



Who is in Charge?

Sermon for the 4th Sunday after Pentecost, June 2021

St. Luke's Episcopal Church, Coeur d'Alene The Very Rev. Holladay Sanderson

[1 Samuel 17: \(1a, 4-11, 19-23\), 32-49, 2 Corinthians 6:1-13, Mark 4:35-41](#)

In the early 'oughts, in 2005 or so, there was a brief, 13-episode failed TV series called "Kings." The main characters were: King Silas Benjamin of Gilboa (think Saul of the tribe of Benjamin), David Shepherd (just guess who), the King's children Jonathan or Jack and Michelle (think Michal from the scriptures).

It was a love it or hate it series and I LOVED it. I loved it particularly because it was a modern rendering of 1 Samuel, about the kingship of Saul and the entry of David into the story. The scene was one that began in the midst of a battle with a neighboring kingdom or perhaps some underhanded goings-on in the kingdom itself.

One of the primary beginning stories tells of how newly minted Captain Shepherd saves the day by defeating a monster tank, an enormous piece of supposedly impervious and deadly machinery... the Goliath! David is recognized as a hero in the kingdom. And from there the stories continue, shaped by 1 Samuel and the eventual demise of King Silas's kingdom... as we readers of the scriptures expect to happen.

The apparently indestructible and powerful tank for our own day is the best symbol the writers could come up with to counter the story we heard this morning about David and Goliath, the 9-foot tall impossible-to-defeat soldier. Goliath curses God and dares the Israelites to send their best challenger so that the Philistines can gain one more territory for themselves. Goliath assumes the Philistines are in charge.

And here comes David. He has come because Jesse has bade his sons help Israel defeat the Philistines. David: the kid, the shepherd, the youngest, gets his sheep taken care of and heads for the battle along with his brothers. Until this time, David has not been bragging to everyone about the events of last week's scriptures, that he is chosen to become king. David has been tending the sheep and writing his psalms: his praise to the God whom he knows to be in charge. Through it all, David patiently waits upon God's timing. As long as David puts his faith in his God, he knows all will be well.

We see this particularly when he steps forward to be the one to deal with Goliath. He is laughed at but no one else was coming forward; only David. David insists that God is his right hand and Goliath will be defeated. So Saul tries to set him up to succeed in a way that just doesn't quite work out. Imagine the shepherd boy putting on a full-grown man's suit of armor. I have a picture in my head of a pair of eyes peeking out of a pile of metal of all kinds of anatomical shapes. Finally the boy steps out and says the sling is all

he needs. He knows to the depths of his young soul that God IS with him; that God is in charge.

So David meets Goliath and is mocked by the giant. Still David claims that God WILL be glorified in the way their meeting will inevitably turn out. And indeed God IS glorified. Just like Joshua fought the Canaanites with much smaller armies and won; just as Samson fought Philistines of old on his own and prevailed; just as God led slaves from slavery in a powerful kingdom; just as the promise given to Abraham and all of his descendants states; God DOES remain in charge. Saul's kingdom remains free from the Philistine rule. The most unexpected yet faith-filled challenger turns out, once again, to be the one to remind us all just WHO is always in charge.

In his Second Letter to the pesky Corinthians, Paul chides them for being led astray by others and forgetting who has always been in charge. Yes, Paul has met with challenges but most of them have been because rival factions have been lying to the Corinthians and they, gullible and hard to please as they are, were easily misled by those lies. The list of the lies are named in this lesson, yet Paul says he is still rejoicing and is still filled with faith in God. Paul reminds them to think carefully about who is really in charge; who really cares about the people of Corinth.

In the Gospel, Mark tells us of the sail of Jesus and his disciples across the Sea of Galilee. Everything starts calmly but, as can easily happen in a body of water of that size, the wind can come up suddenly. It does and scares the disciples, yet there is Jesus, snoozing quietly on the cushions. The disciples wake him and wonder why he doesn't really care about them. Then Jesus calms the storm. "Peace. Be still," he says, and all is well. Then Jesus chides them for their own lack of faith because they forgot that God is in charge.

In Mark's Gospel, the insiders generally are supposed to KNOW that God is in charge. They are supposed to be filled with faith. The beauty of Mark's Gospel is that who is an insider or an outsider constantly shifts from the beginning to the end of the gospel. In THIS story, the ultimate insiders, Jesus' own buddies, the disciples, are found wondering WHO IS THIS PERSON who commands the wind and the sea??

They have followed this man eagerly, yet at 1/4th of the way through Mark's story, they really have no idea just WHO they have been avidly following. One of Mark's great gifts is the invitation for us to continually ponder who are the insiders and the outsiders? Who REALLY knows; who really believes that God is in charge?

WE are asked the same question perhaps, daily, hourly, weekly. We are always being confronted with challenges in our lives. Some are matters we face in our homes. Some concern events in our nation and in the world. Sometimes it feels like NO ONE is in charge! Yet, is that really so? Our faith declares the opposite: GOD is in charge.

The disciples forgot it and were miffed at Jesus. On the other hand, David was faced with a challenge and took some action. He did not sit back, figuring God is in charge and will fix the problem. He didn't sit back and figure someone else would come and fix the problem. David took an action that he was able to take to do his part in addressing the challenge confronting his world. David wound up defeating the Goliath he confronted. When we face our own Goliaths, our own storms, what actions might we take?

From the time of Abraham; from the stories of Moses; from the naming of the Judges; from the Annunciation to Mary; from Jesus's own promises of the coming of the comforter and guide into our lives, God has ALWAYS promised to be with us. As Christians we are called into lives with God at the center. In our lives with God, we are God's beloved: both servants and friends, always secure in the knowledge that God is always in charge. AMEN