

File: FRT Exodus 16

Dear Friends in Christ, Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, Amen!

One thing I enjoy is greeting people at the front door when they come to church. Every now and then there's a young person who approaches the front door with a little bit of a scowl on their face, they put their head down and blow past me. More times than not the parent will roll their eyes, look at me and say "Sleepover". Enough said. There's always a price to be paid for a sleepover and sometimes part of the price that's paid is a little extra grumbling the day after until they get caught up on sleep.

Kids aren't the only ones who grumble. Adults have been known to grumble when it's too hot, or too cold or it rains----or when it snows too much or when it's too humid or when we have 21 inches of snow and 5 weeks later it's over 100 degrees —and that's just the weather. There are some people who hardly ever grumble, and then there are those if they weren't always complaining or grumbling about something in life they wouldn't know what to say.

Adults grumble about weather but also about more serious things: things like ongoing health issues, financial problems, the unfairness of life. Whether

you're a major grumbler or a minor grumbler we've all grumbled about something. And we're not alone.

In the Bible reading from this morning the Israelites had turned into a bunch of grumblers. It seemed that no matter how faithful God had been---some new test of their faith brought back the old doubts and despair and grumbling.

Let me take a moment to set the context of the passage. It had only been a couple of months since they had been delivered from slavery in Egypt and passed through the Red Sea. As they were walking through the desert God led them to an oasis called Elim. I can imagine it looking like an oasis in the movies with big palm trees, some green grass and lots of water. While it was a welcome rest it wasn't God's plan to let them stay there. They were to head to the Promised Land--a land which was said to be flowing with milk and honey which would end up being a 40 year journey.

After they left the oasis of Elim their stomachs began to rumble they began to grumble (**READ Vss. 2-4**). What did they grumble about? They grumbled about what they drank, about what they would eat, about missing the food they had in Egypt, they grumbled about their leaders Moses and Aaron, they grumbled about what they were given and how much they were given. It's all right there in Chapters 15-16. It was like the stereotypical road trip: 'Are we there yet' 'I'm

hungry” “I’m thirsty” “I have to go to the bathroom” “Why did we have to go on this trip anyway”. Let’s just say a grumbling spirit had overtaken a grateful spirit.

Basically they had forgotten God’s faithfulness to them in the past. They idealized the past forgetting about the hardships they faced in Egypt. They forgot about working in the brick pits, the task master’s whip, they forgot the blood, sweat and tears of slaving for Pharaoh. They forgot God’s promises and how he’d allowed Moses to part the Red Sea to allow them to escape bondage in Egypt under Pharaoh. They forgot that God’s provided for them physically but spiritually as well.

When the Israelites were so disrespectful, ungrateful and grumbling God could have rained down fire and brimstone. Instead The Lord rained down sweet manna from heaven literally giving them food to eat. God continued to show mercy on them. When they deserved to receive the full force of the wrath of God, He pours out grace!. This grumbling in the desert is not singular instance it had become a spiritual problem and a way of life.

When our circumstances get unpleasant we can easily become grumblers to God. We all know that life isn’t filled with constant ease, comfort and pleasure. We know there will be difficult times, perhaps even times where we wonder if we

can go on. And there is a time for complaining to God. There are Psalms in the Bible that put words to our complaints about life. They are called Lament Psalms.

Listen to the first few verses of Psalm 13--- “How long, O Lord? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me? How long must I wrestle with my thoughts and every day have sorrow in my heart?” and Psalm 22 “My God my God why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me, so far from the words of my groaning?”

Genuine lament and telling God what we’re really feeling is a good thing to do. But to keep lamenting from turning into chronic grumbling Psalm 13 turns it around at the end and says “But I trust in your unfailing love; my heart rejoices in your salvation. I will sing to the Lord, for he has been good to me.” All of the lament psalms turn it around in the end and put the focus on God’s goodness and faithfulness.

So while there may be a time and a place for lamenting and maybe even some grumbling to God the Lord doesn’t want us to stay there. Even with all of their lamenting this person in the Psalm is able to remember that God has been good to them.

God’s plan for Israel was in some respect the same plan God has for you and I and that is that we come to trust God as our sole provider. To trust God as we go

up against those times in life when it feels like we are out in the desert, I mean way out and lost in the desert with no food and water, when there's no oasis in sight wondering if we will survive.

That desert place might be when someone we love treated us in a way that has caused us to question our love for them. It might be wondering if we can survive the latest health scare. The desert place might be wondering if we'll ever be able to love or forgive ourselves or wondering if that person will ever change or recognizing that some of the dreams you had for your life might not come true in the way you'd hoped.

Yeah those desert experiences are real and can be pretty sobering and when we're in them it's pretty easy to develop a grumbling spirit. It's God's desire that we look to the Lord as our sole provider. Yes we still have to go to work, nobody's going to magically pay the mortgage or rent. So seeing God as our sole provider isn't to be measured by material stuff because that would be misguided and unbiblical because there will always be someone with more and someone with less which leads to grumbling.

No, to move from grumbling to gratitude means coming to know that God loves you, even if you can't love yourself, and forgives you even if you can't forgive yourself and others. Moving from grumbling to gratitude means knowing

that the Lord has provided the most important thing we need, forgiveness and salvation, even though it may not seem like the most important when we're in that desert.

Forgetting what God has done leads to complaining, grumbling and fear. Remembering what God has done leads to gratitude and hope. So we can live with fear or we can live in hope.

And living in hope begins by remembering what God has done for us and knowing that first and foremost his primary concern is not about our physical comfort and safety but about our souls and relationship with him. That's why God told the Israelites to constantly remember what he had done for them because it would give them hope to move forward.

Deut 6:12 "...do not forget The Lord, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery."

Deut 11:19 talking about God's teaching "teach them to your children, talking about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Write them on the door frames of your houses and on your gates..."

Psalm 77: 11-12 *“I will remember the deeds of the Lord; yes, I will remember your miracles of long ago. I will meditate on all your works and consider all your mighty deeds.”*

Colossians 3:17 *“And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the father through him.”*

We can grumble and live in fear or we can remember what God has done and God’s faithfulness and live with hope. May God bless you this morning with a spirit of thankfulness and remembrance as you think about the desert experiences that The Lord has led you through. And May God bless you with a spirit of gratitude and may you live with hope. In Jesus name Amen!!!