

“Bullies and Battles”

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I Samuel 17:4-11, 40-42, 45-49 = war and security

Bullies come in all shapes and sizes not just a 10 ft. tall Goliath. From recent news:

On April 17, a 71-year-old white woman attacked a pregnant black servicewoman over a confrontation about a parking space in Macon, Ga.

The older woman, who was with her son and her daughter at the time, told deputies that the scuffle “started over a parking spot” because “she was white and it was a race issue.”



The two servicewomen both black told responding officers they were backing into a parking space when the older woman’s son called them a crude insult.

This harassment continued inside the restaurant. The son approached them again, this time using sexist and racist slurs. One of the soldiers started recording the incident. In the video, the older woman’s daughter was seen lunging at her.

The older woman “lunged and struck [the other younger woman] in the face.” That’s when the struck woman pointed out she was not only a serving soldier but also pregnant. To which the older woman responded aggressively.

The police report stated: “With all of the lunging and slapping, it was never shown through cell phone video that [either of the younger women] did anything wrong. In fact, [one of them] tried, without fail, to stop the attack on [the other].”¹

Stepping out of this news item for a moment, we see how common it is for bullies to loudly broadcast that they themselves are the victim. I can

just hear the Philistines shouting after Goliath's fall. The headlines in the *Philistine Post* would surely have read:



"Hate Crime Kills Beloved Champion Goliath: court psychiatrist claims David repressed childhood of neglect and abuse."

and

"Heirs Of Goliath Bring Wrongful Death Suit Against King David: David claims Monarch's Privilege and refuses to release transcripts."

However, in this modern case like in Biblical times, the bully does get what is deserved. For the rest of the story:



The older woman being determined by the police as the aggressor, she is taken away and charged with assault. More charges are pending.

In the meantime, Darden Restaurants, which owns Cheddar's, released a statement saying that the older woman and her family are no longer welcome in the establishment.

"We were appalled by the behavior of the individuals who confronted the two female service members. Such behavior flies in the face of our values and those individuals are no longer welcome in our restaurant."

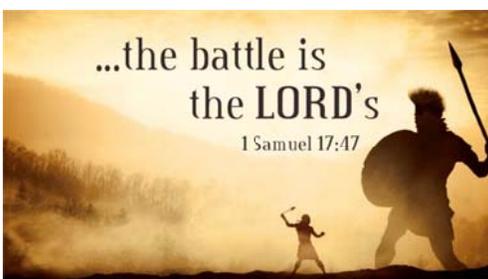
The woman is also facing repercussions in her personal life. Her job as an art teacher is in peril. Mercer University released a statement saying that she would not be teaching there anymore.²

Sometimes in life, the persons in the right win and justice is done, although it is unfortunately rare today.

This is where David and Goliath fit in God's overarching, big story. Last Sunday, Samuel consecrated a new king, the boy David, after Saul had brought ruin on Israel. God chose David purposely not from among the elite, not from one of the rich and powerful families, but the most obscure member of one of the least families in all Israel.



In I Samuel 17 the battle of two champions, the giant Goliath and the not even flyweight David. The



betting odds were long against the boy David. God does have a point and it is:

“that all this assembly may know that the Lord does not save by sword and spear; for the battle is the Lord’s.”³

Biblically war is too serious to leave to humans. In Judges 7, Gideon goes out with 32,000 soldiers against an uncountable number of Midianites, Amalekites and other “people from the East.” But Yahweh says 32,000 is too many. God sifts and sifts again Gideon’s army down to just 300(!) so the Israelites would not think themselves capable of accomplishing victory on their own. Hopelessly outnumbered they gain a miraculous victory against all odds. Just like little David.



God reserves the right to war. We are never granted it. When the nation of Israel, or any nation for that matter, is righteous and follows God faithfully, they have no need for a standing army. God defends. They prevail, like David, against the odds.



However, lest we think God is always on our side, the Biblical witness is also equally clear that if a nation is not righteous, does not follow God faithfully, no army is strong enough to prevent captivity and exile, enslavement and oppression. The obverse of the Golden Rule is just

as true: as we oppress, so shall we be oppressed.

This is all about the characteristics of God’s chosen ones. When defending ourselves from violence, will we use the world’s methods or depend on God?

There are all kinds of bullies. Beware of anyone who says we should go to war no matter how compelling. We Americans are particularly susceptible to this as out of our 241 years as a republic we have only had 17 of those years free from war ~ only 17! It’s true, and while we had won almost every war up to WWII, we have not actually been winning many since then.



WAR ON...

Politicians love wars not only against nations but also against concepts ~ against crime, drugs, terrorism, belief, immigration, ideology, another political party.

Our God arborees such wars. These wars with their movable goalposts never end, and keep the populace confused enough to keep paying for them. Through histrionics and jingoism, the people are so fatigued they have few brain cells left to examine if the war is actually accomplishing anything. Such wars create a spiral of suffering and death which makes the world immensely worse.

It hasn't been so long since we weren't a society based on such fear-mongering. We have however become one. The whole nation seems afraid, or more accurately, our leaders have learned it pays politically to play upon our fears. Such politicians encourage us to disdain people not like us ~ people on welfare, who look different than us, people with mental and developmental issues, immigrants. They play upon in-group/out-group fears, creating wedge issues to force us apart.

In the world we live in, rarely do the vain and mighty fall. Only rarely do the weak and innocent obtain justice. Almost never does a wealthy person such as Cullen Davis or O. J. Simpson get executed or even convicted for a heinous crime. Cynically that is just the way the world works.



In the face of reality, can we say God cares? Does God bring justice to the weak, vulnerable and oppressed? Does God still the storm?



giant ~ and prevailed.

Then again, occasionally little David does win over giant Goliath. In the movie *Erin Brockovich*, the title character is a real person who took on a giant utility polluting ground water and causing a major communitywide health disaster. With no degree nor formal training Brockovich took on the

Oskar Schindler of *Schindler's List*, buried in the Holy Land, is a real person as well, having saved 1200 Jews from the Holocaust ~ a David prevailing for justice against the odds.

Occasionally tiny David prevails over Giant Goliath. Tiny David prevails because his trust is in God, because he is anchored in the living God.

That is the simple message today:

It seems completely insane, but when we depend on ourselves we set ourselves up for failure. When we trust in our own abilities and think ourselves self-sufficient, we fail. When we trust God, God alone as strength of arms and a sure defense, then is when the humble may prevail over the great, the meek inherit the earth, and those who recognize their own poverty of spirit will inherit God's kingdom.



¹ News story can be found at: https://www.theroot.com/white-woman-facing-charges-after-lunging-at-striking-p-1825322119?utm_medium=sharefromsite&utm_source=The_Root_twitter

² *Ibid*

³ I Samuel 17:47