

God chooses the least likely – the ones that the world often shunts aside. God preferred Abel's offering even though he was the younger son. God chose Jacob, not Esau. God chose Joseph, the youngest of the 12. God chose Moses to lead the Israelites out of Egypt. So, it does not seem out of the ordinary for God to be with David as he battles against Goliath – but it may not be quite as we think!

Our text today makes it a point to emphasize that David was not old enough to serve in the army and as he tries on Saul's gifts – it is clear he is not big enough to wear it! But this story is not about an underdog – someone who is too small to conceivably take on the giant Goliath. We want to root for David because there is something about underdogs that grab our attention.

- Jim Morris – made his major league debut at the age of 35 with the Tampa Bay Devil Rays when after fulfilling a promise to the high school baseball team he coached, to try out he threw a 98 mph fastball, 10 years after he gave up minor leagues and pitched for 2 years. His story was made into a movie entitled *The Rookie*
- Jim Abbott – born with 1 hand threw made it to the major leagues having never played a game in the minors. Through

his 10 year career he pitched a no hitter while he was with the Yankees.

- Rudy Ruettiger was just 5 feet, 6 inches, 165 pounds and suffered from dyslexia. Best known as the inspiration for the film "Rudy," it took him four tries to get admitted into Notre Dame, but he did so as a 26-year-old in 1974. Ruettiger earned a spot on the scout team. After two years of helping the varsity squad prepare for games, Ruettiger got an opportunity to play in Notre Dame's final game in 1975. He played a total of three plays and on the last play of his college career, Ruettiger lined up at defensive end and sacked Georgia Tech's quarterback.
- The 1980 United States men's hockey team defeated the heavily favored Soviet Union team to win gold at the 1980 Winter Olympics in the "Miracle on Ice."
- Movies such as Rocky, Kung Fu Panda, Forrest Gump, Hidden Figures and the Karate Kid all inspire us to see beyond the exterior.

But David's story isn't just that he was smaller than Goliath or that God was with him – David knew who he was, what gifts he had and the courage to adapt to the situation. Israelites & Philistines are at a standstill. They've been battling each other, going back and forth and no one is winning. In fact they're at a

point where neither one wants to start because whoever starts will lose. In this stalemate David enters and moves from army battle to man-to-man combat. It is this idea that small David could not possibly take on the giant Goliath. Saul does not believe that he can do it – no one there does. But David knows who he is and what he is trained to do. David knows that God has gifted him to do the work before him and has been with him through out his caring for sheep.

Saul relents but not before he tried to “help” David. Perhaps we have experienced someone helping us who really makes our job that much harder? David though knows who he is and what his gifts are. I think it’s more courageous for David to tell Saul – thanks but no thanks, I can’t do my job with your protection. He reminds Saul who he is and what he has done. David is an underdog if we think of a traditional battle but David changed what was to happen. If David had tried to take on Goliath as Saul had outfitted him the story would not have been the same. David would have lost – not because he was small but because he was not living as he was called to live.

It is easy to see whatever obstacle is before us as insurmountable – a Goliath. It is easy to see all the ways we are not up to a task if we think there is only one way to accomplish it. When I arrived at Faith 4 years ago, I heard so much sadness

about the ways in which we were not Grace. I heard the pain as people spoke of the ways in which we'd grown only to come back to a small size. I said it then and I say it again, I am glad we are not Grace or First Baptist or St. Mary's. It is not that any of those churches are bad – they are not but that is not who we are! We are Faith UMC. We have a very different way about us because we are different. If we attempted to do everything that the big churches around us we would be like David attempting to walk in Saul's armor. But if we remember who we are and whose we are we can live into who God calls us to be!

There is something about underdogs that we cannot help but root for. Do you know what each and every underdog has? They have the courage to be who they are – they all learn that they cannot do it as everyone else around them did. Jim Morris was not a successful pitcher before his arm surgeries and his high school coaching experience. Jim Abbott would not and could not pitch & field as everyone else did because he only had 1 hand. Rudy could not have sacked the quarterback for Georgia Tech if he had not learned how to do it as part of the scout squad. Kung Fu Panda could not succeed as Tigress but only succeeded when he that his greatest weaknesses turn out to be his greatest can be he strength. We can look at Dorothy Vaughan who worked at NASA as part of a group of African-American female

mathematicians that served as the brains behind one of the greatest operations in U.S. history. But when IBM came in with a computer to take their jobs, Dorothy learned the language and how to operate it adapting and making herself (and others) indispensable.

My friends we are only limited if we choose to do nothing. When we see the story of David & Goliath it is not a story of an underdog winning a fight with God. It is a story of a child of God who knew who he was and what he had to bring to the moment. It is a story of not letting others define who & how they show up. Last week we were reminded that if we are to living into the image of God we must rest and create, each in our own way. I do not worry about the future of the church. I am not worried that the numbers attending church is down. Why, because I've never known Christianity in the United States to be anything but losing numbers. I've also seen the power of being who God created us to be. I am thankful for the ways in which we care for each other. I am blessed to know that in this time in our community others needs to know that there is a place for them.

When I was a child I loved the story of Rudolph the Red-nosed Reindeer. I was upset that he wasn't welcome to play the reindeer games. I was excited when he was welcomed by the other misfits and knew that while I saw myself as a misfit to others I just had to

find my people. I knew that I would spend my life making sure everyone had a place to call home and a place at the table. There is always enough. May we remember that the something about underdogs people dismiss is that they learn to adapt. May we learn and grow so that we recognize who we are and the gifts we bring to the world. May we embrace who we are so that others know what it means to be loved by God, not in spite of who they are but because of who they are. In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.