

## **Sermon 7B 2021: Relying More and More on the Power of God**

### **Introduction: DIY is not the only way to live**

Some of you know that my father grew up on a cotton farm in East Texas;

During the Great Depression of the 1930's;

The family farm was just outside of the booming metropolis of Frost, Texas;

Population 850;

In a funny little irony, the high school's mascot was the Polar Bear;

In a place where the temperature lived above 90 all summer.

My Dad and his six siblings and my grandparents farmed their 150 acres;

Growing cotton, growing their own vegetables, milking cows, raising chickens;

They did everything themselves and didn't own a tractor until 1940;

So the work was hard and was a year round endeavor.

They survived; they thrived; all of the children went to college or beyond;

But one thing they all took with them through life;

And passed on to their children, including me, was a commitment to hard work;

An appreciation of manual labor and the joys and challenges it brings;

They were living DIY, Do It Yourself;

Before anyone even knew that was a thing.

We grew up with DIY, and the joys and struggles of manual labor from the time we were little;

We built our own vegetable garden and weeded it;

My Dad had had enough of tilling and planting and weeding, so he mostly harvested;

We planted long rows of holly bushes ourselves;

We laid insulation one hot August in the attic while he offered direction;

Reroofed the house the next year; mowed, edged, cleaned up sticks

Took care of whatever my Dad thought we should.

We grew pretty adept at most things until the weekend

My Dad told us to take down the patio's brick wall and the brick barbecue;  
Because it was falling apart and we really didn't use the barbecue.

He and my mom left us that Saturday morning to participate in some church retreat;  
And we were armed with sledge hammers, wrecking bars, a wheelbarrow;  
And a borrowed truck that we were to fill with all the bricks.

The work went pretty well, demolition for teenagers was an attractive job;  
And we were working fast and filling the truck with brick and mortar;  
Until we got to the chimney of the outdoor barbecue.

The chimney was lined with metal plate that we couldn't separate from the brick;  
We knocked it down, but it was too heavy to lift into the truck;  
We tried everything we knew, but couldn't get it into the truck;  
Sweaty and dirty, we had just given up when my parents drove into the driveway.

Not sure how this failure would be received, my brothers and I started explaining;  
So that my Dad knew that we had tried everything we could to finish the job;  
He just looked at the chimney and at us and said we hadn't tried everything;  
We hadn't used all of our strength.

We pleaded with him that we had and he just walked into the house;  
We tried again with no success and he came out of the house in work clothes;  
Looked at us, and said, "You haven't used all of your strength.  
Because you haven't asked me to help."  
We just looked at him as he told us to try again and with his strength;  
The four of us were able to get the chimney into the truck and finish the job.

I think about that moment often when I am struggling with something in my life;  
Or when I talk with you all when challenges seem too large for us to handle;  
Or when we're not sure what the next step in life should be.

Too many times we rely on our own strength and abilities alone;  
DIY is embedded into our souls and minds at a very early age;  
And reinforced along the way in school, at work, and in the world we live in;  
But it's not the only way to life we've been given.

Too many of us are trying to do life ourselves as we forget that there are people here to help us;  
And as we forget that God is with us;  
A God willing and able to help us with any struggle or challenge;  
Adding God's Spirit and power to our lives;  
And to the challenges and struggles that come for all of us.

### **Giants and Storms**

The Old Testament reading from Samuel and the Gospel of Mark

Are both stories to teach us and remind us that we are not alone in this life;  
And that there is a power and love and a purpose available for every one of us.

Few stories in the Bible have captured the imagination of western culture through time;  
Like the story of David and Goliath;  
The underdog taking on the giant;  
The most unlikely person or weaker team succeeding;  
Someone overcoming seemingly impossible odds and winning through.

There are moments in all of our lives  
When we come face to face with giants we have to overcome;  
Sometimes it's school with some subject we struggle with;

Sometimes it's our classmates or with adult friend who may be pushing us around;  
Sometimes it's on the athletic field,  
When we're playing against an opponent who is bigger and better than we are;  
Sometimes it's a tough business cycle or some personal struggle at work;  
Sometimes it's a natural disaster or even a pandemic;  
And sometimes it's in our own homes and families when love grows cold;  
Or when someone we love is struggling; and we are facing sickness and dying and death

And this story of David standing up to Goliath gives us courage; fuels our sense of hope;  
Helps us to face the giant before us and to try and overcome it;  
David facing and beating Goliath reminds us that it's always worth the fight.

The popular author, Malcolm Gladwell, has written a very fine book;  
Called David and Goliath that suggests it's not so much an underdog story;  
But a story about gifts and giftedness;  
About using our gifts to learn in school, to play the game, to face the giant on our own terms;  
And not on the terms of the giant or in using gifts we don't have.

It's worth the read and he's done some very careful study of the scripture we heard;  
Arguing that David chose not to face the giant on the giant's terms;  
And instead of giving into the giant's advantages of size and experience;  
David used the gift of his experience in protecting sheep with sling and stone;  
And was able to conquer a much larger and experienced opponent.

It's a good message to use the advantages and even disadvantages we've been given  
To face our struggles and challenges in creative ways;  
But it's not the point of the story.  
David used something and someone else to win that day.

David taunts Goliath, “You come at me with sword and spear and javelin;

But I come to you in the Name of the Lord of hosts!”

David knows he doesn’t have to face the giant on his own;

And invokes the power of God to win the day.

In the Gospel lesson, we find Jesus and His first followers crossing the Sea of Galilee at night;

Jesus, tired from a day of teaching and healing, crawls into the stern and drifts off to sleep;

Before long, a great wind arose; waves beat against the boat; the boat starts filling with water;

And these experienced fisherman panic because they know what might happen.

Finally, they remember who they’re with and wake Jesus up;

Not to ask for His help, but to question His love and care for them;

Jesus wakes up, assesses the situation, and commands the wind to be still;

Stopping the storm and saving all of them from drowning.

Unlike David who calls on the Lord before his struggle;

Jesus’ first followers forget or are just learning about the power of God

That is available to them and everyone, when we invite God into our lives;

When we rely on the power greater than sickness and storms and sin and death;

To come alongside and help us face our struggles and challenges

Not as a DIY, but with the power of God.

### **Facing Your Struggles With God**

Every one of us is facing a struggle right now; that’s part of the gift of life;

We are all facing the struggle of re-entering life after this pandemic;

We are facing struggles in school, at work, in our homes, with our health;

We are facing struggles that call on us to use our best selves;

And the many gifts and experiences that we have learned;

But we don’t have to face them on our own.

Oh God gave us brains and gifts and experiences and expects us to use them;

We're not rocks, after all, but living, growing, gifted human beings;

But far too many of us rely on ourselves alone

And forget a power and a love that are far beyond our abilities.

I wonder how much more confidence and peace we would all have in our lives;

And in facing the challenges and struggles that are before us;

If we would take just a moment at the start of each day and over the course of our days;

To invite God into our lives; to talk with God about our worries and challenges;

To remember that we do not have to live this life on our own;

But that we worship and follow the God who is with us always;

And is interested and willing to be with us as we face the giants and storms of our lives;

Even in the face of death itself.

So let me invite you today and every day to call on the power and the presence of God;

Let me invite you to call on God to guide you; to empower you;

To give you that peace that passes understanding;

So that you may live your life in confidence and hope;

And in partnership with the God who loves you

And doesn't expect or want us to do it ourselves alone.

God is willing;

God's waiting for you and me to ask;

And when we do, God will be there every step along the way of our lives;

And enable us to face our giants and struggles;

To get that chimney into the truck.

Amen.