

McCabe United Methodist Church

Part 2: Superheroes of Faith
2017 Fall Kick-Off Series

Stepping Up and Stepping Out

1 Samuel 17; 1-12, 32-27, 41-40, 57-58 (9/16 & 9/17/17)
Pastor Mark Ehrmantraut

Let's Pray... Mighty and Merciful God, may the words of my mouth and the mediations on our hearts this morning be acceptable in your sight. You alone are our Rock. You alone are our Redeemer. Amen.

We continue with our superheroes series this weekend and I got Spiderman today, and the classic Bible reading of David and Goliath. How cool is that? Seeking to be faithful to the Biblical text, let's begin by doing some comparing and contrasting.

Spiderman is just more irresistible than the other superheroes...



I wonder if maybe Spiderman has some Methodist roots.

I wonder this because part of Marvel Comics agreement with Sony Pictures, as I understand it, is that Spiderman must 'Do no harm, or at least do the least harm possible while doing all the good he can.' That's pretty Wesleyan Methodist, isn't it? Do no harm. Do Good.

- Peter Parker, the guy who turns into Spider-Man, he has a lot in common with the hero of today's Scripture, the boy David.
 - ✓ Peter Parker is a teenager in high school. He can seem awkward at times.
 - ✓ David is a teenager at best. He's the youngest of his brothers. At times, he seems like a family afterthought.
- Both Peter Parker and David won contests of sorts that brought attention to themselves.
 - ✓ In the most recent Spiderman movie Peter Parker won a science contest. Part of the prize was receiving his Spider-Man suit.
 - ✓ David won a contest. 1st Samuel 16 tells us that David wasn't even in the initial pool of candidates. David the boy was chosen by God, and anointed by the Prophet Samuel, to be the future

king.

When David was selected by God, 1 Samuel 16 says: *The Spirit of the Lord RUSHED upon David.* Other translations say: *The Spirit of the Lord came **POWERFULLY** upon David.* The Spirit of the Lord didn't just come upon him. The Spirit of the Lord came **POWERFULLY** upon him.

Back to comparing our heroes this morning.

- Both Spider-Man and David loved the people.
 - ✓ They usually worked for the greater good.
 - ✓ Yet they both grew up and messed up.
 - ✓ They both got into plenty of trouble.

- Their Pride and selfishness crept in. There were times they had to run and hide just to stay alive and it wasn't until they submitted to their higher authority that they found their true strength.
 - ✓ Peter Parker submitted to his boss Tony Stark, not always the greatest guy in the world.
 - ✓ David repeatedly submitted, crying out to God, confessing and recalibrating his obedience to God.

God our Creator, God Almighty, God who loves us and forgives us and pursues us relentlessly.

Back to Peter Parker...

- When Peter got his Spider-Man suit, Peter wanted to be doing more than just sitting in school and doing homework. Peter wanted to save the world, but Tony Stark, the maker of the Spider-Man suit, dismissed Peter as only a boy.
- And David, still a boy, yet anointed to be future king... David was relegated to tending sheep. David wasn't considered important enough to help out even though his people were scared to death at the looming battle ahead.

That's where our Scripture today picks up. The Israelite Army is paralyzed with fear because the Philistines and their champion warrior Goliath were about to pummel the Israelites and turn them into their slaves.



It's at this point, that maybe Spider-Man and David differ some more too...

- For example, Peter Parker wanted more and better bells and whistles in his battle suit.
- David... David was offered the King's top of the line battle equipment and David turned it all down.

There's another major difference between Spider-Man and David.

- I don't want to burst anyone's bubble here so plug your ears if you don't want to hear it, but Spider-Man isn't actually real...
- Yet our Biblical hero David is very real. His life continues to impact us here today.
- Consider that Spider-Man lived with his Aunt May.
- David's lineage on the other hand... David's life fulfilled Biblical prophecies. His lineage further led to fulfilling the promised coming of Jesus Christ.

So here we are dear friends. Both Spider-Man and David faced the giants.

- They were only boys, but they were willing to step up and to step out. Others may have said they didn't have what it takes, yet even at a young age they both made a difference in the world.
 - ✓ Peter Parker, in Spider-Man Homecoming, defeated the evil villain The Vulture... He helped to save his fictional city from destruction and despair.
 - ✓ And the boy David defeated Goliath in a place we can visit, the Elah Valley. David saved Bethlehem, and Hebron, and Jerusalem, and all of Judah. His work eventually saved the Unified Kingdom of Israel and Judah. This impacted the very real

course of history, and this history is our history as people of faith.

Last week Pastor Jenny highlighted superhero Wonder Woman and the Biblical superwoman Esther. David, like Esther, didn't let the naysayers or the negative voices in his own head slow him down or stop him. He listened to God. He accepted God's nudgings and promptings, and David listened and acted when he heard God saying: *for such a time as this. I've been preparing you.*

Be strong in your faith. Step up and step out.

Our Scripture doesn't say how David was feeling on the inside. All we know is that David acted and his faithful actions made a difference for the Kingdom of God.

Friends, our inner turmoil can drive us or defeat us.

Our fears and anxieties, our lack of confidence or feelings of shame, they can propel us or pull us down.

Our insecurities, our negative self-talk, it can act like the heavy armor and weapons that Saul borrowed to David. It was intended to be helpful but it only interfered with his mission, weighing him down.

And whether, like Goliath, we have 125 pounds of armor, a giant javelin, and a guy who does nothing but go in front of us with a shield protecting us, OR whether... like David, we only have a sling and a couple river rocks, we are reminded that God isn't just looking for the easily identifiable superheroes who are fully loaded and prepared.

No. God isn't seeking only the Wonder Women and the Spider-Men and the Bat Men. God is actually seeking regular people, people like you and me. God's looking to us to be the hands and the feet and the hearts and the lips and the minds who are instrumental in building and expanding God's Kingdom here.

God has given us everything we need.

We are loved by God. We are each equipped with certain gifts and there is nothing... There is nothing that can separate us from the love of God through Christ Jesus.

So, whether we are church-ed or unchurch-ed or somewhere in between, each and every one of us is equipped and has what we need to be a superhero in God's Kingdom.

Sure, sin, satan, and even our own selves can get in the way and tell us we can't do it. We hear we don't have what it takes or we're not good enough.

Maybe we should be thinking about sin or satan and our own insecurities as *dark villains*...

Friends, as followers of Jesus, we have to battle FOR the forces of good.

And as followers of Jesus, we have to battle AGAINST the forces of evil.

We have to step up and to step out in faith. We are called to grow into becoming more like Christ.

David stepped up and stepped out. He faced the giant and the giant fell.

Our Scripture ends with David explaining where he came from. The name (of my Father) is Jesse. He's from Bethlehem.

At Christmas, we proclaim a shoot from the stump of Jesse, from the town of Bethlehem, saved the day, to one day save the world.



Sometimes we step up and we step out and we surprise everyone, maybe even ourselves.

Sometimes we step up and we step out and God leads us in directions we

hadn't anticipated, so we pray. We adjust course and we pray through into where God is leading us.

Sometimes when we step up and step out, sometimes it feels like we fail according to what we thought would happen. Yet we must keep the faith. We must seek God and submit to God so we can step up and step out and stay faithful.

Think about the people we refer to as '*pillars of faith*' in Scripture...

There are men and women we can name throughout Biblical history. Beginning with Genesis and continuing through Revelation, there are names of people in the Bible we think of as Pillars of Faith.

Who are a few names from the Bible that you can think of right off the bat?

(Some of the names that got named were: Abraham and Sarah, Peter, The Apostle Paul, Ruth, Esther, Job).

These Biblical Pillars of faith, these people are pillars of faith NOT because their road was easy. They are pillars of faith because they stepped up and stepped out and stayed faithful even when life was hard.

They loved God and they loved their neighbor even when it wasn't easy to do.



Jesus never promised an easy, comfortable road.

In the book of Acts, when the apostles got out of prison for sharing Christ, the Apostles didn't pray for safety or comfort. They prayed for boldness. They prayed for strength so they could continue to step up and step out in faith, and share Christ.

Valorie Burton writes that fear can be a major obstacle to stepping up and stepping out. She writes that we all wrestle with fears and anxieties and insecurities... Our outer shells don't always tell the story.

Regardless of the image we project, our inner voices can creep in saying:

- I'm not good enough...
 - I've done too many stupid things... Or
 - I haven't done enough...
- Who am I to bother them?
 - What if they don't like me? Or
 - What if it doesn't work?

Have you ever been there?

- Maybe it was the chance to offer a kind, compassionate word in the midst of hateful commentary.
- Maybe it was a chance to offer an invitation or to share the difference Jesus makes in your own life.

Maybe you felt tired or used up or you wanted to play it safe instead of taking a step forward in faith.

- ✚ Yet we are Christmas people. We are Easter People...
- ✚ Our God is called Emmanuel meaning our God is always with us.
- ✚ Our Savior died to forgive us and to save us.
- ✚ We have a God who is with us and who offers us new life.

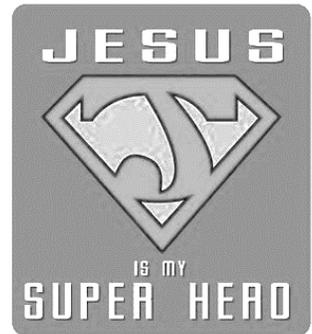
Joshua 1 reminds us and encourages us:

“... Be strong and courageous. Don't be afraid; Don't be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go.”



So here and now dear friends, maybe the challenge to us this morning is asking: Where are you in this superhero adventure we call living the Christian faith?

Where is God nudging you, or maybe even shoving you, to step up and to step out in faith?



Is it time to join a small group?

Maybe it's time to START a new small group?

Is it time to take one next step forward in your giving?

Or is it time to make a few phone calls, to check on that person or two you haven't seen for a few weeks?

Maybe you're being prompted to pull together a mission team to head to Texas or Mexico, or maybe you're feeling nudged to help welcome people as Christ welcomes each of us on a Sunday morning or a Wednesday night?

How is God calling **YOU** to make a difference for His Kingdom here and now, and for all eternity?

Let's pray...

Lord give us the courage to step up and to speak up instead of allowing our fears and insecurities hold us back. Grant us wisdom to know what say and when to say it. Help us to see ourselves as You see us. Free us from the fears and anxieties that can keep us from acting in your name. Lead us into being your people who speak and act with gentle boldness, and humble, compassionate courage. We pray in the precious name of your son Jesus. Amen.