

Ps 9:9-20

The Lord is a stronghold for the oppressed,

a stronghold in times of trouble.

And those who know your name put their trust in you,
for you, O Lord, have not forsaken those who seek you.

Sing praises to the Lord, who dwells in Zion.

Declare his deeds among the peoples.

For he who avenges blood is mindful of them;

he does not forget the cry of the afflicted.

Be gracious to me, O Lord. See what I suffer from those who hate me;
you are the one who lifts me up from the gates of death, so that I may
recount all your praises, and, in the gates of daughter Zion, rejoice in
your deliverance.

The nations have sunk in the pit that they made;

in the net that they hid has their own foot been caught.

The Lord has made himself known, he has executed judgment; the

wicked are snared in the work of their own hands. *Higgaion. Selah*

The wicked shall depart to Sheol, all the nations that forget God.

For the needy shall not always be forgotten,

nor the hope of the poor perish forever.

Rise up, O Lord! Do not let mortals prevail; let the nations be judged
before you. Put them in fear, O Lord; let the nations know that they are
only human. *Selah*

Mark 4:35-41

On that day, when evening had come, he said to them, "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 windstorm 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?"

COCU44B Readings

The question of authority speaks through the readings. The young
shepherd David calls on God's authority to defeat the giant, Goliath,
and then is given authority over Saul's army. An interesting feature of
this passage is the difference between Saul, whose authority is
threatened by this new leader, and Saul's son Jonathan, who would
be expected to be threatened by a possible usurper of his throne, but
who loves David selflessly and devotedly. In the Gospel, Jesus is
shown to have access to the authority and power of God - not just
over people, sickness and evil spirits, but over the natural world as
well. Both of these passages reflect on authority as power or strength
or "dominance over". Paul's letter to the Corinthians, however, gives a
different perspective. It is in the weakness and suffering of Paul and
the other apostles, and their commitment to the Gospel in spite of
their hardships, that Paul's authority is revealed, and it is on the basis
of this that Paul calls on the Christians to accept his ministry and his
message. In Psalm 9, God's authority is proclaimed over the nations
as the psalmist pleads with God to bring justice and show the nations
that they are merely human. This week we are invited to continue the
journey from committing our allegiance to God's Reign alone (two
weeks ago) to recognising the impact that small contributions can
have (last week), to living as those who are under God's authority
while also, together as God's people, exercising authority in God's
name as we bring life and justice to others.

In many developing countries the abuse of power, the corruption in
government and the violence between political and tribal factions
reflects our struggle to use power for the good of all, and the damage
that a hunger for power and dominance can cause. A similar reality is
reflected in the often vitriolic and extremely divisive rhetoric that
accompanies political electioneering. On a global scale, the injustices
from which the poor and weak suffer at the hands of the powerful and
wealthy - including unfair trade practices, debt burdens that far
outweigh any stimulus or aid that poor nations receive, human
trafficking, and exploitation through policies that extract resources
from local economies without sufficient concern for adequate
payment or sustainability - hurts us all and contribute to the violence
and instability of our world. There is no question, when we place the
way power is used and managed in our world alongside the Gospel's
teaching on power, submission, servanthood and sacrifice, that we
need a new way to think about and practice power. (*John van de Laar, Sacredise*)

1 Sam 17:(1a, 4-11,19-23) 32-49

Now the Philistines gathered their armies for battle. There came from the Phillistines camp a champion named Goliath, of Gath, whose height was 6 cubits and a span. He had a helmet of bronze on his head, and he was armed with a coat of mail; the weight of the coat was 5000 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 6 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 the sheep with a keeper, took the provisions, and went as Jesse had commanded him. He came to the encampment as the army was going 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, Goliath 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, "I used to keep sheep for my father; 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. 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." 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 5 smooth stones, and put them in his shepherd's bag; his sling was in his hand.

He drew near to Goliath; Goliath came and drew near to David, with his shield-bearer in front of him. When Goliath looked and saw David, he disdained him, for he was only a youth, ruddy and handsome in appearance. Goliath said to David, "Am I a dog, that you come to me with sticks?" and cursed David by his gods. Goliath 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, "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 Goliath drew nearer to meet David, David ran quickly toward the battle line to meet him. David put his hand in his bag, took out a stone, slung it, and struck Goliath on his forehead; the stone sank into his forehead, and he fell face down on the ground.

2 Corinthians 6:1-13 As we work together with him, we urge you also not to accept the grace of God in vain. For he says, "At an acceptable time I have listened to you, and on a day of salvation I have helped you." See, now is the acceptable time; see, now is the day of salvation! We are putting no obstacle in anyone's way, so that no fault may be found with our ministry, but as servants of God we have commended ourselves in every way: through great endurance, in afflictions, hardships, calamities, beatings, imprisonments, riots, labours, sleepless nights, hunger; by purity, knowledge, patience, kindness, holiness of spirit, genuine love, truthful speech, and the power of God; with the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and for the left; in honour and dishonour, in ill repute and good repute. We are treated as impostors, and yet are true; as unknown, and yet are well known; as dying, and see—we are alive; as punished, and yet not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing everything. We have spoken frankly to you Corinthians; our heart is wide open to you. There is no restriction in our affections, but only in yours. In return - I speak as to children - open wide your hearts also.