

## David, Part 4 10-31-21 The Right Man On Our Side

I am very excited about our study in God's word for today. So many things come together on this day. First of all, it is Reformation Day. I know you thought it was Halloween, but for those who love what God did in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century through Luther and Calvin and others, we think first of the historic importance of this day. It was the day when Martin Luther nailed the 95 theses to the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg, in what today is Germany. Those 95 theses were his complaints against the Roman Catholic church of his time and launched the great move of God called the *Reformation* which restored to the world a Biblical understanding of the gospel of Christ. What could be more important than that? October 31, 1517, 504 years ago today. Last Sunday David Williams sent me this – It says, *coffee first reached Europe in 1515, Luther sparked the reformation in 1517. Beware a caffeinated pastor.* But there is more – I have been teaching in our Sunday School a class on theology of the great hymns. Martin Luther's most famous hymn, by far, is *A Mighty Fortress Is Our God*. It is a great hymn worth studying. But there's more. I began October 10 a series on the life of David. The most familiar story from that life is the one we have looked at for two weeks, involving the Philistine giant named Goliath. So, let's bring those three streams together may we? Reformation Day. Hymns and David. Put those in a pot, stir them up and wallah! What pops out is an unusual Sunday message I call *A Mighty Fortress vs the Giant of Gath*.

The hymn written by Luther is one of the church's best known and loved pieces of music, the only hymn Luther wrote that maintained its popularity. The German reformer was a man who loved music. He used it in his raging battles against the devil. Luther's relationship with the devil was unlike anyone else I know in history. He spoke constantly about the enemy of his soul. Luther wrote, *the devil hates music, because he cannot endure gaiety; Satan can smirk but he cannot laugh; he can sneer, but he cannot sing*. Part of the reformation was restoring to churches the practice of congregational singing. Singing had been relegated to the clergy who sang dirges in Latin. But Luther wrote hymns for real Germans who sang of the gospel with gusto.

Our hymn for today has three themes which come right from the heart of reformation teaching. The first of those is the battle with Satan. And here is where I am going to start connecting dots between our hymn and our Biblical story. David and Goliath is a story of conflict which starts with a terrible and powerful enemy

who is keeping the people of God locked up in fear. Goliath – Satan? A lot in common there. In the hymn Satan is called our *ancient foe*. Verse one – *For still our ancient foe doth seek to work us woe*. That is what he is. Our enemy. I Peter 5:8 *Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour*. That is precisely what Goliath was out to do. He taunted the armies of Israel and said, *Give me a man to fight that I might destroy him*. Satan is a less visible but even more formidable enemy who is also called in our hymn *the Prince of Darkness*. That is in verse 3, *The Prince of Darkness grim*. Luther was a Bible student and he knew that Ephesians speaks of Satan as the *prince of the power of the air*, and as *a force of darkness*. Satan's goal is to snuff out the light of Christ. His kingdom is called the kingdom of darkness. Christ leads the kingdom of light. These two are in conflict. Luther felt that mightily. That is why his first impulse is to refer to God as a fortress, and a fortress is needed when you are under attack. In verse three he speaks of this world being filled with devils that threaten to undo us. Verse one speaks of his great craft and power, how he is armed with hate and is too much for any of us to face on our own. Got that? He is too much for us to face on our own.

This explains why the second verse of our hymn begins this way: *Did we in our own strength confide, our striving would be losing*. Luther as a gospel preacher does not say to us, *Hey, you can do it. You've got victory inside of you, just reach down and find it*. No-no. He says, you are in trouble if left to yourself. *Were not the right man on our side, the man of God's own choosing*. Okay, back to the battlefield with David. In the previous chapter we read of God choosing and anointing David right? In I Samuel the man of God's choosing is a young unknown who turns out to be *the right man*. Of course, in his hymn Luther is thinking of someone else. He says, *Dost ask who that may be? Christ Jesus it is he...and he must win the battle*. Okay. How does Luther's musical story about Christ our Victor intersect with David and Goliath? Well, Jesus is David's greater son. Jesus is the Son of David, the ultimate anointed one – Messiah. He was promised to David back in II Samuel 7 where David was told that his descendant would reign forever. But, in our story, David is a type of Christ. He prefigures Jesus because what does he do? He steps in to take on and defeat our enemy for us. He faces down sin, death, Satan, and conquers, not by a sling and a stone, but by a cross and a resurrection. But the gospel is there in I Samuel. You could not tackle Goliath on your own. You need a champion, a warrior-king to come to your rescue. David did that. Jesus does it in more profound and lasting ways. Amen?

Our Jesus came, out of the house and line of Jesse and David. Like David, he endured discouragement from the authorities. He endured mocking from his brethren, the Jewish leaders. But, like David, he let nothing dissuade him from fulfilling his mission, from taking on Satan, giving glory to God and rescuing his chosen people.

Alright, so Luther tells a story in his hymn. Having let us know we are in a battle against a powerful foe and that we have no chance on our own. He then redirects our focus from the powerful enemy to the yet-more-powerful Savior. Verse 3 - *The Prince of Darkness grim, we tremble not for him; his rage we can endure. For lo, his doom is sure; one little word will fell him.* One little word. Like one little stone. We know what that means in the David story. But that may be the most confusing line in the hymn for us. *Little word?* What does that mean? Luther clarifies it in verse four but not entirely. Some suggest that *the word* refers to the person of Jesus who is called in John's gospel, *the word of God*. Personally, I doubt that is what Luther was thinking. He has already told us that our main man, our Savior, our champion is Christ Jesus. And here I think he is referring to the power of Christ's spoken word. Think of it. How did this earth and all the stars get there? Christ spoke. His word brought all this to pass. Then, in the gospels, we read of the power of the words of Jesus. The waters and the winds are raging on the lake and what does Jesus do? He speaks to them, *be still!* And they were. He talks to demons and tells them to be quiet and they hush. He tells them to come out and they scam. He says to cripples, *rise up* and they rise. He says to Lazarus, already dead for three days in the tomb – *Lazarus come forth!* And Lazarus came forth. This is the decretive word of Jesus, the king of kings. Name me something more mighty than that? Luther writes, *That word above all earthly powers.* Jesus speaks life into a dead soul and that soul lives. Jesus names you as his own and there is nothing the devil can do about it when the Lord says, *you are mine!* Mind you, the devil can throw a fit. The devil can activate his armies and his legions to harass you. You'll notice as you read the book that most of God's favorites endured a great deal of ill treatment. Luther's hymn even says, *the body they may kill.* Huh! *The body they may kill.* When Luther wrote this he knew nobody, but nobody, would give him life insurance. He was a marked man. There was a price on his head. So, the conflict rages on, even though the outcome is made sure because the right man is on our side if we elect to be on his side and if by faith we link our lives with Jesus and say *the battle belongs to the Lord so I will take refuge in Him and wait for my deliverance.*

So, we finish our look at David vs Goliath. We can learn and should learn much from David's positive qualities on display in the story. But the primary lesson is this – weak and wounded sinners, put our hope in a champion of God's choosing and God's anointing. His name is Jesus. The forces of hell tremble at that name and the armies of God rejoice and find refuge.