

Dad's Big Adventure

June 21, 2009

(St. Alban's Day - Pentecost 3 - Year B)

1 Samuel 17: 1a, 4-11, 19-23, 32-49

St. Alban's Episcopal Church, Waco, Texas

When our boys were very little, I used to let Susan sleep in on Saturday mornings.

As you know, little kids wake up early, no matter what day of the week it is.

So, at 7 o'clock on Saturday mornings, the males in our house would be very quiet, carefully trying not to wake up the sleeping mother.

We would get dressed quickly and head out on our weekly Saturday adventure.

The first stop was always the same.

We would go to Shipley's Donuts - and I would hoist the boys up to the plate glass window that looked into the kitchen, so that they could see the donuts being made.

After donuts and milk, the boys and I would continue on our adventure.

I never really planned where we were headed, but I would just start driving.

I remember that one Saturday morning we drove out to the local high school and watched the football players during an early morning practice, while my sons were mesmerized by the athletic talent of the "big boys."

One Saturday morning, we drove out into the country, and we parked the car along the side of the dirt road, walked out into the field, and stared through the barbed-wire fence at cows grazing in the field.

It did not take my sons long before they started calling these Saturday morning journeys by a special name.

They called these Saturday mornings:

"Dad's Big Adventure."

There was a reason, I believe, why those Saturday morning journeys with "just the guys" were called "Dad's Big Adventure."

And I do not say this to be sexist, but I do believe that men, especially, are hard-wired to seek a life of adventure.

The author, John Eldredge, wrote an interesting book in 2001 about men and men's spirituality.

Eldredge's book is called *Wild at Heart*.

And in this book, Eldredge writes this:

“A man is never more a man than when he embraces an adventure beyond his control,
Or when he walks into a battle he isn't sure of winning.”¹

When I was in seminary, I completed an honors thesis on Masculine Spirituality.

Through my work on my thesis, I have come to believe that we need to recover the concept - for both men and women - that the Christian life is about walking into a battle that we aren't sure that we can win.

The Christian life is about embracing an adventure that is beyond our control.

Even though the Old Testament reading this morning was of a record-breaking length, we did hear the story about a young boy named David, who embraces an adventure beyond his control.

Many people, including those outside of the Jewish and Christian faith communities, know about the story of David and Goliath.

The story of David and Goliath is a story about the Israelites vs. the Philistines, the good guys vs. the bad guys.

Goliath is a Philistine, one of the bad guys.

Goliath decides that instead of whole armies fighting against each other, that he is up for an even greater adventure.

So Goliath asks for the Israelites to send just one man to fight against him, man to man.

The young David, still with just some peach fuzz on his face, comes forward and tells King Saul that he will fight Goliath on behalf of

¹ John Eldredge, *Wild at Heart*, page 213.

the Israelites.

Now the shepherd boy named David is already used to fighting off lions and bears to protect his sheep,

So with these skills, David decides to enter the battle against the giant Goliath, a battle that David is not likely to win.

But rather than using King Saul's armor and sword, David instead takes his sling shot, pulls back and 5 smooth stones from the creek bed.

David puts one of these smooth stones in his sling shot and hits Goliath right smack in the middle of his forehead.

David embraces a dangerous adventure and walks into a battle with the odds stacked against him,

Because David is a man of adventure.

This church, St. Alban's Episcopal Church, is named for another man of adventure.

Alban lived in the 3rd century in what is now England.

The city where Alban lived was ruled by Romans and Alban worshiped Roman gods.

One day, a Christian priest was running away from the Roman authorities who are persecuting him.

So Alban decided to hide this priest in his own house.

This priest then began to teach Alban about the Christian faith.

Alban was so impressed with the teaching and prayers of this priest that Alban decided to become a Christian.

Yet, the most adventurous part of the story comes next.

The Roman authorities discover that a Christian priest is hiding out at Alban's house.

So, Alban exchanges clothes with the priest.

The real priest escapes.

And Alban, dressed in the priest's clothing, is left behind to be captured by the Romans.

Alban is then put on trial before a Roman judge, where he professes his faith before the judge.

Alban then gets his head chopped off for his newly-professed Christian faith, one thousand seven hundred and five years ago tomorrow, on

June 22, 304 AD.

St. Alban, the man for whom this church is named, embraces a dangerous adventure, as Alban walks into a battle that he isn't sure of winning.

Research shows that, in Christian churches on an average Sunday, the pews are mainly filled with women.

Research shows that only 35-40% of regular Church attendees are men. It is my own personal belief that men are missing from our midst - because we have neglected to teach that the Christian faith and life is really a dangerous adventure.

In the Old Testament, David enters a dangerous adventure, fighting in hand to hand combat with Goliath.

And yet, we have communicated that the Christian life is boring and predictable.

Alban enters a dangerous adventure, dramatically exchanging clothes with a priest and getting his head chopped off.

And yet, we have communicated that the Christian life is nice, sweet, precious, church-lady behavior.

Yet here at St. Alban's Episcopal Church, I do believe that we are on the right path to a life of adventure.

And yet I do challenge each of us to continue to raise our hand - and to respond:

“Yes, I will fight Goliath.”

I challenge each of us to respond:

“Yes, I will work with our neighborhood schools in providing school supplies.”

“Yes, I will take dinner to the Baylor Episcopal Student Center and be a friend to those Baylor Episcopalians.”

“Yes, I will spearhead Multi-Cultural Ministry so that we will open our church doors to people of all races and cultures.”

For, if any of you are hungry for a sense of adventure,

If you are itching to fight in battle that you aren't sure you can win,

Then come and see me sometime,
And I'm sure I can find you a sling shot and introduce you to a few
Goliaths that need to be attacked.

For the Christian life really is an adventure, where our heavenly Father
takes us to Shipley's Donuts, then drives us to both ordinary and
extraordinary places.

The Christian life is a dangerous adventure, where we exchange clothes
with fugitives and boldly confess our faith to people who can chop
off our heads.

The Christian life is a dangerous adventure, where we shoot smooth
stones at the Goliaths of poverty and loneliness and bigotry.

The Christian life is a dangerous adventure, where we fight the good
fight and get ourselves nailed to a cross.

So, be a real man, be a real woman.
And join me in Dad's Big Adventure.

AMEN.

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