

“Complaints” Sermon: September 24, 2017
Exodus 16:2-8, Philippians 1:21-26, Matthew
20:10-16

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Hebrew: gogguzó - I whisper, murmur, grumble (generally of smoldering discontent). (an onomatopoeic term imitating the sound of cooing doves) – to murmur or mutter (grumble) with muffled undertones; a low constant murmur.

The grumbling and murmuring were a complaint against Moses and Aaron. The basic complaint was not that they were hungry. They missed Egypt. They missed the security that being bought and paid for brings. This is having an authoritarian personality. “We need someone to tell us what to do, how to think, what to say, or just who to blame-to make it easy for us.” They grumbled, murmured, and gossiped among themselves:

We had plenty, we had surfeit. We had all we wanted and more. The Egyptians took care of us.

They looked forward to the passivity that having someone or something else control your life brings: “We sat around pots of meat and ate all

the food we wanted.” They preferred to be dehumanization of being enslaved rather than live freely before God. Is not this why our elected leadership seems to only do the bidding of the rich and powerful, and to look after their interests to the neglect of the majority of the earth’s people? Do we not tend to look to those who have quick, easy answers?

It makes no difference what we have or have not done or what others have not or have not done. It matters that we are faithful in what God has presented us with. No matter how small it seems to others, or how great others’ contributions and involvement appear to be, the rewards are given equally to all, on the basis of faithfulness.

God’s response was a teaching response, “God will rain down food for you, will provide for your necessities, but you will become an active participant in the process.” There would be no pots of meat, sitting out there for whenever they

decided to sit down and chill and eat. God wants a militant, God-directed church of warriors, not a passive bunch of complainers. They would have to gather their food every day. God was disciplining them even as he met their need, teaching them and us, “I don’t do surpluses and give guarantees to prove my words. You must learn to live them out, creatively in faith.”

Instead of being dependent on Egypt, dependent on physical food, dependent on the idol gods that you think will guarantee your every desire you will learn to depend on Me. You won’t get continual food, but you will get continual Me. You are the object of my creation, the object of my love, the focus of the future. You will learn to compliment me rather than complain because you will get to know me when you realize that your very existence is in my

hands. To complain is to beat upon the chest in protest, to compliment is to reach out and offer praise.

Rather than complain about the absence of structures and systems that had ordered every aspect of their lives in Egypt, they had become sojourners. They were on a journey to a new land, a new situation, new opportunities, new ways of relating to each other and a new understanding of God. They would become active participants in God's journey to life.

God wanted the ancient Hebrews to understand, life, the fulfillment of life, the joy of life is not about getting all that you can. Life is about learning to sustain that part of you which food and drink and shelter and abundance can neither satisfy, nor sustain. Jesus reminded his hearers that God had not changed. God follows

the same plan that he had for the ancient
Hebrews in Exodus 16:16-18:

Let every man gather as much as he will need, an omer (2.3 or 3.64 liters) for each person, according to the number of persons in his family, take, every man for those in his tent. The people did so and gathered, some more, some less. He who gathered much had nothing left over, and he who gathered little had no lack; each gathered according to his need.

The alternative to complaints, to grumbling and murmuring is living the creative, productive life-generous giving of self, compliment-living rather than complaint-living, faithful in praise to God. God desires us to **receive a spiritual reward that far transcends life's temporary-material satisfactions.** In faith we shall pursue and receive. Amen.