

Title: Living for the Fame of God
Text: 1 Samuel 17.12-30
Theme: Living for the fame of God
Series: 1 Samuel
Prop Stmtnt: Living for the fame of anyone other than God is a fool's errand.

The scene ended with a cliffhanger. The Philistine army had invaded Israel and was about 13 miles from Bethlehem. Israel's first king, Saul responded with his army and the two sides were digging in on either side of a valley. It is always easier to attack downhill than uphill and so far, neither side was willing to move in force. The Philistines were the aggressors and apparently with good reason. They had a not-so-secret weapon whose name was Goliath. This mountain of a man came down into the valley as the representative of the Philistines and called upon Israel to send forth a champion from their side who would fight him. Winner would take all.

Circumstances have a way of revealing in public the very things we try to hide in private. Saul had become a man consumed by fear. His meltdowns, psychotic episodes, depressive moods, , were in his case, the result of having no genuine faith in God. He was owned by his fear. There were things that his inner circle knew about him. His army and his nation may not have had a clue that he was such a danger to others and himself, but now, his faithlessness and fearfulness are no longer hidden. Goliath is calling him out.

What do you believe is bigger? What do you really believe has more authority? What do you believe defines you and defends you? Your sin, your guilt or Jesus? Your circumstance or God? Your problems or God's promises? Your fears or the Spirit of God? Your diagnosis or God's grace? Your reputation or your identity in Christ? What do you believe is more important? This life or the life to come? This world or glory? The church or this world? What causes you to be dismayed and greatly afraid? For Saul and his army, it was Goliath. Goliath exposed the fact that Saul trusted in Saul. Trusting in yourself is terrifying when facing Goliath. Praise God, that there are people who really trust in God. They may be behind the scenes and in the shadows, but God often uses the weak, the overlooked and insignificant to do pretty amazing things.

Read Text:

The text begins with "now David" and then gives us some insight into this young man who was living between two worlds. Part of his life was spent playing for Saul, the king, in the palace, the seat of power and influence where the leaders of the nation and other nations convened, ate and slept. The other part of his life was about as opposite of that as possible. He was watching sheep. This was decidedly less glamorous. He was doing the most inglorious job there was. He was the youngest of 8 boys (a point made again emphatically in v.14). He was doing the job that the youngest had to do, which is the job that nobody else wanted to do. And now, right now, all of the attention of the country and the king was not on a little shepherd watching sheep all by himself. Oh no! All eyes were on the battle. That is, all eyes except God's. With those words, "now David" we are reminded of a truth and a reality that plays all throughout God's plan. That truth, that reality is like a watermark in this story. A watermark is the subtle backdrop to what

is being written. The story of power and influence as God sees it is not always where people see it. Man looks at the outward appearance, but God looks on the heart. Man sees power, fame, prestige, influence, God sees what is really behind image, what is really under the surface, where the real power is. But, why does God call David a man after his own heart? Why does God call a shepherd boy to be a king and to start a dynasty from which his own son will come? The answer is unveiled in this text. Here is a boy whose heart is captured by God and for God. Here is a boy who early on chooses to live for the glory of another. Here is a boy who is willing to lay down his life that the reputation of God might be raised up. Here is a boy who lives for the fame of God.

Whoa, hold the phone. Is that really true? Am I overselling him? I became convinced of this based on what David says. Jesus said, *“For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.”* (Matthew 12:34) Up until this point in the story, we have not read anything that David has said. This is the first time that he speaks and throughout this story, David is concerned primarily with one thing, the fame of God. We see it this week when he talks with the men in the army of Israel. We will see it next week when he talks with Saul. But it is his address to Goliath (two weeks from now) that captures our hearts because his heart is so completely captured by God and his confidence is so emboldened and his concern for the reputation of God helps us see what a man after God’s heart is like. This guy really lives for the fame of God and what David does imperfectly helps see what Christ will be and do perfectly. There are five ways this is displayed. Living for the fame of God means:

1. **Faithfully doing your job no matter what.** (12-16)

Notice the details in the text. David was the son of an Ephrathite of Bethlehem in Judah, named Jesse. There is a contrast here between where Goliath came from, and where David came from. This is an ancient Israel version of: Bethlehem vs. Everybody. But the contrast is even greater. David was the youngest of 8 boys. 8 boys! David was “uh, what’s your name?” right? Remember back in chapter 16 when Samuel was sent to Jesse’s house to anoint one of his sons as king that Jesse called all sons together, at least seven of them (v.10). Samuel had to ask him if this was all, to which Jesse said, “There remains yet the youngest (no name), but behold, he is keeping the sheep.” Meaning, it really can’t be him. He’s not king material. He’s the youngest – a point emphasized again here. However, David was anointed king and David was selected to play music for the king, when he was in tormented by an evil spirit. David was hanging with the movers and shakers – well some of the time. The rest of the time, he was back taking care of sheep. Sheep! This was not where the action was. His three oldest brothers were with Saul and were in the army. They were at the battle. They were where the action was.

Like Moses, long before him, God used the loneliness and challenges of insignificant work to form the heart of a leader who would change the course of history. Yes, David was the God-appointed heir to the throne, but that did not entitle him not to work in obscurity. A thousand years later, the son of David and son of God, Jesus who came from Bethlehem would work for years and years in obscurity before he would publicly speak. Jesus left his throne. He set aside his crown and the applause of angels. He exchanged his heavenly glory for a woodshop where

locals gave him orders for tables and chairs and likely tried to cheat him on wages. When he began to gather a following, his townspeople were stunned. Who do you think you are? You're the carpenter's son. (meaning) You're no king! This isn't what the Messiah was supposed to be like. This isn't what a king looks like. God doesn't do things that we generally do, does he?

Brothers and sisters, living for the fame of God is usually not on a platform where thousands of people listen to you perform. The real action is most of the time, praying over your babies as you care for them in the middle of the night, teaching your son how to honor God, by respecting women and working hard. The real action is sharing the gospel with your neighbors, family members and co-workers, caring for the elderly, listening to the needy, visiting the sick, praying with the hurting and even feeding the hungry. Many of you encourage me with your comments about the sermons here, but when I say that I am so blessed to be your pastor, it is because you preach way better sermons than I do. The elders, staff and I visit people in the hospital, but you do it even more. You visit the shut-in and give rides when needed, check in on the sick and counsel people in hard places. Public ministry only has credibility and impact where it is outpaced by private ministry. What David was in public started with what he was in private. He honored God by faithfully doing what he was told, no matter what. You are never ready to lead until you know what it is to follow. Living for the fame of God means ...

2. **Faithfully serving while you wait your turn.** (17-18)

David was watching sheep! But David was about to get a promotion. He went from lowly shepherd to Uber eats driver. Jesse told him to take a care package to his brothers and be sure to give their commander the good stuff. Did you notice that? The brothers get the parched grain and some bread and the commander gets ten cheeses. We all know what that's about. Look out for my boys, right? Ten cheeses might influence the commander to give the Jesse boys a favorable position. I'm not sure if parched grain was momma's homemade cooking or just some extra stuff laying around that still had to be better than Army rations. It's hard to say.

Jesse doesn't know it, David doesn't know it, nobody but God knows that the fate of a nation hangs upon a boy taking his brothers some food from home. Verses 17-18 are so ordinary. But that is what living for the fame of God is about 98-99% of the time. Even being in ministry has a distinctively ordinary aspect to it. I heard John MacArthur say once that success in ministry is keeping your rear-end in your desk chair until you get your tasks done. Living for the fame of God is faithfulness in the ordinary. You've heard me tell seniors on graduation Sunday at times that if you can't get out of bed in the morning, then make your bed, brush your hair and wear something other than pajamas, then you may not be as ready as you think you are to take on the world.

Think about this with me. What does living for the fame of God actually mean? God's fame, God's honor, God's glory, God's name and God's reputation are all different ways of referring to the same thing. All that he is and does, is his glory. He is glorious because he is holy, merciful, loving, righteous, just, good, omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient, and immutable. He does not change. He is faithful. Just as the moon has no light of its own, but reflects the light of the

sun, our very existence is to reflect the glory of God and we reflect that by imaging his attributes and actions. When you care for the hurting, minister to the lonely, encourage the weak, you are living for the fame of God because God does those things. We don't do those things in order to take pictures of ourselves so that we can share them and impress others.

Almost 50 years ago now, Ruth Harms Calkin penned this prayer. You know, Lord, how I serve You with great emotional fervor in the limelight. You know how eagerly I speak for You at a women's club. You know how I effervesce when I promote a fellowship group. You know my genuine enthusiasm at a Bible study. But how would I react, I wonder, if You pointed to a basin of water and asked me to wash the calloused feet of a bent and wrinkled old woman day after day, month after month, in a room where nobody saw and nobody knew.

It doesn't matter if you are the heir to the throne. If your dad asks you to take grain and bread to your brothers and cheese to the commander, you go. God uses faithfulness in the ordinary to do the extraordinary. We are tempted to think that the life of Christ on the earth was full of amazing miracles. But, 30 of his 33 years were marked by doing ordinary things. He fulfilled all righteousness by doing, for the vast majority of the time, ordinary things. He got up, (probably made his bed) went to work, and did his job. He, of all people could have said, what is someone like me, doing in a place like this and doing jobs like this? Jesus was the ultimate undercover boss. And everything that he did was for the fame of God. When you realize this, you realize that everything that you do matters. God uses your ordinary to put his character on display. Even eating and drinking is to be done for the glory of God. (1 Cor. 10.31) But, when you live for the fame of God you will face the headwinds of this world. This world lives for its own glory which is a fool's errand. Living for the fame of God means...

3. **This world is against you.** (19-23)

These verses reflect a sweet combination of eagerness and responsibility. David gets up early in the morning (probably made his bed too), made sure that the sheep were taken care of, made sure he didn't forget the very stuff he was supposed to take and got to the encampment in time for the armies to line up. V.21 says that both sides drew up for battle, army against army. This could not have been timed more perfectly for David. The kid had to be about geeked out of his mind. But, even then, David left his things in the charge of the keeper of the baggage before he ran to the ranks and found his brothers. He just does everything well.

V. 23 is deliberately layered in order to build the intensity. "As he (David) talked with them (his brothers), behold (Bam) the champion (the man between) the Philistine of Gath, Goliath by name came up out of the ranks of the Philistines and spoke the same words as before. The representative of the enemy of the people of God, the mocker, the accuser, the personification of evil, the larger-than-life foe who strikes terror in the hearts of Israel makes another appearance. V. 16 says that Goliath has been doing this for 40 days, morning and evening. For 40 days this hippopotamic land mass has been mocking and demoralizing Israel. But something happened on the 41st day that had never happened before. Do you see it? Look at the end of v.23. There it is. "And David heard him."

1 Samuel 17 is the account that changes the course of history and this is the moment where the account that changes history changes. While everyone else is running, David listens. He listens to what is being said about Israel, about the king and what is implied about God. He hears what they hear, but he has a different response. David realizes what is at stake. He sees what others don't see and we are about to find that he doesn't fear what others fear and he doesn't care about what others care about. He is probably running with them but wondering why. Why are we running from this? Why aren't we running to him! Why aren't we saying – you don't talk about my God this way. This is the heart of a king. This is the heart of a man after God's heart. He is consumed with a passion for the glory of God and will not abide anything or anyone who seeks to rob God of his glory. David heard and for the first time in the Bible, we are about to hear from David. Goliath makes the point well. If you side with God you will be confronted with a world that will hate you because it hates God. You can feed the hungry, heal the sick, and raise the dead, but this world will still resent you, hate you and try to get rid of you because we live in a world that is in rebellion to its own Creator. Living for the fame of God can be lonely. This world will be against you, but what is harder is living for the fame of God means...

4. **Some of “the people of God” won't understand you.** (24-27)

David is clearly stunned. Why is everyone running? The army has become used to their fear. Their fear is normal. Their cowardice is acceptable because everyone is doing it. Everyone has bought into the narrative that no one can beat Goliath. The voice of the evil one is so loud and so constant, that no one has dared to challenge it. Even Saul tries to fight the enemy with the weapons of the world. Goliath is mortally embarrassing to Saul and it reflects so poorly on him as a leader and on his inability to raise up a leader who is willing to take Goliath on. The text is silent on this, but I wouldn't be surprised to find out that Jonathan wanted to go and fight Goliath but was forbidden by Saul. Saul tries to offer rewards of money, tax-free living and even getting to marry the king's daughter. The enormity of this reward tells us how desperate Saul was to find someone, anyone to fight this giant. And still, no takers. But David heard him and he hears the soldiers in Israel's army talking about the reward. But David doesn't care about the reward, he cares about the reputation of God. Look at v.26. David's question is embarrassing to the army. David, who is not a soldier, is asking the soldiers why they aren't acting like soldiers. This guy is defying the armies of Israel. This isn't right. What is going on? Who is going to take him out? So, David starts asking questions but his concern is not with the rewards, or his own life, but with the fame of God. The others just don't get that. They can only think of themselves. That is most of our world. Others, even in his own family are threatened by David because of their self-centeredness, their lack of faith is being exposed. When the idols of one's heart are threatened with exposure, look out. Living for the fame of God is often lonely because

5. **Some will be threatened by you.** (28-30)

Our text concludes with David standing all alone. Before he stands alone before Goliath, which we can understand, he has to stand alone before his own people and before his own brothers, and before his own king, which is hard to understand. His oldest brother is livid with David and

explodes on him accusing him of shirking his responsibilities and presumes to know David's motives. Eliab, likely stinging from being overlooked by Samuel is now displaying the very reason why. He, like Saul, looked the part, but he didn't have the heart. Eliab is clearly trying to deflect the attention away from his own lack of faith, so he accuses David of the very things that in a way, he is guilty of. David rightfully asks, "What have I done? Was it not but a word?" What did David do and what did David say that was so wrong that Eliab erupted on him? It says way more about Eliab than it does David. David wasn't used to the fear and cowardice. David didn't take it for granted that God's people had to run in the face of danger and wilt under pressure. He didn't give in to the group think that allowed the accusations and lies of the world remain unchallenged in the public square.

What is the heart of real king? Here it is, living for the fame of God begins with believing God – no matter what. He may be attacked for it. He may be accused and threatened. But he believes God – no matter what. His brothers and sisters may think that this Jesus stuff is full of it, but he believes God. The youth group may run, but he believes God. Everyone is doing it. In David's case, that was true. But it still didn't matter. Their unbelief did not shake his belief.

David really is an incredible figure in the OT. In the coming weeks you are just going to love him more and more, but I have to warn you. He's going to break your heart. There are parts of 2 Samuel that I don't like to read and I definitely don't want to preach, but I have to. There are parts of his life that not only let us down, they scare us. But we need to read them and I need to preach them because our hope in life and death is not in David and is certainly not in trying to be like David. Our hope in life and death is in the Son of David – Jesus Christ.

David went into the valley of the shadow of death against Goliath and was willing to die that his people might live and he was victorious. He rescued them from slavery with the Philistines. That valley pointed to a hill. The Son of David went to a hill where he willingly died that we might live forgiven, justified, adopted and forever. Jesus Christ was our champion, our man between who stood before us and for us and died in our place to pay for our sins and then rose again proving that he had cut the head off of sin and condemnation for everyone who would trust him with their lives. Trust Christ. Live for the fame of the One who is truly glorious. He's worthy to glory in.