



# March Team Ministry

March Team St John, St Mary, St Peter, St Wendreda

*Welcome*

**3rd Sunday after Trinity ~ 20th June June 2021**

Please keep in touch with one another, and I am always glad to hear from you on 01354 279232 or at [andrew.marchurch@gmail.com](mailto:andrew.marchurch@gmail.com)

-----

**Following last week's update we are not making any changes to our worship.** We will continue to act to give safety and confidence. Services with Social Distancing

-----

**St Peter's Sundays 8am & 11am; Wednesdays 10am**

**St Mary's Sundays 9.15am**

**St John's Sundays 9.30am; Tuesdays 10am**

**"Stay in touch, take care, keep safe, continue praying and God bless."**

---

## Prayers

In the beginning, O God, your word subdued the chaos: in the fullness of time you sent Jesus, your Son, to rebuke the forces of evil and bring forth a new creation. By that same power, transform all our fear into faith and awe in your saving presence. We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, with the comfort of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

Saving God, entering the flood and storm of chaos and confusion: speak to our fearful hearts that we might find our faith in him whose word brings rest to all creation; through Jesus Christ, lord of wind and wave. **Amen.**

## **1 Samuel 17 v1a & v4-11 & v19-23 & v32-49**

*The Philistines gathered their armies for battle; they were gathered at Socoh, which belongs to Judah, and encamped between Socoh and Azekah, in Ephes-dammim. And there came out from the camp of the Philistines a champion named Goliath, of Gath, whose height was six cubits and a span. He had a helmet of bronze on his head, and he was armoured with a coat of mail; the weight of the coat was five thousand shekels of bronze. He had greaves of bronze on his legs and a javelin of bronze slung between his shoulders. The shaft of his spear was like a weaver's beam, and his spear's head weighed six hundred shekels of iron; and his shield-bearer went before him. He stood and shouted to the ranks of Israel, 'Why have you come out to draw up for battle? Am I not a Philistine, and are you not servants of Saul? Choose a man for yourselves, and let him come down to me. If he is able to fight with me and kill me, then we will be your servants; but if I prevail against him and kill him, then you shall be our servants and serve us.' And the Philistine said, 'Today I defy the ranks of Israel! Give me a man, that we may fight together.' When Saul and all Israel heard these words of the Philistine, they were dismayed and greatly afraid.*

*Now Saul, and they, and all the men of Israel, were in the valley of Elah, fighting with the Philistines. David rose*

early in the morning, left someone in charge of the sheep, took the provisions, and went as Jesse had commanded him. He came to the encampment as the army was going forth to the battle line, shouting the war cry. Israel and the Philistines drew up for battle, army against army. David left the things in charge of the keeper of the baggage, ran to the ranks, and went and greeted his brothers. As he talked with them, the champion, the Philistine of Gath, Goliath by name, came up out of the ranks of the Philistines, and spoke the same words as before. And David heard him.

David said to Saul, 'Let no one's heart fail because of him; your servant will go and fight with this Philistine.' Saul said to David, 'You are not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him; for you are just a boy, and he has been a warrior from his youth.' But David said to Saul, 'Your servant used to keep sheep for his father; and whenever a lion or a bear came, and took a lamb from the flock, I went after it and struck it down, rescuing the lamb from its mouth; and if it turned against me, I would catch it by the jaw, strike it down, and kill it. Your servant has killed both lions and bears; and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be like one of them, since he has defied the armies of the living God.' David said, 'The LORD, who saved me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear, will save me from the hand of this Philistine.' So Saul said to David, 'Go, and may the LORD be with you!'

Saul clothed David with his armour; he put a bronze helmet on his head and clothed him with a coat of mail. David strapped Saul's sword over the armour, and he tried in vain to walk, for he was not used to them. Then David said to Saul, 'I cannot walk with these; for I am not used to them.' So David removed them. Then he took his staff in his hand, and chose five smooth stones from the wadi, and put them in his shepherd's bag, in the pouch; his sling was in his hand, and he drew near to the Philistine.

The Philistine came on and drew near to David, with his shield-bearer in front of him. When the Philistine looked and saw David, he disdained him, for he was only a youth, ruddy and handsome in appearance. The Philistine said to David, 'Am I a dog, that you come to me with sticks?' And the Philistine cursed David by his gods. The Philistine said to David, 'Come to me, and I will give your flesh to the birds of the air and to the wild animals of the field.' But David said to the Philistine, 'You come to me with sword and spear and javelin; but I come to you in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. This very day the LORD will deliver you into my hand, and I will strike you down and cut off your head; and I will give the dead bodies of the Philistine army this very day to the birds of the air and to the wild animals of the earth, so that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel, and that all this assembly may know that the LORD does not save by sword and spear; for the battle is the LORD's and he will give you into our hand.'

When the Philistine drew nearer to meet David, David ran quickly towards the battle line to meet the Philistine. David put his hand in his bag, took out a stone, slung it, and struck the Philistine on his forehead; the stone sank into his forehead, and he fell face down on the ground.

### **Gospel of St Mark 4 v35--41**

When evening had come, Jesus said to his disciples, 'Let us go across to the other side.' And leaving the crowd behind, they took him with them in the boat, just as he was. Other boats were with him. A great gale arose, and the waves beat into the boat, so that the boat was already being swamped. But he was in the stern, asleep on the cushion; and they woke him up and said to him, 'Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?' He woke up and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, 'Peace! Be still!' Then the wind ceased, and there was a dead calm. He said to them, 'Why are you afraid? Have you still no faith?' And they were filled with great awe and said to one another, 'Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?'

---

### **Meditation**

When I was at Prep school back in the late 60's, the four "houses" were named after ex-pupils or members of staff who were killed or died of wounds in the Great War; one an early air ace, one a junior and one a senior army officer, and the last an army chaplain. It was in this school's assemblies where we read through successive chapters of the bible that I first heard the full story of David and Goliath. At one level, with this background of "our" war heroes, it was greeted by us small boys as a brave story of triumph of good over evil, of the small beating the strong, and as a dire warning against bullying! I had seen children's bible versions and acted it out in Sunday School, however, when I heard the full story in the bible I discovered much greater depth that led to more discomfort. And the same is true today.

Why were the Philistines (not uncultured barbaric people by any means) fighting the Israelites? It was over land, - they were sea people seeking to expand in land to the hill country; technology - they were in the iron age whilst Israel remained in the bronze age; culture - mixed marriages, language and literacy; religion - was God for

all peoples or just for one; was there one or many God's? But above all, it seems to me to be about power.

Later, for 'O'-level, I remember reading 'All Quiet on the Western Front' a semi auto-biographical book written from the German perspective of life in the trenches. It follows the fate of a class of recruits, with most dying or being terribly wounded. I recall one debate the essence of it was; "Germany is at war with England." "Nonsense! How can a field by the Rhine be in conflict with a meadow by the Thames!" "All right then; Germans at war with Brits." "Nonsense! What dispute do you, a German teenager, have with a British student, or your mother with their mother, or your grandfather with their grandfather?" "All right then, the Kaiser is at War with the King." "Well then let Kaiser Bill roll up his sleeves and fight King Edward in the mud of Flanders, and we can all go home!"

In one sense the offer of Goliath to come forward and take on one Israelite in single combat, seems to be a potential way to reduce mortality in human combat; one man dying rather than a devastating battle with many casualties. It seems a better way, but it also seems loaded; Goliath is a giant far too strong for the best of the Israelite warriors, who are humiliated by his challenge. Perhaps, the story is one to encourage lateral thinking; no size power or force to overcome, but ingenuity, guile and bravery – a small boy with a stream's pebble. The rejection is a burden on David of all the trappings of being a warrior; breastplate, helmet and sword for the tools of a shepherd protecting his sheep from wolves can be used as rich metaphor in many ways. But, I need to be careful about lauding it as a story of the triumph of the small over the large, the weak over the strong, the oppressed over the oppressor. For David, after killing Goliath, hews off his head and goes on to slaughter many people in battle, and conduct personal and family relationships in a way that is damaging and destructive. The harp playing, small weak shepherd boy grows into a warrior every bit as impressive as Goliath!

From my prep school assemblies, and from hearing scripture in worship throughout my life, from studying and preaching, I know that there are lots of occasions of killing, war, death and destruction; but I can't help the ringing in my ears of the Old Testament Exodus commandment "thou shalt not kill", and the New Testament words of Jesus "love your enemies, do good to those who hate you" and from this week's Choral evensong reading, "Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of judgement: But I say to you, that whosoever is angry with his brother shall be in danger of judgement...therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; leave there thy gift before the altar and go thy way, first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift." So although I recognise that I am just as likely to retaliate when threatened, and risk that I may be seen to "walk by on the other side" when others threaten violence, I find it hard to see any war or killing as anything more than the least worst option, and something profoundly challenging to our response to God who made all people in his image.

When Jesus awoke in the fishing boat being tossed about by the storm on Lake Galilee, he said to the disciples and to the storm 'Peace. Be still!' Well, in this time of covid plague, it feels more to me as if we are in an isolated boat in thick mist than in a storm. We cannot see others or meet them. We cannot see clearly the way forward. Rather than being tossed around we feel becalmed. And perhaps it feels safer to be in the thick mist in the middle of the lake than to take the risk of trying to move nearer to the shore, where there is the risk of finding cliffs, reefs, rocks or sandbanks rather than a safe harbour or beach to regain secure dry land. 'Why are you afraid?' 'Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?' Why are we afraid of covid? Perhaps a partial answer is to realise and give thanks for the human ingenuity that has produced vaccines, treatment and tests; for the human solidarity in accepting lockdown for the good and safety of others; for the opportunity to rethink, adapt and reforge human relationships and values. And to say with wonder equivalent to the disciples in their boat, 'Who then is this, that even the virus and the vaccine obey him?' for Jesus has said to us too, 'Peace!' and he means it.

## God bless, Andrew

---

### Prayers

O be joyful in the Lord all the earth:  
serve the Lord with gladness and come before his presence with a song.  
Know that the Lord is God: it is he who has made us and we are his;  
we are his people and the sheep of his pasture.  
Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise:  
give thanks to him and bless his name.  
For the Lord is gracious; his steadfast love is everlasting:  
and his faithfulness endures from generation to generation.

In the midst of hunger and war  
**We celebrate the promise of plenty and peace,**  
In the midst of oppression and tyranny  
**We celebrate the promise of service and freedom,**  
In the midst of doubt and despair  
**We celebrate the promise of faith and hope,**  
In the midst of fear and betrayal  
**We celebrate the promise of joy and loyalty,**  
In the midst of hatred and death  
**We celebrate the promise of love and life,**  
In the midst of sin and decay  
**We celebrate the promise of salvation and renewal,**  
In the midst of death on every side  
**We celebrate the promise of the Living Christ.**

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge of God and of his Son Jesus Christ, our Lord, and Blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit be with you this day and for evermore.

**Amen.**