

### THREE DAVIDS

I Samuel 16:1-13 (NRSV), Psalm 23 (KJV)

While waiting in line at the veterinarian shot clinic, a young boy's tee shirt grabbed my attention. **I Samuel 17:50** was emblazoned on it in large bold letters. That's something you don't see everyday! Not "Pokemon" nor "Star Wars" but a tee showing off a biblical reference. Of course, I had to ask him about it and his quick reply was "Oh, I got it at the movie 'David.' It was great." I thought, "Wow, years ago I watched the movie "David and Bathsheba," starring Gregory Peck and Susan Hayward but I never saw a tee shirt touting it. Oh well, maybe that wouldn't have worked anyway!

The biblical reference the young kid was wearing from I Samuel reads like this: "So David prevailed over the Philistine with a sling and with a stone and smote the Philistine and slew him." His shirt came from the theater that was showing the 2025 computer-animated biblical musical of King David, about his life from his time as a shepherd boy to becoming king, focusing on his battle with Goliath. The opening lines of the movie are taken from a verse from today's Scripture text, "for the Lord does not see as mortals see; they look on the outward appearance but the Lord looks on the heart." (I Samuel 16:7) And in the great battle scene with Goliath, the big wide-eyed kid takes care of the giant with all his heart and trust in God.

This animated movie portrays David just the way I learned about him from a children's chorus in rural Virginia at Belmont Baptist Church. The lyrics went this way: "Only a boy named David, only a little sling; only a boy named David but he could pray and sing. Only a boy named David, only a rippling brook; only a boy named David, but five little stones he took. And one little stone went in the sling, and the sling went round and round. And one little stone went up in the air and the giant came tumbling down."

Today's text tells us where this story all began. King Saul has been rejected for a lot of good reasons and now Samuel the prophet is sent to the city of Bethlehem to anoint one of the

sons of Jesse as the new king. And seven sons pass by Samuel with names we no longer remember. One by one, they are rejected. In a bit of confusion, Samuel learns that there is another son, the youngest of eight, who is out keeping the sheep. Evidently, his family never dreamed of him as “kingly material.” Maybe it’s because he is the youngest. Maybe because he is not real tall. Maybe it’s because he has a simple name, David, not Jewish names with a ring to them like Eliab or Abinadab or Shammah. Simply, David. Anyway, the overlooked shepherd is located and he shows up “ruddy, handsome, with beautiful eyes.” He’s the one! The overlooked one is to be anointed king and actually become the king when he is thirty years old.

In the intervening years before becoming king, this young man went through a lot of strife. . As difficult as it was fighting off lions and bears in protecting his flock of sheep, it was nothing compared to dealing with the madness of King Saul. King Saul would have him soothe his soul with quiet music on the harp one minute and the next instant try to kill him in a jealous rage. I Samuel 19:10 says it this way, “David was playing the harp and Saul tried to pin David to the wall with his spear but he avoided Saul’s thrust and the spear stuck in the wall. David fled and made good his escape.” Fortunately for David, King Saul’s son Jonathan became his best friend and protector and David survived an incredible “life on the run” before becoming king.

That’s **the first David**, the biblical David that we all know so well. Then, there is **the second David**, the David that I learned about in college and that some of you have seen in Florence, Italy. This is Michelangelo’s David, the fourteen foot David that my professor said was the greatest piece of art ever created. I remember his saying, “suppose Michelangelo had sculpted Goliath - how tall would he have been?” Oft-cited as the world’s most beautiful chiseled man, Michelangelo crafted him from 1501-04 from one rough slab of marble. The “lithe” young David weighs nearly 12,500 pounds and stands the size of a two story building, counting the pedestal. David stands in the nude, with a somewhat turned body, holding a sling shot in his left hand above his left shoulder, as he is about to go into battle with Goliath. He is alert and concentrated, looking independent and strong. He makes me think of a

seventeen year old Cassius Clay winning an Olympic gold medal in 1960 or an eighteen year old Lebron James turning pro in 2003, straight out of high school. He looks nothing like “only a boy named David” from the chorus I learned in Sunday School. Instead, he is muscular, thoughtful and intense. His artist figured it would take this kind of strength to sling a stone up to hundred miles an hour to take down a bear or a Goliath.

For centuries, Michelangelo’s David stood outdoors in Florence’s Piazza del Signoria, having battled earthquakes, lightning strikes, pigeons and even a broken left arm when during a riot, a bench was thrown from a window. At the urging of concerned citizens and art connoisseurs, David was moved inside the Galleria dell’Accademia in 1873. Even indoors and surrounded by museum security, David has not been completely safe. In a well-known 1991 incident, an Italian artist entered the building with a hammer under his coat. Once near the statue, he sprang forward and started smashing David’s left foot, managing to shatter a left toe before being subdued. He claimed he had been told to do this by a 16th century Venetian painter’s model. Now David is protected by Plexiglass, safe from hands and hammers.

By the way, if you don’t want to shell out the 30.00 to be among the 1.5 million annual visitors to see the real statue in Florence, there are at least thirty life-sized replicas around the world. The nearest full-sized replica to us is in Caesar’s Palace in Las Vegas but you could take a trip to Buffalo or Philadelphia or Sarasota or even Forest Lawn in Glendale, California to see him, if you are so inclined. My late college prof would turn over in his grave to learn that there are even two full-sized replicas in Florence, Italy, one at its original outdoor location.

**But there is a third David.** He’s the special David for me. He is the David of the Psalms. This is the David who wrote at least seventy-three songs or poems that touch our hearts for God. From them we truly know that here was a man, with all his strengths and weaknesses, “after God’s own heart.” He reminds us that “The Lord is my rock, my fortress, and my deliverer, my God, my rock in whom I take refuge.” (Psalm 18:2) Which of us doesn’t need that rock when life throws all kinds of stuff at us? Who hasn’t felt these words in the time of grief : “Be gracious to me, O Lord, for I am in distress, my eyes waste away from grief, my soul and

body also.” (Psalm 31:9). And haven’t we been glad to shout for joy to the Lord like David did in Psalm 4:7, 8: “You have put gladness in my heart more than when their grain and wine abound. I will both lie down and sleep in peace, for you alone, O Lord, make me lie down in safety.” And haven’t we needed repentance and forgiveness and cried out, “For your name’s sake, O Lord, pardon my guilt, for it is great,” (Psalm 25:11) or “purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.’ (Psalm 51:7).

So, with this **third David**, my favorite David, let’s conclude this time together with deep feeling, reading together his most famous of psalms, Psalm 23 (KJV):

The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.  
He maketh me to lie down in green pastures:  
He leadeth me beside the still waters.  
He restoreth my soul;  
He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness  
for his name’s sake.  
Yea, though I walk through the valley of the  
shadow of death,  
I will fear no evil, for thou art with me;  
Thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.  
Thou preparest a table before me in the  
presence of mine enemies:  
Thou anointest my head with oil; my cup  
runneth over.  
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me  
all the days of my life:  
And I will dwell in the house of the Lord  
forever.  
AMEN!

