

Our hero

Gillian Cooper *reflects on* 1 Samuel 17:[1a 4-11. 19-23] 32-49

David and Goliath. We hear the familiar phrase and we know that a little person has taken on someone powerful in some way and won the day. We can picture the shepherd boy with his stone and sling, bravely facing the huge warrior in all his armour with his vast spear at the ready.

We have met this boy before in the Old Testament story, twice. We have witnessed him being chosen in secret ultimately to replace King Saul, who now cowers in his tent before the Philistine threat. And we have met him as the court musician, playing to soothe the king. We know he has a heart that pleases God. We know he is handsome and talented. Now we see him in a different situation. This boy also has courage and faith.

Poor Saul. He has tried so hard to measure up as king, and he has failed. His successor is everything he is not – talented, brave and blessed. It is only a matter of time. Our hero takes his stance in the name of the God of Israel, and throws his stone. As Goliath hits the ground, Saul's reign is effectively over. Even Saul's own son Jonathan has fallen for David's charms.

Saul cowers, but David stands up in the face of the threat on behalf of his people, with faith in victory but knowing the cost of defeat. His descendant will stand against an even greater enemy, and will emerge the victor by a harder and darker way. 🍌



Turn our hearts, O Lord, to you, and give us faithfulness and courage, that we may discern your will and defend your truth, and know your blessing in our lives now and in all eternity. Amen.

Fruits of the Spirit

– a meditation on Galatians 5:22-23

The peach is an example of gentleness

by Caroline Hodgson

The soft, velvety skin of the peach represents the gentleness we need to nurture in our hearts, even if it sometimes means we bruise more easily.

Mother Theresa said: "It is better to commit faults with gentleness than to work miracles with unkindness." In recent weeks you may have been practising love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness and faithfulness. Now consider who you reveal these

qualities to. Do you find it easier to show them to someone you feel comfortable with? Do you perhaps make judgements about who is vulnerable or strong? Sometimes it's worth remembering that we all – rich or poor, young or old, in sickness or health – have fears, worries and doubts. It's simply part of the human condition. If we soften our hearts and nurture the qualities of gentleness and understanding, if we drop our judgemental side and practise an open, approachable manner, we soon start to radiate God's love. 🍌

“**May my teaching drop like the rain, my speech condense like the dew; like gentle rain on grass, like showers on new growth.**”

Deuteronomy 32:2

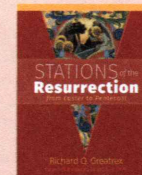
The Eucharist Part III, the early Church (continued)

by Richard Greatrex

When Constantine adopted Christianity as the official Roman religion, the Eucharist moved from private homes into the public sphere, became influenced by court ceremonies and eventually took place in specially designed buildings. Prayers led by the presiding bishop expanded to include the text we know as the *Sanctus* (beginning "Holy, holy, holy, Lord...") as well as an account of the Last Supper (1 Corinthians 11:23-26), along with prayers

that those present might benefit from the sacrament.

As the public nature of worship drew larger crowds, the elements of bread and wine gained increasing centrality as the locus for Christ's presence. This led to the introduction of prayers for their consecration, that they become Christ's body and blood. The Roman rite introduced these into the long Eucharistic prayer before the institution narrative, but the Eastern Church also added an extra petition for the descent of the Spirit, called the *epiclesis*. Thus liturgies began to diverge. 🍌



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