,  
'At an acceptable time I have listened to you,  
and on a day of salvation I have helped you.'

*See, now is the acceptable time; see, now is the day of salvation!*

<sup>3</sup>We are putting no obstacle in anyone's way, so that no fault may be found with our ministry, <sup>4</sup>but as servants of God we have commended ourselves in every way: through great endurance, in afflictions, hardships, calamities, <sup>5</sup>beatings, imprisonments, riots, labours, sleepless nights, hunger; <sup>6</sup>by purity, knowledge, patience, kindness, holiness of spirit, genuine love, <sup>7</sup>truthful speech, and the power of God; with the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and for the left; <sup>8</sup>in honour and dishonour, in ill repute and good repute.

We are treated as impostors, and yet are true; <sup>9</sup>as unknown, and yet are well known; as dying, and see—we are alive; as punished, and yet not killed; <sup>10</sup>as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing everything.

<sup>11</sup>We have spoken frankly to you Corinthians; our heart is wide open to you. <sup>12</sup>There is no restriction in our affections, but only in yours. <sup>13</sup>In return—I speak as to children—open wide your hearts also.

The Word of the Lord  
***Thanks be to God***

## THE GOSPEL:

Mark 4:35-41

<sup>2</sup>INTRODUCTION: Wind and sea calmed (see Mt. 8:18, 23-27; Lk. 8:22-25). Jesus' authority is shown to extend to the world of natural forces. *Faith* trusts God to achieve his purpose, even through apparent destruction (Mt. 6:25-30; Mk. 14: 35-36).

**O**n that day, when evening had come, he said to them, 'Let us go across to the other side.'

<sup>36</sup>And leaving the crowd behind, they took him with them in the boat, just as he was. Other boats were with him. <sup>37</sup>A great gale arose, and the waves beat into the boat, so that the boat was already being swamped.

<sup>38</sup>But he was in the stern, asleep on the cushion; and they woke him up and said to him, 'Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?' <sup>39</sup>He woke up and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, 'Peace! Be still!' Then the wind ceased, and there was a dead calm.

<sup>40</sup>He said to them, 'Why are you afraid? Have you still no faith?' <sup>41</sup>And they were filled with great awe and said to one another, 'Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?'

### The Gospel of the Lord *All Praise to you, Lord Christ*



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<https://www.episcopalchurch.org/lectionary/fifth-sunday-after-pentecost-1>

and The Lectionary Page: <http://lectionarypage.net>

## <sup>1</sup>NOTES ON THE COLLECT

<sup>c</sup>the recital of some doctrine or fact, which is made the basis of the petition, and <sup>d</sup>the devout wish with which it closes. - *The collects of the Book of common prayer; an exposition, critical, devotional.* Goulburn, Edward Meyrick, 1818-1897.

<https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=uva.x030802265;view=1up;seq=20>

Our Collect for today is the Latin Collect of the Sarum Missal for the Second Sunday after Trinity Sunday. The Gelasian Sacramentary has it for the Sunday after Ascension Day (#586); Gregorian (#1132) Second Sunday after Pentecost:

*SANCTI nominis tui, Domine, timorem pariter et amorem fac nos habere perpetuum: quia numquam tua gubernatione destituis quos in soliditate tuae dilectionis instituis. Per Dominum. Amen.*

Cranmer in 1549 has this as:

LORD, make us to have a perpetuall feare and love of thy holy name: for thou never failest to helpe and governe them whom thou doest bryng up in thy stedfast love. Graunt this, &c.

This was revised in BCP 1662 to:

O LORD, who never failest to help and govern them who thou dost bring up in thy stedfast fear and love; Keep us, we beseech thee, under the protection of thy good providence, and make us to have a perpetual fear and love of thy holy Name; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Massey Hamilton Shepherd, in *The Oxford American Prayer Book Commentary* [©1950, 1963], wrote:

Cranmer's version does not catch the illuminating metaphor of the original, which likens God's help and governance to that of a pilot or helmsman. We reverence and fear the pilot because he alone can bring us safely to our destination; we love him because he never abandons that care and concern for us from the moment we have placed ourselves in his hands. The original balances *timor/amor* (fear/love) and *instituto/destituto* and *instituto/destituto* (establish/abandon). *gubernatio* – God is, our pilot, our helmsman.

There is benefit in reflecting on reverence, fear, love, providence, and the concept of God's "name" being God's nature, including God's self-revelation.

The Church of England appears not to use this collect. The Episcopal Church (USA) uses it for Proper 7 (the Sunday closest to June 22, i.e., where RC uses it, the twelfth Sunday in Ordinary Time). *The American BCP restores it closer to the Latin and Cranmer's (1549) understanding.*

<http://liturgy.co.nz/reflections/ordinary-12>



HEADINGS: <sup>^</sup> *The History of Expository Preaching* James F. Stitzinger, [tms.edu/m/tmsj3a.pdf](https://tms.edu/m/tmsj3a.pdf)

<sup>2</sup>INTRODUCTION:1 Samuel 17

The idea that a combat between two champions could decide a battle is well known in ancient sources. Goliath was 9' 9" tall and extremely well-armed (his armor would have weighed about 125 pounds). David shows up at the battle to bring provisions to his brothers. Eliab, David's older brother, even scolds him for neglecting his duties with the sheep and for daring to take on Goliath.

The story of David and Goliath is a classic example of what can be accomplished through a person of faith. Ben Sira (Sirach/Ecclesiasticus) commented: "David played with lions as though they were young goats, and with bears as though they were lambs of the flock. In his youth did he not kill a giant, and take away the people's disgrace, when he whirled the stone in the sling and struck down the boasting Goliath? For he called on the LORD, the Most High, and he gave strength to his right arm to strike down a mighty warrior and to exalt the power of his people" (Sirach 47:3-5).

[http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary\\_id=331](http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=331)

(<sup>^</sup> *As an aside, the Greek translation of the text, the Septuagint, made perhaps in the 3rd century B.C.E., plainly does not believe this fantastic figure, changing it to "four cubits and a span," tall but within some reason.*)

<http://www.patheos.com/progressive-christian/in-the-name-of-yhwh-john-c-holbert-06-16-2015.html>

<sup>2</sup>INTRODUCTION: 2 Corinthians 6:1-13

[https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary\\_id=32](https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=32)

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<sup>2</sup>INTRODUCTION: Mark 4: 35-41

The New Oxford Annotated Bible © 1973, 1977

## Who Then Is This: Calming the Storm



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This section of Mark begins with Jesus getting into the boat his disciples have prepared for him ([4:35](#); see [3:9](#)). <sup>9</sup> *He told his disciples to have a boat ready for him because of the crowd, so that they would not crush him; . . .*

As they are crossing the sea of Galilee, a major storm blows onto the lake. Fierce storms were common on the Sea of Galilee, given its geographical location. Since at least four of the disciples were fishermen, there is no reason to think that this was their first time dealing with a storm on the lake. Therefore, based on the disciples' extreme fear for their lives ([4:38](#)), this must have been a terrifying storm.

Jesus, however, seems supremely unconcerned for their safety, as he sleeps through the storm ([4:38](#); see also [Jonah 1:4–5](#)). <sup>4</sup> *But the LORD hurled a great wind upon the sea, and such a mighty storm came upon the sea that the ship threatened to break up.* <sup>5</sup> *Then the mariners were afraid, and each cried to his god. They threw the cargo that was in the ship into the sea, to lighten it for them. Jonah, meanwhile, had gone down into the hold of the ship and had lain down, and was fast asleep.*

Once woken, Jesus “rebukes” the wind and the waves, just as he has rebuked unclean spirits (see Mark [1:25](#); [3:12](#)). <sup>25</sup> *But Jesus rebuked him, saying, “Be silent, and come out of him!”* and <sup>12</sup> *But he sternly ordered them not to make him known.*

Miraculously, the storm does not simply slow down but ceases immediately, producing “a great calm” ([4:39](#)). Jesus has authority over the wind and the water in a way that is expected of God alone (see

Psalm 65:5-7; 89:8-9; 104:6-9; and especially 107:25-30). Jesus has brought life out of a deadly situation.

### **Psalm 65:5-7**

- <sup>5</sup> By awesome deeds you answer us with deliverance,  
O God of our salvation;  
you are the hope of all the ends of the earth  
and of the farthest seas.
- <sup>6</sup> By your<sup>a</sup> strength you established the mountains;  
you are girded with might.
- <sup>7</sup> You silence the roaring of the seas,  
the roaring of their waves,  
the tumult of the peoples.

### **Psalm 89:8-9**

- <sup>8</sup> O LORD God of hosts,  
who is as mighty as you, O LORD?  
Your faithfulness surrounds you.
- <sup>9</sup> You rule the raging of the sea;  
when its waves rise, you still them.

### **Psalm 104:6-9**

- <sup>6</sup> You cover it with the deep as with a garment;  
the waters stood above the mountains.
- <sup>7</sup> At your rebuke they flee;  
at the sound of your thunder they take to flight.
- <sup>8</sup> They rose up to the mountains, ran down to the valleys  
to the place that you appointed for them.
- <sup>9</sup> You set a boundary that they may not pass,  
so that they might not again cover the earth.

### **Psalm 107:25-30**

- <sup>25</sup> For he commanded and raised the stormy wind,  
which lifted up the waves of the sea.
- <sup>26</sup> They mounted up to heaven, they went down to the depths;  
their courage melted away in their calamity;
- <sup>27</sup> they reeled and staggered like drunkards,  
and were at their wits' end.
- <sup>28</sup> Then they cried to the LORD in their trouble,  
and he brought them out from their distress;
- <sup>29</sup> he made the storm be still,

and the waves of the sea were hushed.  
<sup>30</sup> Then they were glad because they had quiet,  
and he brought them to their desired haven.

In this passage, the emotional responses of Jesus' disciples travel in the opposite direction of Jesus' actions. While Jesus moves from absence to authority, the disciples move from fight to fear. They are able to fight the storm until it gets too much for them to handle, and they seem personally insulted that Jesus does not seem as concerned about their lives as they are. Dealing with Jesus' absence is the disciples' first hurdle. Their second hurdle is facing their fear, rather than their faith, in Jesus' actions. After such a miracle, a reader of Mark may wonder why the disciples would have been afraid, rather than worshipful [see Author's Note 1].

The clue to this answer lies in their interpretation of Jesus' actions. They have been thinking that they know who Jesus is. He is a teacher, a healer, an exorcist, and one who proclaims the nearness of the kingdom of God. Now, however, they realize that his power over the wind and waves is frightening in itself and far beyond what they anticipated.

**Author's Note on Mark 4:41** - And they were filled with great awe and said to one another, 'Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?'

This fear is even more apparent in the Greek than in the NRSV translation, as a literal translation of Mark 4:41 would begin "and [the disciples] feared a great fear," rather than "and they were filled with great awe." This is astonishment at Jesus' actions that is not connected with a wonder that drives one to worship, but rather with a fear that drives out faith.

<https://blog.spu.edu/lectio/who-then-is-this/#note1>  
<https://biblia.com/books/nrsv>



## **"After He Killed Him, He Cut Off His Head:" David, Goliath, and Sacred Violence**

### **An Essay on 1 Samuel 17**

Those of us who went to Sunday School as kids remember flannel graph stories about David and Goliath (1 Samuel 17).

The punch line about David and Goliath was something to the effect that God uses insignificant people and unlikely means to accomplish improbable feats. That is certainly true (cf. 1 Corinthians 1:18–25; 3:18–23). But there's one horrifying detail in the story that my Sunday School teacher skipped. David "took hold of the Philistine's sword and drew it from the scabbard. After he killed him, he cut off his head with the sword" (17:51). David then displayed Goliath's head in Jerusalem, brandished it before King Saul, and kept his sword in his tent as a souvenir.

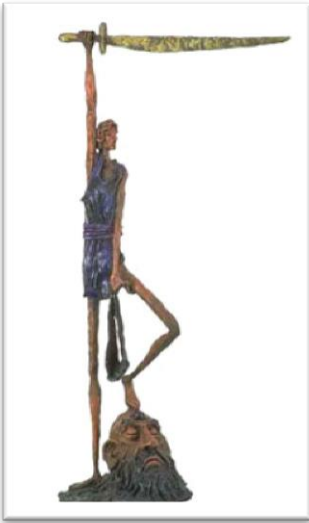
By decapitating Goliath, David wanted to "show the whole world that there is a God in Israel. All those gathered here will know that it is not by the sword or spear that the Lord saves; for the battle is the Lord's, and he will give all of you into our hands" (17:46–47).

This story made my mind ping to the decapitation of Nicholas Berg in May 2004, and to numerous other expatriates and Iraqi citizens. In their book *The Next Attack* (2005), Daniel Benjamin and Steven Simon show how decapitation (still a form of capital punishment in Saudi Arabia) and the signature ear-to-ear throat-slitting by extremists are ways to traumatize and terrorize your enemy. They are "spectacles for ogling," and "participatory events" for those who download replays of the horrific act on the internet. MIT's *Technology Review* (February 2005) reported that videos of the Berg beheading were down-loaded 15 million times, crashing many servers. But decapitation — and this takes us back to David and Goliath — is also a "public sacrament," a "way of making the violence holy," and, write Benjamin and Simon, "an act redolent with the sense of sacrifice and the literal execution of God's law, which to the jihadist means death for infidels and apostates."

Years later, as a poet and song writer David returned to this theme of sacred violence as proof of God's favor. In his acrostic psalm for this week (each verse begins with a successive letter of the Hebrew alphabet), he insists that *his* cause is righteous, and that his enemies are the enemies of God. He prays for God to rebuke, destroy, blot out, annihilate, and to vanquish his enemies with "endless ruin." As if to



erase the least vestige of their humanity, he prays for "even the memory of them [to] perish." He concludes his prayer, "Strike them with terror, O Lord!" (Psalm 9).



How should we read these two texts of terror? You might dismiss the decapitation of Goliath as patriotic fiction or legend, but that takes the easy way out; for some reason, the Hebrews included this story

Phillip Ratner, David and Goliath. ©1998. This collection consists of sculptures and paintings that depict the Heroes and Heroines of the Hebrew Bible.

<http://www.ratnermuseum.org/page/heroes>

(and other disturbing ones) in their sacred canon. There are also reasonable caveats and qualifications that might mitigate the sacred horror — maybe we have here a case of historical description of something that happened, but that does not mean that God approved of it; primitive cultures back then were more barbaric than ours; divine retribution for truly wicked people and nations is a necessary part of humanity's moral compass and calculus; war and its tragic consequences seem to be an inevitable and inscrutable aspect of the intersection of human history and divine sovereignty; later progress in God's revelation of himself supercedes earlier stories like these; and maybe poetry like Psalm 9 is just angry exaggeration or emotional overstatement.

Whether ancient or modern, violence in God's name knows no boundaries. All religions have engaged in sacred terror, including widow burning, child sacrifice, caste systems, mass suicide, female genital mutilation, witch hunts, ritual abuse, ethnic cleansing, suicide bombers, and apartheid — the list is depressingly long. Christians killed thousands in the Crusades and Inquisitions, defended slavery, were complicit in the Holocaust that killed six million Jews, ravaged the Native American peoples, and have murdered abortion doctors and gays.

I'm not sure how to read the Bible's texts of terror, but here are two suggestions.

Whereas the Old Testament contains violence that is divinely sanctioned, at least according to its writers, in the New Testament I can think of only two examples when the followers of Jesus wanted to use violent means for his cause — when James and John wanted to call down fire upon the Samaritans because of their unbelief (Luke 9:51–55), and in the Garden of Gethsemane when his disciples tried to prevent His arrest (Mark 14:47). In both instances Jesus rebuked those who tried to show their allegiance to him through violent means. Instead, he insisted that his Father in heaven causes his sun to shine on both the wicked and the righteous. He told us to love our enemies and to do good to those who persecute us, because in the end the ultimate measure of my love for God is my love for my neighbor.

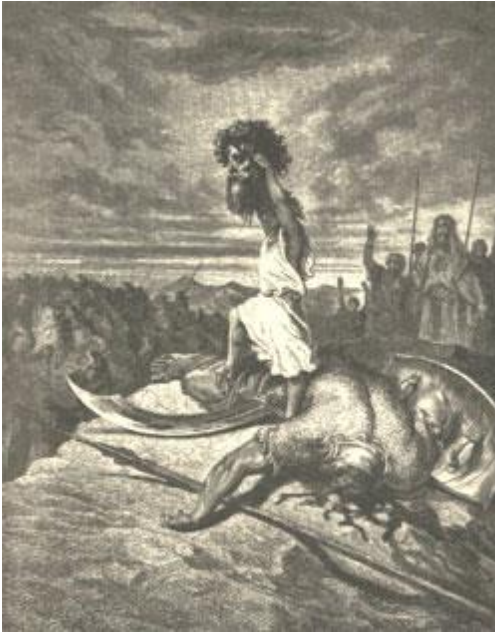
I can't recall anyone who made this point better than the German pastor Martin Niemoeller (1892–1984), who protested Hitler's anti-semitic measures in person to the fuehrer, was eventually arrested, and then imprisoned for eight years at Sachsenhausen and Dachau (1937–1945). He once confessed, "It took me a long time to learn that God is not the enemy of my enemies. He is not even the enemy of his enemies." When God hates all the same people that you hate, you can be absolutely certain that you have created him in your own image (Lamott). -

*Traveling Mercies* by Anne Lamott; on page 22 of *Bird by Bird* she attributes this quote to "my priest friend Tom")

Second, we should not remain silent when we see attempts to legitimize sacred violence, but instead name it for what it is. We should learn the warning signs that religion has become evil and evil has become religious:

- \* Fanatical claims of absolute truth. I do not mean the belief that absolute truth exists, but the doubt-free and uncritical confidence that one understands such absolute truth absolutely.
- \* Blind obedience to totalitarian, charismatic, and authoritarian leaders or their views that undermines moral integrity, personal freedom, individual responsibility, and intellectual inquiry.
- \* Identifying and rationalizing "end times" scenarios in the name of your religion.
- \* Justifying religious ends by dubious means.

\* Any and all forms of dehumanization, from openly declaring war on



your enemy, demonizing those who differ from you, construing your neighbor as an Other, to claiming that God is on your side alone.

\* Pressure tactics of coercion, deception, and false advertisement.

\* Alienation, isolation and withdrawal from family, friends and society, whether psychologically or literally.

\* Exploitation and all forms of unreasonable demands upon one's time, money, resources, family, friendships, sexuality, etc. Often one or more of these danger signs combine.<sup>1</sup>

Gustave Dore: David and Goliath their most authentic examples rather than by their worst corruptions. There is also a difference between evil committed by people who happen to be religious, and evil promoted in the name of religion. Some people overstate the connection between religion and violence, as when Charles Kimball writes that “more evil [has been] perpetrated in the name of religion than by any other institutional force in human history” (a distinction that probably goes to Soviet and Chinese atheism). Sometimes the connection between religion and violence is tenuous, sometimes it is explicit. Sacred terror is almost always complex and bound up with other causes (social, historical, economic, cultural, political, etc). But at the end of the day we must admit that there is far too much violence in the world that is fomented with a specifically religious rationale, motivation, or justification. Christians should commit ourselves to do whatever we can to stop it.

[1] Some but not all of these are taken from Charles Kimball, *When Religion Becomes Evil* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 2002); he focuses on the first five.

<https://www.journeywithjesus.net/Essays/20090615JJ.shtml>



Jesus stills the storm, Gospel Book of Echternach, 11th century miniature  
<http://edgeofenclosure.org/mysticaljourney/proper7b.html>