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We reached chapter 17 of 1 Samuel on Sunday morning. It's the archetypal story of David versus Goliath. We noted at the beginning about the reality of our dissatisfaction in the Samuel account if we only stay there-again and again we are pointed forward to a better king, Jesus.

However before looking at the text and where it leads us, we looked back this week and saw how this account has a number of shadows reaching over it from previous stories within the Bible.

1. For example we saw the shadow of Joshua. We have already met giants in the Promised Land. As God's people were on the border they sent spies to check out their new territory - and the majority report was that they could not take the land because of the size of the people living there. Here, once again we have giants in the land that God has promised to his people. We are meant to ask the question 'will they trust him this time?'
2. We also noted the Joseph narrative drawn out in the text. Just as Joseph was set upon by his older brothers (Gen 37) so here as David visits his brothers on the battlefield they verbally abuse him and think the worst of him. Maybe we're to consider how David will go onto surpasses his brothers as Joseph did? Or the patience with which David must live as it will take a long time for the Lord to raise him to the position of influence as King.
3. We also noted that David is seen as a new Adam. He has dominion over the beasts who have been attacking his sheep and as we will see, he is to be the one who crushes a serpents head.

Having zoomed right out to consider these three stories, we then zoomed right in and looked closely at the text of the chapter.

#### + The enemy

We noted that Goliath is described in great detail, what he is wearing, his armour, his weapons and his taunts of the people of God. This is presumably meant to help us feel the terror of the situation. He is described as a champion of the Philistines. The word champion is literally "a man of the in between" - That is - if you imagine the line of the Philistine soldiers - Goliath has stepped forward and is leading them into battle. He is their representative, speaking on behalf of them all.

What is interesting is that up against this champion, the Israelites have no one. Saul, the king and military leader, is as terrified as everyone else.

#### + The Protector

Although David is not yet the king (he's anointed but not appointed) he ends up being the protector of God's people. He is the champion, one who will represent them and fight for them. David is just visiting his brothers, taking provisions for them when he overhears the daily taunts of Goliath. He also hears what is promised to the one who defeats the Philistine champion.

David's family resent his interest in the matter and yet his bullish speech makes its way to Saul such that he persuades Saul to let him try and fight the giant. David's motivation for fighting is not what he can get out of it though, but rather for the glory of God's name. Because Goliath has blasphemed so God will be seen to be the true God, and all the world will hear of it.

David heads into battle without armour (note the way that Saul is still thinking as the world thinks) and with only a slingshot and five stones to defeat God's enemy. Goliath the blasphemer is stoned to death. God has conquered his enemy.

The slightly gruesome ongoing reference to Goliath's head having been chopped off is probably in part because he has a similar fate to Dagon from chapter 5. God is God and Dagon is not, neither is his champion Goliath.

We then rounded the final band considering who we were meant to be in the chapter.

We noted that perhaps some people in the room felt like Philistines. That is they would certainly not align themselves with God or his people, but rather would be happier to mock and laugh at them.

We also thought about the tendency we might have to be more like Eliab. That is a scepticism about the kind of people whom God uses, or even about the kind of plans that God has. Just as Eliab resented David, so maybe we resent the seeming foolishness of the plans of God. He calls us to trust him but at times were just not sure if we can.

The reality is though I believe we are meant to align ourselves with the Israelite people. We are in the army stood behind our champion. He is the one who going to battle on our behalf. He is the one who would defeat the enemy of God. He will make it possible for us to enjoy the promises of God, and the peace that he brings.

Our Champion now is not King David, but rather King Jesus who conquered the real enemies of God-sin, suffering and Satan. He won them through what looked like a weak and foolish plan as he died on the cross in the place of his people. Also note how Goliath looks like a huge bronze snake with scale armour-David comes as a prototype serpent crusher.

Our problem is that too easily we think we are the Messiah-and have to defeat God's enemies by ourselves, rather than remembering that our champion has gone before us. When we think we are the Messiah - life can be exhausting and we can end up feeling crushed. This week let's remember who we are in the story and let's look to our champion who has gone before us. Let's not think that we need to win the battles he's already won.

***Here are some questions to start your group off:***

What one main thing has stuck with you so far through the series?

How have these studies enlarged or sharpened your understanding of Christ?

What do you make of the allusions to Joshua, Joseph and Adam? Why are they there? How do they help us understand what's going on?

Describe Goliath (What he looks like, what he sounds like), describe David and describe Saul. What do you make of each?

What do you make of David's concern for the glory of God? How does that apply to us?

What is this a story all about? How does it point to head to Jesus? What does it mean for us? What happens if we get our place in the story wrong?

Where do we think we are tempted to be the Messiah, trusting in ourselves and our own strength rather than him and what he's already done?