

“The Sword of Goliath: Plunder, Temptation, Provision, and Equipping”

1 Samuel 21:8-9

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Faith Presbyterian Church – Evening Service

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Last Lord’s Day evening we looked at chapters twenty-one and twenty-two of First Samuel.

This evening we are going to focus in on one detail that we passed over last Lord’s Day. This evening we will be looking just at First Samuel, chapter twenty-one, verses eight and nine, and we will be considering the implications of what we learn there about the sword of Goliath. At this point in the story David is on the run from Saul, he has stopped at the tabernacle, and he is talking to Ahimelech the priest.

And so we turn to First Samuel twenty-one, verses eight and nine.

Please listen carefully, for this is God’s word for us this evening:

21:8 Then David said to Ahimelech, “Then have you not here a spear or a sword at hand? For I have brought neither my sword nor my weapons with me, because the king's business required haste.”⁹ And the priest said, “The sword of Goliath the Philistine, whom you struck down in the Valley of Elah, behold, it is here wrapped in a cloth behind the ephod. If you will take that, take it, for there is none but that here.” And David said, “There is none like that; give it to me.”

This is the Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Let’s pray ...

Lord, you promise in your word that if any ask for wisdom, you will grant it.

We your people now ask for wisdom as we come to your word.

Bless us through the wisdom found in your word.

Bless us as we consider the wisdom of your church through the ages.

Bless us with the wisdom that comes through your Spirit.

We ask this in Jesus’s name. Amen

In the midst of a much longer passage – a passage that is thirty-eight verses long – there is an odd aside here in verses eight and nine of chapter twenty-one.

David needs a weapon. He asks Ahimelech the priest if they have one. One commentator points out that the way David asked Ahimelech suggests that David knew that the sword was there. In fact, the same commentator suggests that getting the sword may have been David’s primary objective in coming to Ahimelech – the bread may have been only a secondary need. [Firth, 235]

That might push us back a step and lead us to ask: Why was the sword there in the first place? We read in chapter seventeen of First Samuel that David took the armor of Goliath after killing him. How did it get in the tabernacle of God – the tabernacle of Yahweh? Well, it might be helpful at this point to remember back to First Samuel five.

When Israel was defeated, and the Philistines seized the ark of the Lord, the ark of Yahweh, then the Philistines put the ark in the temple of their god, Dagon. We get a picture here of what may

have been a common practice at the time: When an enemy of a people was vanquished, the equipment of the vanquished enemy might have been placed in a sanctuary of the victors, as a symbol of how their god had defeated their enemies. And so it would have been natural that after David defeated Goliath, he took Goliath's equipment, and brought it to the sanctuary of the Lord, the sanctuary of Yahweh, as a symbol of the truth that it was Yahweh who had defeated Goliath, and so it was Yahweh who should receive the plunder. [Firth, 235]

So Goliath, an enemy of God – a man who mocked the Lord and actively fought to conquer God's people – Goliath had a sword ... a sword that, from the sound of his other equipment, was likely made especially for him.

Then, when God defeated Goliath, he plundered him. And one of the weapons created for Goliath – a weapon created to be used against God's people – is now in the tabernacle of God. And so David, who is on the run and needs a weapon in order to fight the Lord's battles now comes to the tabernacle of the Lord. And the priests of the tabernacle – the keepers of the House of Yahweh – equip David with the sword of Goliath so that he might use it to fight the battles of the Lord.

Yahweh, the Lord, has plundered his enemies ... and he has given the very tools made to fight against his people – he has given those tools *to* his people so that they might use them in service to the Lord and his kingdom.

And so verses eight and nine here make an important point. They show us that far from avoiding the tools of his enemies, far from refusing to use them himself, David, as a man after God's own heart, is ready to take the very tools made by those who were hostile to the Lord, and to wield them in service to the Lord.

Verses eight and nine do make an important point ... but they only make half of the point that First Samuel is actually presenting. Because Goliath's sword is not the only tool of his that is mentioned or alluded to after Goliath's death.

Throughout the past few chapters we have had repeated allusions also to Goliath's spear.

Goliath's spear and his sword are the two weapons especially mentioned in chapter seventeen. The sword is now in the hands of David. But the spear of Goliath has been associated for us with Saul.

Time and time again, the author of First Samuel has drawn attention to Saul's spear. In chapter eighteen Saul attacks David with a spear [18:10-11]. In chapter nineteen Saul attacks David with a spear a second time [19:9-10]. Both times it is mentioned that Saul keeps his spear in his hand while he sits in his royal court. In chapter twenty Saul uses his spear to attack Jonathan [20:33]. In chapter twenty-two, just a few verses after our text tonight we will find Saul again with his gathered royal court, and we will be told again that he has his spear in his hand [22:6]. In chapter twenty-six we find Saul sleeping with his spear by his head [26:7-22]. And in Second Samuel chapter one, Saul's spear is mentioned again [1:6].

And as one commentator points out, the first time Saul's spear is mentioned, the text seems to especially hint at a connection to Goliath's spear in the chapter before. Now, due to the size of Goliath's spear it seems unlikely that Saul was using the actual spear of Goliath. But the language of chapter eighteen is a bit ambiguous. It could have been. But in either case, it seems clear that we are meant to at least associate Saul's spear with Goliath's spear. [Leithart, *A Son to Me*, 113-114]

And what is key in all of that is that whenever we see Saul using his spear, he is using it to fight *against* the purposes of God.

And so David acquiring the sword of Goliath and Saul carrying a spear like Goliath's holds before us, once again, two contrasting pictures.

As one commentator puts it: "David asked for a weapon and was given the sword of Goliath. Saul had been holding a spear almost continually since he turned against David (one imagines him putting it under his pillow at night), and this symbolized the fact that Saul had become a king like the kings of the nations. David also took a Philistine weapon: Did this mean that he, too, was becoming a ruler like the rulers of the Gentiles? No. Instead, the story presents two ways in which the righteous can use the weapons of the wicked. On the one hand, one can use the weapons of the wicked in such a way as to become like them; that was what Saul did, using Philistine weapons as the Philistines did, [...] to attack David. On the other hand, one can use the weapons of the wicked to fight the Lord's battles, and this was what David did. Just as he used Goliath's sword to decapitate Goliath, so he continued to use Philistine weapons against the Philistines." [Leithart, *A Son to Me*, 127]

"The story presents two ways in which the righteous can use the weapons of the wicked." We can use them in a way that makes us like them. Or we can use them to fight the Lord's battles.

This picture is what we will attend to this evening, as we consider the sword of Goliath, and think together about a theology of plunder, temptation, provision, and equipping.

And to begin, we should recognize that David's acquiring of the sword of Goliath is not the first time the Bible directs God's people to lay hold of the tools and insights of a world hostile to God, and use those very tools in the service of God and his kingdom.

The concept first comes up back in Genesis chapter four.

In Genesis 4:17-24 we read of the wicked line of Cain. Cain had rejected God, he had killed his own brother, and he had been exiled from the land Adam and Eve were dwelling in. And his descendants continued in Cain's unbelief and rebellion – Lamech, the seventh from Adam in the line of Cain, being held up as a particular example of wickedness. And in verses nineteen through twenty we read of three of Lamech's sons. The first was Jubal. We read that Jubal "was the father of those who dwell in tents and have livestock." We are also told that Jubal's "brother's name was Jubal;" and that "he was the father of all those who play the lyre and pipe." And their half-brother was Tubal-cain, who, we are told "was the forger of all instruments of bronze and iron."

Here in the book of Genesis we are told that Jubal was the founding father of keeping herds as livestock. But the Israelites were herdsman, going back to the patriarchs. Abraham was a herdsman. So was Jacob. So was Moses. So was David! But herdsmanship, shepherding, was invented by the wicked line of Cain that was in rebellion against God.

And so was metal-work! Which should have been even more alarming, because God had instructed Israel to carry out metal-work in order to construct the instruments of the tabernacle sanctuary!

And musical instruments! The lyre, we just read, was invented by Jubal, the unbelieving son of wicked Lamech. David is the first Israelite we see in Scripture wielding the lyre. And when we see him wielding it, he does so not just as a tool for entertainment, but as a weapon against evil spirits. In First Samuel sixteen David uses the lyre, an instrument developed by the enemies of God, and

he uses it against the enemies of God – he uses it to drive away the harmful spirit that was afflicting Saul.

From Genesis four and on, God showed his people that their calling towards the tools developed and truths discovered by a world hostile to God was neither to shun them nor to be shaped by them. Their calling was to lay hold of them, and use them in service to God’s kingdom. [Leithart, “Instruments Make the Man”]

We see this in Genesis four. We see this in First Samuel twenty-one. But it was this pattern in the Book of Exodus that especially caught the imaginations of later Christians.

In chapter eleven of the Book of Exodus the Lord tells his people to ask the Egyptians for their silver and gold jewelry before they leave Egypt [11:2-3]. Then in chapter twelve we read: “The people of Israel had also done as Moses told them, for they had asked the Egyptians for silver and gold jewelry and for clothing. And Yahweh had given the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians, so that they let them have what they asked. Thus they plundered the Egyptians.” [12:35-36]

Now ... what was the point of this? What was the purpose? Why did the Israelites make off with the Egyptian’s gold?

Well we find that out in chapter twenty-five of Exodus. There we read of God’s intention to ask the Israelites to contribute gold, silver, precious stones, and special cloths, among other things, to the construction of the tabernacle – the sanctuary of the Lord. [25:1-9]

Now – the Israelites had been slaves in Egypt! They had not been wealthy. And so whatever gold, silver, precious stones or fine cloths they had to contribute would be those they received from the Egyptians. God’s people were called on to plunder the enemies of God so that what they took from God’s enemies could be used in the tabernacle – could be used in the worship of God.

And that is exactly what happened in chapter thirty-five. [35:4-9, 20-29]

Though ... that’s also not the only thing that happened in the book of Exodus with the gold that the Israelites took from the Egyptians.

Because in-between chapters twenty-five and thirty-five we have the events of chapter thirty-two. There we find the *misuse* of the goods received from the wicked Egyptians. There we see the Israelites use the Egyptian gold *like* Egyptians. There the Israelites use the gold to make an idol – a golden calf that they worship instead of the Lord. *There we see the plunder reshape the people, instead of the people reshaping the plunder.*

In Saul and David we see that the weapons of Goliath can be used in a way in which one becomes like Goliath, or they can be used to fight the battles of the Lord. And in the plundering of the Egyptians we see how the gold of the idolatrous Egyptians can be used in a way that makes God’s people *like* the Egyptians, or in a way that serves the worship of the Lord.

And Christians have reflected on this image of plundering the Egyptians for centuries.

In the year 180 the church father Irenaeus of Lyons picked up the picture of the Israelites plundering the Egyptians to describe how converts to Christianity should use the wealth they acquired out of greed before they came to know the Lord: what they acquired from the world and

in the world which was hostile to God, now they should use for the kingdom of God – in acts of righteousness. [Irenaeus, IV.30.1,3,4 – ANF 1.502-504]

Fifty-five years later, in his *Letter to Gregory*, Origen of Alexandria took the image of plundering of the Egyptians and applied it to education. He urged Gregory to study the thought and philosophy of the unbelieving Greek world so that he could use it in service to his faith. At the same time, he warned Gregory to flee from the idolatry and error contained in pagan thought. And as he did, he pointed Gregory to Israel's use of the Egyptian's gold either for the worship of God or the construction of idols. [Origen, ANF 4.393-394]

After Origen, Gregory Nazianzen also picks up the image of plundering the Egyptians. [Gregory, "Oration XLV: Second Oration on Easter" Chapters 20 and 21 (NPNF2 7.430-431)]

But it is really Augustine, writing towards the end of the fourth century, who establishes this image in the Christian imagination going forward.

I know we heard a lot from Augustine this morning, but please indulge me for one more ... rather long quotation from him.

In his work titled *Teaching Christianity*, Augustine writes at length about how Christians should approach the ideas developed and truths discovered by pagan thinkers.

He writes:

"If those, however, who are called philosophers happen to have said anything that is true, and agreeable to our faith, the Platonists above all, not only should we not be afraid of them, but we should even claim back for our own use what they have said, as from its unjust possessors. It is like the Egyptians, who not only had idols and heavy burdens, which the people of Israel abominated and fled from, but also vessels and ornaments of gold and silver, and fine raiment, which the people [...] appropriated for their own, and indeed better, use as they went forth from Egypt; and this not on their own initiative, but on God's instructions, with the Egyptians unwittingly lending them things they were not themselves making good use of.

"In the same way, while the heathen certainly have counterfeit and superstitious fictions in all their teachings [...], which everyone of us must abominate and shun as we go forth from the company of the heathen under the leadership of Christ, their teachings also contain liberal disciplines which are more suited to the service of the truth, as well as a number of most useful ethical principles, and some true things are to be found among them about worshiping only the one God. All this is like their gold and silver, and not something they instituted themselves, but something which they mined, so to say, from the ore of divine providence, veins of which are everywhere to be found. As they for their part make perverse and unjust misuse of it in the service of demons, so Christians for theirs ought, when they separate themselves in spirit from their hapless company, to take these things away from them for the proper use of preaching the gospel [...] [turning] them into aids to the worship of the one God, by which the futile worship of idols would be extirpated. But they gave gold and silver and fine raiment to the people of God as they went forth from Egypt, quite unaware how the things they were giving would be restored to the allegiance of Christ (2 Cor 10:5). All that happened in the Exodus, after all, was a kind of acted parable, pointing in advance to all this." [Augustine, *Teaching Christianity (De Doctrina Christiana)*, II.40,60-61 (p. 170-171)]

Augustine distinguishes between the gold of Egypt and the idolatry and bondage of Egypt. And though those three things could all be bound up together, the calling of God's people is to separate them, to flee from the idolatry and bondage, and to repurpose the gold and the raiment for use in

the kingdom of God. Specifically, Augustine's point is that there is pagan philosophical thought and pagan ethical reflections and pagan institutions and practices which Christians can indeed take and make proper use of in service to God and his kingdom.

Whether in the musical instruments of Jubal, or the gold of Egypt, or the sword and spear of Goliath, we see with the help of the Church Fathers that God has called his people to plunder the pagan world in order to serve the kingdom of God. He has called them to take the tools developed and the truths discovered by a world that is hostile to God and to turn them to use in service of the kingdom and the glory of God. He has called us to transform the products of a culture hostile to God into the service of God, *rather than letting the products of that culture transform us and make us hostile to God*. He has called us to take the sword of Goliath while rejecting the ways of Goliath – to take the gold of Egypt while fleeing the idolatry and bondage of Egypt – to take the tools developed and the truths discovered, while rejecting and actively fighting the worldview those tools and truths were used to serve in a culture hostile to God. The faithful are to reshape the plunder. The plunder is not to reshape the faithful.

And as we do this – as we take good tools and true truths from a world in rebellion against God and repurpose them to serve the Lord, we are restoring those tools and those truths to their proper place – to the place they belong, in service to their truest Maker.

Though all the while we need to be on guard that we do not become like Saul or like the idolatrous Israelites – we need to make sure that *we* transform the tools rather than allowing *the tools* to transform us.

What are some more practical ways that that might play out?

Well, let me briefly give three examples – three areas we may see this at work: First, in wisdom or philosophy. Second, in psychology. And third, in technology.

So ... first, we are to draw from truths discovered and tools developed in unbelieving wisdom and philosophy, in order to use those thoughts and insights in service to our Christian walk and the kingdom of God.

And this is an easy one to start with because we see it in both Scripture and Church history.

The book of Proverbs is a book of Biblical wisdom, largely composed and compiled by King Solomon, who was especially gifted with wisdom by God.

Solomon tells us right at the outset that the fear of the Lord – the fear of Yahweh, the God of Israel, is the beginning of wisdom.

Which is why it is interesting to note that a chapter and a half of the book of Proverbs is taken from the sayings of non-Israelites – from people *outside* the covenant community of God.

Chapter thirty says that it contains the words of Agur. Commentators point out that the information we are given seems to indicate that this chapter comes from a non-Israelite – perhaps an Ishmaelite. [Kidner, *Proverbs*, 24-25, 171-172]

And then, right after that, the first portion of chapter thirty-one comes from, we are told, the mother of King Lemuel. There was no king Lemuel in Israel ... and there is no indication that Lemuel or his mother were from Israel. [Kidner, *Proverbs*, 24-25, 176] Instead, this passage resembles

examples we have of Egyptian wisdom literature. [Kidner, *Wisdom*, 35] Some commentators have argued that there is evidence that it may even come from a Canaanite source [Clifford, 270].

Solomon, we are told in the Bible, was, in his lifetime, the wisest man on the earth. Why, then, would he draw on material from the wisdom literature of non-believers? Well, Solomon was "wiser than all other men" (1 Kings 4:29-34), but as Derek Kidner points out, Solomon's wisdom "surpassed rather than by-passed" the wisdom of the cultures around him. [Kidner, *Wisdom*, 15]

When Solomon drew wise truths from the pagan world around him, he was acting in wisdom – to such an extent that the results of that gathering work could be made a part of Scripture. Solomon gives us an example of how believers can and should learn wisdom from non-believers.

Of course, at the same time, in another context, Solomon also serves as an example of what it looks like to go beyond gathering truths and to begin to accept false worldviews. When Solomon began to adopt the pagan worldviews and idolatrous practices of his unbelieving wives, we are told how it was his downfall. Truths and tools should be taken and repurposed for the kingdom. Unbelieving worldviews and idolatries must be fled from.

And Christians have found the same thing throughout history. Again and again, Christians in the early church saw how unbelieving wisdom and philosophy wrongly handled could be a stumbling block, while the truths and insights of that same unbelieving philosophy, when rightly handled, could be used to prepare people for faith, to help Christians more fully understand what they believe by faith, and to defend the Christian faith against its enemies. [Adamson, 287]

What does that proper use look like for us?

Generally speaking, it means that we as Christians need to be ready and willing to learn from non-Christians around us. We need to be willing to learn not just technical skills from them, but even wisdom – just as Solomon was willing to learn from the mother of King Lemuel.

It means that we expect that non-Christians in our lives will sometimes have wise advice on family life that we can take, and use in the service of cultivating a distinctly Christian home. It means that non-Christian authors will at times have advice on raising our children that we can take and use to raise faithful covenant children to know and love the Lord. It means non-Christian co-workers and self-help writers will often have wisdom that we can benefit from as we seek to use our gifts and efforts to glorify the Lord. It means that we accept that God in his providence has distributed forms of wisdom to many outside his people, and our calling is to draw that wisdom out and use it to glorify him.

It also means that we must have eyes to see when non-Christian thinkers can help our evangelistic, apologetic, and theological efforts.

In terms of evangelism and apologetics, I have mentioned several times from the pulpit how helpful I have personally found Thomas Nagel's little book *Mind and Cosmos*, the subtitle of which is: "Why the Materialist Neo-Darwinian Conception of Nature is Almost Certainly False." In 144 pages, I think Nagel demolishes the philosophical basis and assumptions of New Atheists like Richard Dawkins, and renders secular materialism deeply implausible. And Thomas Nagel is not a Christian. He even admits that this is by choice – not because he believed Christianity has been disproved, but because he *prefers* a different perspective. Nagel is open in his rejection of the God of the Bible, but many Christians have rightly drawn from the ideas he has developed and truths

he has discovered to defend the Christian faith, and to prepare others for knowing the Christian God.

Nagel is one example. There are others.

While we must always be on guard not to adopt the worldview of such thinkers, like the sword of Goliath, some of the very weapons employed by non-believers can be taken up in defense of kingdom of Christ.

That is true in wisdom and philosophy.

It is also true in the area of psychology.

In fact ... it seems to me that it is inevitable in the area of Christian psychology, and to deny it leads to more problems than we often realize.

I was a psychology major in college, at a pretty secular university. And at my secular university, when it came to psychological theories and models for counseling, cognitive-behavioral therapy was all the rage at the time. It's a secular counseling model that seeks change in people's lives by attending to their behavior patterns and their conscious thought patterns – the propositional truths which they are consciously believing as they interact with the world.

I liked that approach a lot when I was an undergraduate student. Though over time I began to see its limitations. It certainly has benefits – and it can be a very useful tool in helping people deal with certain struggles. But as an overall view of human beings it is fairly incomplete. It is maybe a bit prone to secular behaviorism and to a way of treating people primarily as “thinking things” – as “brains on a stick” – a model that was particularly developed by the Enlightenment thinker Rene Descartes.

When I began my first ministry internship (this was before seminary), I was told that I was going to complete a study program that included material on a *Biblical* approach to counseling. I was told that the model I'd be learning was one that was based *just* on the Bible – not drawing from secular or non-Christian models. This would be a purely Biblical approach to counseling. It would be very different from what I learned at my secular university.

This is what I was told ... and so I was surprised as I read this material, and eventually, somewhere down the line, realized that what I was reading was the very same cognitive-behavioral therapy I had been taught at my secular university. Or, more accurately, it was cognitive-behavioral therapy with a Christian twist. Its framework for how people worked and how people changed seemed to be taken straight from the secular psychology books I read in college – the difference being that Christian beliefs and actions had been put in place of the non-Christian beliefs and actions that secular therapists promoted.

Now, such a counseling model could work in a number of areas of life. In one sense this was a form of plundering of the Egyptians.

But on another level, it was not. Because it wasn't claiming to plunder the Egyptians – it was claiming to be a purely Biblical psychology when it wasn't. It was drawing from secular psychology without acknowledging it.

And there was a dangerous irony to that fact. It was that by failing to see or acknowledge the non-Christian roots of their counseling approach, the very teachers who were so anxious to avoid non-Christian psychology had embraced it in an unguarded way, and had let it shape their view of human beings far more than they should have.

You see, when a Christian counselor openly draws on secular psychological tools or insights, they know they are doing it, and they should know that they need to be careful and thoughtful to detach the insight or the tool from the overall worldview from which it's been drawn.

But when a Christian uses a secular psychological model without realizing or without acknowledging its secular roots, then they often fail to carefully sift it. They may even declare it to be simply a "Biblical" model. They may end up allowing that secular model to shape their worldview.

And Christian philosopher James K. A. Smith has argued that just that has been the case for many American evangelicals. We have allowed our view of human beings, and how they work, and how they change, to be shaped more by the Enlightenment than by the Christian tradition – more by the rationalistic "brain-on-a-stick" model of Renee Descartes than by the Christian Scriptures that acknowledge the complexity of the human mind and heart.

And Christian counseling models that focus on what we cognitively think while neglecting most other aspects of the human heart and life have been unwitting contributors to this tendency.

Non-Christian psychology poses a serious threat when we allow it to give us a worldview – when we allow its tools to transform *us* – when we embrace its idolatries.

But *seeking* insights and tools from non-Christian psychology is almost inevitable. Human beings have been trying to understand themselves for thousands of years. Even those who do not know the Lord, by God's grace, will have had some insights that you have not yet come upon. Our calling is to mine those insights, to draw them out of various places, and then to employ them in our spiritual growth and maturity – in our discipleship and in the discipleship of others. Like the sword of Goliath, even insights mined from psychological models that are completely hostile to a Christian worldview, can themselves be taken up and repurposed as weapons for the kingdom of God. *We are to reject the worldview while plundering the insights held captive within it.*

Third and finally, there is technology.

And here, again, we need to recognize both mistakes we can be tempted towards when it comes to the tools, truths, and insights of non-believers: the mistake of shunning them, and the mistake of allowing them, and the worldview they emerged in, to shape us.

We could talk for a while about technology, but rather than doing that, let me pick one piece of technology as an example. Let's just consider online video streaming.

Online video streaming has become ubiquitous in our world. It is everywhere. It is so present with us that it's possible for us to not even notice how much a part of our lives it is.

Online video streaming, in various forms, can be a tool for good – it can be a tool to connect people who normally could not be connected. You can hear great thinkers and teachers whom you would never get to see in person – on TED Talks or Youtube videos or online lectures, you could connect with people you would never otherwise connect with.

You could also, of course, connect with loved ones who are far away. My children can skype with their grandparents. We can skype with my nephew. And so on.

Video streaming can be a tool to connect people who might not be able to otherwise connect.

And seeing that truth, we as a church have employed it as well. We currently stream our services, and past services are archived on our website. And the goal is both to make the service available to those who otherwise would not be able to gather with God's people, and to make it available to those who attend another church and would like to supplement their worship with an additional service. Those are two main goals. And as we do that, we use a technological tool of the world in service to God's kingdom and people.

At the same time ... video streaming has begun to shape people and how they live in and experience the world in some not-so-healthy ways. Even in some evil ways. Many have noted how ubiquitous video streaming has shaped a generation of men and women who increasingly would prefer to interact with other human beings through a screen, rather than in real life. They prefer communication to be mediated through screens. They prefer a sense of community to be mediated through screens. With the explosion of pornography, they even prefer sex to be mediated through a screen. In other words, for many, video streaming has, in one way or another, become not a way to connect with those they otherwise might not connect to, but a barrier they prefer to put between themselves and real interactions with other people.

And so, the challenge for us as a church with something like online streaming is to use it as a tool, without being shaped by a worldview that *prefers* screens to real interactions with people. And if we begin to observe that our streaming service has become an *alternative* to in-person worship for many, then we will need to rethink the whole thing.

We need to use the gold, while fleeing the idolatry. We need to transform the sword of Goliath rather than allowing ourselves to be transformed by the spear of Goliath.

God has providentially distributed his gracious gifts to many. Jubal invented musical instruments. Egypt had the gold. Goliath had the cutting-edge weapons. Lemuel's mother had the wisdom. The Greeks had the philosophy. Seattle has the tech.

It is tempting to either unthinkingly embrace those things or to unthinkingly shun them.

In the picture of David with his sword and Saul with his spear, we are reminded that God has called us to something else.

He has called us to see and acknowledge the many ways that God in his grace has granted to the world around us – a world often hostile to him – he has granted to the world around us insights into his creation: he has granted them to discover important truths, to develop great tools, to cultivate important thoughts. And he has called on us, then, to take up those truths and tools, and use them for the good of his kingdom – all while being vigilant to resist any idolatry that had previously been associated with them.

That is not easy. That is not simple. It takes wisdom. But as James tells us, God grants wisdom to those who ask for it. [James 1:5]

But even as we ask for wisdom, we must recognize that in all of this, God is indeed serving us – he is serving his people.

Solomon says, after all, that to the sinner God “has given the business of gathering and collecting, only to give to the one who pleases God.” [Ecclesiastes 2:26]

When a Philistine blacksmith and worshiper of Dagon crafted a sword for Goliath – he thought he was making a weapon that would be used against the people of Israel. But God knew that he was making a tool that would be used by David to defend Israel and defeat the Philistines.

And God has continued to work that way to this day. Our calling is to have hearts that are rooted in Scripture and prayer, hearts that are imploring God for wisdom, and then eyes and minds which can scan the products of an unbelieving world, and when we happen upon a tool or an insight or a truth, we can lay our hands upon it, and like David take it up, and wield it in faith for the glory of God.

Amen.

This sermon draws on material from:

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