



Daily Reflections

FIVE SMOOTH STONES

By Sr. Jane DeLisle, CSJ

Excerpts from Today's First Reading and Responsorial Psalm, and Today's Gospel

Then, staff in hand, David selected five smooth stones from the wadi and put them in the pocket of his shepherd's bag.

With his sling also ready to hand, he approached the Philistine.

*With his shield bearer marching before him,
the Philistine also advanced closer and closer to David.*

*When he had sized David up,
and seen that he was youthful, and ruddy, and handsome in appearance,
the Philistine held David in contempt.*

*The Philistine said to David,
"Am I a dog that you come against me with a staff?"*

*Then the Philistine cursed David by his gods
and said to him, "Come here to me,
and I will leave your flesh for the birds of the air
and the beasts of the field."*

David answered him:

*"You come against me with sword and spear and scimitar,
but I come against you in the name of the LORD of hosts,
the God of the armies of Israel that you have insulted.*

Today the LORD shall deliver you into my hand;

I will strike you down and cut off your head.

This very day I will leave your corpse

*and the corpses of the Philistine army for the birds of the air
and the beasts of the field;*

thus the whole land shall learn that Israel has a God.

All this multitude, too,

shall learn that it is not by sword or spear that the LORD saves.

For the battle is the LORD's and he shall deliver you into our hands."

The Philistine then moved to meet David at close quarters,

while David ran quickly toward the battle line

in the direction of the Philistine.

David put his hand into the bag and took out a stone,

hurled it with the sling,

and struck the Philistine on the forehead.

The stone embedded itself in his brow,

and he fell prostrate on the ground.

Thus David overcame the Philistine with sling and stone;

he struck the Philistine mortally, and did it without a sword.

Then David ran and stood over him;

*with the Philistine's own sword which he drew from its sheath
he dispatched him and cut off his head.*

1 SAMUEL 17:40-51

Blessed be the LORD, my rock,

who trains my hands for battle,

my fingers for war;

My safeguard and my fortress,

my stronghold, my deliverer,

My shield, in whom I take refuge,

who subdues peoples under me.

PSALM 144:1-2

Jesus entered the synagogue.

There was a man there who had a withered hand.

They watched Jesus closely

to see if he would cure him on the sabbath

*so that they might accuse him.
He said to the man with the withered hand,
"Come up here before us."
Then he said to the Pharisees,
"Is it lawful to do good on the sabbath rather than to do evil,
to save life rather than to destroy it?"
But they remained silent.
Looking around at them with anger
and grieved at their hardness of heart,
Jesus said to the man, "Stretch out your hand."
He stretched it out and his hand was restored.
The Pharisees went out and immediately took counsel
with the Herodians against him to put him to death.*

MARK 3:1-6

Reflection

Today we have a familiar reading from 1 Samuel 17:40-51. It is the story of David and Goliath, or the weak versus the mighty, or the small versus the great. The lesson is worth remembering not for the violence of it, but for the ingenuity and faith-filled courage that speaks truth to power, making way for goodness to rise up.

The Gospel reveals different circumstances and similar struggles in the story of Jesus healing the man with the withered hand despite the objection of those in command.

Perhaps the message is that faith and trust in the abiding presence of God outweigh the controlling judgement, the status quo of the powerful. Sometimes this is costly grace.

David and Jesus reveal to us the "five smooth stones" of right relationship that force evil to step aside or at least rethink its position: Faith, Trust, Courage, Obedience, and Commitment.

Faith that is steeped in relationship with God stirs up love that is a powerful source of inner strength. Faith in God's great love for me builds up confidence that opens me to develop intellectual and spiritual gifts that inform and energize my life.

Trust in God's abiding presence makes room for deepening commitment to the ways of God and impels me to discern and choose what is good and life-giving for all, rather than focus on self-centered needs and perceptions.

Courage is borne of grace that comes from a focus on what is good, beautiful, true, and according to God's ways. Courage comes from the experience of struggle with my own ego needs and allows my best self to flourish. Faith is bigger than my fears. Courage is not the absence of fear, but rather the ability to act despite fear.

Obedience is deep listening to the Holy Spirit dwelling within me, reminding me that I am made in God's image. In concert with God, I desire to act with integrity striving for right-relationship in all aspects of my life. Deep listening reveals my gifts, talents, and abilities, given for the sake of sharing in God's creative goodness. These gifts and talents are mine to develop and share within my perceived purpose in life. I discern what **is**, rather than focus on what **isn't** or what is lacking. I re-focus my attention for the sake of graced intention toward action.

Commitment is essential to living life fully. Commitment is a determined dedication to do something, respond to grace, engage life as it is. Not just thinking and talking about possibilities, or complaining about all that is wrong. Once I have discerned what is mine to do, I choose to act, to face the situation honestly and engage all that is life-giving. Always there is reliance on the presence and love of God at work in my life. Then I sing with the Psalmist, *"Blessed be the Lord, my rock who strengthens me. God is my refuge, my deliverer, my shield in whom I trust."* (Psalm 144:1-2)



Close-up of gray cairn stone
Photo by Anthony □

For Pondering

- What are the "giants in my life" that I have slain, or still need slaying, with God's help?
 - What are the "five smooth stones" that assist me in coming into greater fullness of God's love and life in me?
 - How am I different today than when I was younger because of the work of God in me?
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For Prayer

Pray a portion of Psalm 144 as re-written by Nan Merrill:

*Blessed are You, O Radiant One,
You are hidden within our hearts,
even as we are hidden within Your heart.*

*You invite us to participate in the Divine Unfoldment,
as we awaken from our long sleep and give birth to creativity.*

*Open us that we might recognize the divine in every person,
and become sensitive to all we meet along the path.*

*For You are the Breathing Life of all,
the infinite and eternal within our hearts.*

*Evoke the Child in our souls,
that purity and grace might flourish!*

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