**October 18, 2020 Exodus 17:1-7**

***Grumbling ad Grace***

**Scripture:**

Exodus 17:1-7 NRSV

*(1)From the wilderness of Sin the whole congregation of the Israelites journeyed by stages, as the LORD commanded. They camped at Rephidim, but there was no water for the people to drink. (2)The people quarreled with Moses, and said, "Give us water to drink." Moses said to them, "Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you test the LORD?" (3)But the people thirsted there for water; and the people complained against Moses and said, "Why did you bring us out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and livestock with thirst?" (4)So Moses cried out to the LORD, "What shall I do with this people? They are almost ready to stone me." (5)The LORD said to Moses, "Go on ahead of the people, and take some of the elders of Israel with you; take in your hand the staff with which you struck the Nile, and go. (6)I will be standing there in front of you on the rock at Horeb. Strike the rock, and water will come out of it, so that the people may drink." Moses did so, in the sight of the elders of Israel. (7)He called the place Massah and Meribah, because the Israelites quarreled and tested the LORD, saying, "Is the LORD among us or not?"*

**Notes:**

1. Our ***attitudes*** are a reflection of our character and faith.
   1. The Hebrew’s ***attitude*** is a reflection of their faith
   2. ***God*** does what he says.
2. Happiness can only be found when we become **content** in our relationship with Jesus.
   1. Moses asked God for help.
   2. There is a direct relationship between asking for help and believing,
3. Moses asked for help but God didn’t do all of the work. ***We*** still have to ***act***.
   1. Like Moses, be unafraid to ***ask*** for help
   2. God will make a ***way***.
   3. The Lord ***provides***.
4. God showers ***grace*** upon us when we need it, whether we deserve it or not.
   1. God wants you to ***believe*** in His intervention.
   2. God wants you to ***humble*** yourselves
   3. God wants to constantly pour ***grace*** upon all of us, even when we least expect it.
5. ***Look*** to the Lord for the ***answers*** to our problems
   1. Have ***compassion*** on those among us who are in a difficult situation.
   2. Extend ***forgiveness*** to those who may have wronged us and hurt us,
   3. Be the ***vessel*** God uses to pour his grace upon the people of this world.

**Script:**

I want to say I praise God today for the week of vacation I have experienced. Especially for the lessons I have learned. Many of you know what I experienced in the Motorcycle accident; you know that Jan was thrown off the bike, that she hurt her back, and was taken by ambulance to the local trauma center or Emergency Room. I thank God that after all of the tests that she is able to make a complete recovery with no physical evidence of the trauma. And I walked away, oh, I had some bumps and bruises, but I was not seriously injured. My motorcycle on the other hand suffered some damage, enough that I am not sure if they will to fix it up. It’s an old bike, 19 years to be exact, and the value is decreasing and the price of replacement parts are increasing. When the cost of repair reaches between 60-80% the chance of repair greatly drops. So some may be saying that’s too bad or what a shame for the bike. And to that I respond, it is fine, I am ok with whatever comes my way; because I have been blessed beyond what I deserve by the grace of God.

Many of us grumble about everything. If it is inconvenient for us, we find it easy to grumble. If it is painful for us, we grumble; if we lose through the events of the day, we grumble. If something comes our way that is unexpected and not a windfall for us, we grumble. And even if they come out smelling like a rose they can find something to grumble about.

Some may think I have a right to complain and grumble; I have suffered trauma, potential loss of family and property. I can understand if he grumbles, and believe me; I have grumbled at times. And that is where we find the Israelites this week as we continue our journey in Exodus. The Israelites have traveled into the dry arid desert. They have needed for food and they grumbled, but the Lord supplied. And now they need for water, and guess what they are doing; they are grumbling again. Turn with me to Exodus 17 and join me in the reading of our passage today.

(1)From the wilderness of Sin the whole congregation of the Israelites journeyed by stages, as the LORD commanded. They camped at Rephidim, but there was no water for the people to drink. (2)The people quarreled with Moses, and said, "Give us water to drink." Moses said to them, "Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you test the LORD?" (3)But the people thirsted there for water; and the people complained against Moses and said, "Why did you bring us out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and livestock with thirst?" (4)So Moses cried out to the LORD, "What shall I do with this people? They are almost ready to stone me." (5)The LORD said to Moses, "Go on ahead of the people, and take some of the elders of Israel with you; take in your hand the staff with which you struck the Nile, and go. (6)I will be standing there in front of you on the rock at Horeb. Strike the rock, and water will come out of it, so that the people may drink." Moses did so, in the sight of the elders of Israel. (7)He called the place Massah and Meribah, because the Israelites quarreled and tested the LORD, saying, "Is the LORD among us or not?" Exodus 17:1-7 NRSV

Our attitudes are a reflection of our character and faith. Moses is leading the Hebrews out of slavery into a freedom they have never experienced. and the Hebrews are acting like spoiled rich kids, born with a silver spoon in their mouth. But when you think about it, they have no reason to warrant their attitude. They are fugitive slaves, on the run; traveling through a dangerous terrain so they will not be detected, they are avoiding capture by the Egyptians.

Today they are grumbling because they don’t have enough water. They grumble because they have to struggle each day. I am guessing they are grumbling about other things as well. Grumbling that they have to go out and gather the manna each morning. Grumbling that they have to capture the quail for their evening meal each day, and who knows what else they are grumbling about.

Their attitude is a reflection of their character and faith. Moses was being criticized for bringing them into the desert and allowing them to run out of water. They did not recognize the hand that leads Moses. They did not recognize the one who has provided them with this freedom. But they have no problem grumbling about their place in the world at this time. Why did you bring us out of Egypt? To kill us, our children, and our livestock with thirst? Can’t they see that Moses is thirsty also; can’t they see that he is doing the best he can? But even more so, don’t they remember how the Lord provided. When they cried out that they were hungry, at the shore of the Red Sea, when they were bound in slavery in Egypt. But notice one more thing, now, they are crying out to Moses and not to the Lord.

So Moses cries out to the Lord, “What shall I do Lord, I believe they want to kill me, Lord.” And the Lord replies, “Go to the rock at Horeb, take some elders along as witnesses. I will be with you. Strike the rock and I will make water come from the rock; enough water that the people will have plenty to drink.” Moses does as he is told, and God does what he says.

But as for the Hebrews, this negative attitude, this grumbling is an expression of unfaith. If they had believed as Moses did, they would have had more confidence in his leadership. But all they could do is find fault. It wasn’t Moses that the people had a problem with; it was God. God had intervened several times, but they still found fault. They failed to trust in the God who had orchestrated their release and freedom. How many times would God have to intervene before they start to believe? One may come to the conclusion that the Hebrews would be unhappy, no matter what situation they would find themselves in.

In many ways I can see the same attitudes in our world today. Even in our churches across this nation many have similar attitudes. As a people we have an attitude of entitlement. Our constitution says that we have the right to have and do as we want, doesn’t it? I don’t think so, our constitution says we are born with inalienable rights; of life, of Liberty, And of the pursuit of happiness. These are inalienable rights but not the promises of God. Nowhere does it say that your life will be a good one, you are entitled to life; nobody has the right to take it away. As for liberty; we are free to live as we see fit, no matter how wrong or right it may be; as long as it does not infringe on the rights of others, and as long as it does not work against the sovereign law of the land. Finally, we have a right to the pursuit of happiness; however, there is no guarantee we will ever be happy. We can chase as many of the things we want but there is no guarantee any of them will make us happy. So many people do not know what will make them happy, no matter what some try, they are never able to find happiness. Happiness can only be found when we become content in our situation. We can only find contentment in our relationship with Jesus, walking in the light of God’s commandments and words.

When the Israelites complained to Moses, he didn’t get defensive or argue. Instead, Moses asked God for help. I believe more people would have a positive attitude if they would not be so stubborn and ask for help. I believe there is a direct relationship between asking for help and believing, just as Moses did, that God would provide.

Why is it so difficult to ask for help? Unfortunately we live in a society that has taught us to be independent and self-sufficient. But, is it realistic to think that we can get along through life without any help. That’s not the way God designed us. From the very beginning he knew that Adam couldn’t live alone so he gave him a helpmate.

Moses asked for help but God didn’t do all of the work. God told Moses to gather some of the elders and then strike the rock with the rod. Moses had God’s help but he still had to act. Getting help doesn’t mean we’re off the hook. We still have to act.

Years ago I spoke of a man who was complaining to God that he never won the lottery. He prayed and prayed that he would win. Finally he was outraged and God replied. “Son, if you want to win the lottery, you first have to buy a ticket.” The same is true with getting help. Last week as I stood next to my wife being prepared to be taken to the hospital, I had all kind of questions. What is going to happen to Jan? How am I going to get to the hospital? What was I going to do with the Motorcycle?

Like Moses, I had to act. And I had to be unafraid to ask for help. What was I going to do about the bike. I asked and the firefighters were willing to let my bike parked outside their station; but they couldn’t guarantee any type of security. The police said their station was secure and I could park it there until could come back to get it. God made a way, problem 1 was out of the way.

Next how was I going to get to the Hospital? I asked and the officer checked with his sergeant and was given permission to take me. The ride was uncomfortable, bumpy and tight, but I was happy that I was able to get to the hospital and be with Jan. God provided again.

What was going to happen with Jan. I had nobody else to turn to but God. My prayers were going up like smoke from one of my campfires; no definitive direction but plenty of it. Once I notified the boys what had happened and what was going on, I texted the district pastors and asked Becky to placed on the prayer chain. There is power in the prayers of the church, and I know there were plenty that evening; because I wasn’t afraid to ask everyone I could think of to pray. Yes Jan has bumps and bruises, but she is able to walk in the doors this morning and that is a praise in itself.

My last concern was how was I going to get back to our campsite to get my vehicle. I was always raised to know that if you are ever in need, call the church, especially the church of the Nazarene. As we drove from the scene in the police car, I called the Cherokee Nazarene Mission no answer. After arriving to the hospital I called the Waynesville CON and left a message, I then realized that it was Wednesday evening and they were in the middle of their services. Later I received a call from the pastor who said he would come pick me up, and he would take me back to the campground so I could get my vehicle. The Lord provides, every problem was taken care of and after I returned to the hospital we received Jan’s results. I believe the injuries were sprains and with some pain management we were able to head back to camp.

What I find amazing about this story in Exodus is that God intervened and gave them water to drink. The Israelites complained again and again, but God still responded. The fact that God brought forth water from the rock is symbolic of the fact that God showers grace upon us when we need it, whether we deserve it or not.

God wants you to believe in His intervention. He wants you to have a positive attitude because then and only then, do we demonstrate and grow our faith. God wants you to humble yourselves; to not be ashamed nor afraid to ask for help when you have a need. You must be the one to decide if you are going to lean on God and his church when you are in a tight situation, or if you are going to lean only upon your wits and intelligence. You may be smart, but you will never outsmart God.

God wants to constantly pours grace upon all of us, even when we least expect it. We must be looking to the Lord for the answers to our problems; the problems we encounter in our personal lives, as well as the problems we encounter in this world. We must not allow fear of rejection to stand in our way. If the Lord brings you to it, He will see you through it, I firmly believe this. When we are tempted to grumble about the situation, consider why you are grumbling; are you upset that you are not getting your own way? Or are you just needing to vent your frustrations?

As I stood at the accident scene looking at the man who had just hit us with his truck, I had compassion on this man. He had no intention of running over us, he was just trying to get to his destination like us. For a moment he was blinded by the sun perhaps and that is when he struck us. As I began to calm down, in my heart I forgave him. In my heart I could feel his pain. In my heart I I knew I had to forgive?

In this world in which we live, maybe this is something we could do a little more often. Have compassion on those among us who are in a difficult situation. Help where and however we are able by sharing the love of Jesus to others. Extend forgiveness to those who may have wronged us and hurt us, even if they do not deserve it. Realize that this world is in the mess it is in because people have begun to feel entitled to more than they deserve. Who among us deserves the grace of Jesus? We are all in need of it, but there is not one of us who is deserving. Be the vessel God uses to pour his grace upon the people of this world.