

“Slaying Giants”

Psalm 144:1-2

Sermon for the Nineteenth Sunday after Pentecost and LWML Sunday 2021; October 3, 2021

Emmanuel Lutheran Church, Rifle, Colorado

Rev. Charles Westby, Pastor

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At the Western Zone Rally of the Rocky Mountain District of the Lutheran Women’s Missionary League (LWML) yesterday (October 2), we heard an inspiring devotion from one of the ladies. It was a devotion based on Psalm 144:1-4. It reads like this: “Blessed be the LORD, my rock, who trains my hands for war, and my fingers for battle; he is my steadfast love and my fortress, my stronghold and my deliverer, my shield and he in whom I take refuge, who subdues peoples under me. O LORD, what is man that you regard him, or the son of man that you think of him? Man is like a breath; his days are like a passing shadow” (Psalm 144:1-4 ESV).

Our Lutheran–Christian sister who gave this devotion was Brenda Moseman. She is the Christian Growth Chair of the Western Zone. There is a very special fact about her, besides her Christian faith. She is unable to see. She read Psalm 144 to us from her braille Bible. She also took us to Psalm 46 and some other places in the Scripture, like Matthew 6 where Jesus talks about worrying. She talked about the story of King David and Goliath, which she has read. In fact, she has probably read most of the Bible in braille, if not all of it.

In her talk, she mentioned that Psalm 144 was written by King David. She mentioned further that David wrote this Psalm in connection with his battle with Goliath, the giant of the Philistine army. She connected the first couple of verses of this Psalm with David slaying the giant.

David was still a young man. Think of him standing there before Goliath, as we hear the first couple of verses of Psalm 144 again: “Blessed be the LORD, my rock, who trains my hands for war, and my fingers for battle; he is my steadfast love and my fortress, my stronghold and my deliverer, my shield and he in whom I take refuge, who subdues peoples under me.” He trains my hands for war. He is my steadfast love, my fortress, my stronghold, my deliverer, my shield, in whom I take refuge. And then Brenda said something like this. “David slew the giant in the name of the LORD.” Then she asked us what giants there are in our lives that we need the LORD to slay, within the will of the LORD. That question coming from her is a powerful one.

Brenda talked about some giants. She talked about Goliath. But what do you think the first giant she mentioned was? We would probably assume it had something to do in some way with having to cope with not being able to see. No it wasn’t that. The first giant she mentioned was unbelief and doubt. Is God with me? Is God still good, given what I am going through. Does He love me and is He gracious to me still? These questions are giants for our hearts and minds, and we need the LORD to slay them.

Her identifying the giant of unbelief and doubt is so important because it reminds us that no matter what we are going through physically, there is the spiritual battle. This is a battle for faith in God and a struggle against doubt and despair. She made such an impression on me and ministered to me because it was evident that the LORD had slain the giant of unbelief and doubt in her life, in the midst of her circumstances. She genuinely spoke to us about her faith in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, who gets her through each day and wins the spiritual battles for her.

She talked about Luther’s hymn “A Mighty Fortress Is Our God,” which we sang yesterday. She talked about how the devil can rant and rave and do what he does and how the

world can be filled with devils. Yet, we have the victory in our Lord Jesus Christ, because, as the hymn says, as Brenda pointed out: “One little word can fell him.” One little word from our Lord Jesus can fell the giant that is the devil and his minions. “Our victory has been won, by Jesus. The kingdom ours remaineth,” as Luther has taught us to sing (Martin Luther, “A Mighty Fortress Is Our God,” Lutheran Service, Book, 656).

David said something extremely important in his battle with Goliath. Goliath was taunting the children of Israel. He was saying how his god was mightier than the God of Israel, the true and living God, as David faithfully confessed back to Goliath (1 Samuel 17:41-47). Then David said this to Goliath: “The battle is the LORD’s” (1 Samuel 17:47). The battle is the LORD’s.

Yeah, sure, David was the man standing there in front of Goliath. Yeah, sure David is the one through whose faith, which the LORD had taught his soul to have, the LORD rebuked Goliath and testified to the one true living God. Yeah, sure David is one who took the smooth stone from the brook, put it in his sling, and struck Goliath in the forehead with the stone (1 Samuel 17:40, 48-49). David was the instrument by which the LORD slew Goliath that day.

But still, David’s faith rings out, the faith that was not only true for David, but true—the truth: “The battle is the LORD’S.” What are we but mere instruments? The battle is the LORD’S. And who do you think can defeat the LORD in battle, in the LORD’S time, in the LORD’S way, in the peculiar nature of whatever the battle is? No one.

David knew this by faith. Brenda knows this by faith. And you and I, we know it too by faith, or will know it, as the LORD is faithful.

And as it is LWML Sunday, we give thanks for the things that our Lutheran-Christian women here and across our Rocky Mountain District and the U.S. do for missions through the organizations of Women of Emmanuel and LWML. What giants could they tell you about that the LORD has slain for them? What giants are there now that they are calling upon God to slay?

I have also been thinking of other women in the Scriptures and the giants the LORD slew for them, because they confessed that the battle is the LORD’S.

There was Hannah, who was the mother of Samuel the prophet. We can read about her in 1 Samuel, chapters 1 and 2. She was married to a man who had two wives, Hannah and her rival Peninnah. Hannah was unable to have children. Peninnah, however, had many children. Peninnah, though, used to ridicule and make fun of Hannah to irritate her on purpose, because she had children and Hannah did not.

So when Hannah went up to Shiloh with her husband to go to the temple of the LORD Hannah was deeply distressed. The temple was in Shiloh in those days. What did she do?

She prayed. As she herself says, she poured her out to the LORD (1 Samuel 1:15). Here is a really important part about slaying giants in our lives within the will of the LORD. Pray.

Eli, the high priest, was sitting on his seat beside the doorposts of the temple. Hannah was there praying where Eli could see her. I love this part. The Scripture says that Hannah was speaking in her heart; only her lips moved. She was not speaking out loud (1 Samuel 1:13). Eli saw her lips moving but no sound was coming out. He thought she was drunk. So he chastised her. But she responded that she was not drunk, but only pouring her out to the LORD.

She was doing what all giant slayers in the name of the LORD do by faith: She was praying to the LORD. She was seeking His face, pouring the heart out. She was calling on the LORD to do it, for the battle is the LORD’S.

The LORD heard her prayer, like He hears all our prayers. He opened her womb, and gave her a son, Samuel. Samuel became the prophet through whom the LORD anointed David as king of Israel.

But then there are so many other women in the Scriptures, men too. Women like Mary Magdalene, from whom it says that Jesus had cast out seven demons. Prisca with her husband Aquila who stood by the Apostle Paul in Corinth and Ephesus when persecution broke out against Paul and the Gospel and Christians. There is Joanna the wife of Chuza, Herod's household manager. There was Suzanna, Phoebe, Lydia, and others. What giants did the Lord slay for them?

Mary Magdalene is important to us, not only because the Lord had driven seven demons out of her, but because the Lord slew the giant that we all face, the giant of despair and fear in the face of death. For Mary this giant was immediately the death of Jesus himself. He slew this giant by arising back to life from the dead and appearing to her on that first Easter morn. For us it is the Lord working the faith in our hearts to dare to believe that Jesus has the power and the last word over death. This faith itself is like a rising from death to life. And He will bring this faith into full, living physical reality one day.

And all of us Christians, whether man or woman, need to have our Lord Jesus slay a huge giant for us. It is the giant of our sin and God's judgment against it. And He has done it in His sacrifice of Himself in our place out of His never exhausted love. Only the Lord Himself can slay this giant. And He has. He has won. The message from God to us rings out from the cross, "It is finished," Jesus said as He prayed one last time to the Father on the cross and gave up His Spirit. He slew there the giant that is sin and God's judgment against it. Now Jesus releases us in forgiveness and gives hope to our hearts that we have a gracious God in Him.

I give thanks today for Brenda, who inspired me with the theme that the Lord slays giants in our lives, for reminding me that the battle is the LORD's and that He has done it and will do it, in His time and gracious will. Thanks be to God. Amen.