

## Grumbling and Tired

In our readings today I think it is easy for us to pass judgment. Those Israelites had seen the plagues, the red sea parted. They literally got a miracle every day as they saw the pillar of fire and smoke and bread, manna, on the ground. And here they are grumbling (which comes from unbelief) against God and Moses. “Oh you led us out here to kill us! We should go back to Egypt!” Don’t miss what that statement confesses, it confesses that their God and leader are not working to save them, are not working for their good, and in fact, are working to actively harm them.

And we think, “what a bunch of overgrown two year olds. Stop throwing fits. Of course God will take care of you.” But did you ever stop to think that they were, I don’t know, really thirsty? Maybe it looked like they were dying. Maybe heat stroke was going around and people were starting to go from headaches to body cramps and passing out. And what if it was your child? You want to swap places with them and live in the wilderness for a generation, living in tents? Being led who knows where or for how long? You wouldn’t ever ask what the leader was thinking, what he was up to?

I think we are more sympathetic to the woman at the well. She didn’t ask to be born a Samaritan, but the Israelites didn’t ask to be born into slavery in Egypt

either. I think we are more sympathetic to her because she didn't seem to have received any miracles from God like the Israelites did. She wasn't one of the lucky ones. She tried to carve out a life and a family, I assume, but was met by rejection each time. It certainly seems that the men had the first and last word in divorce in the ancient world and there she was 5 husbands later with a man who would share a bed but not vows. She was an outcast ethnically, socially, and as Jesus talks with her, religiously. He says, "You don't know what you worship." Those Samaritans with their watered down theology and high places (not the temple).

And so here we have a woman living an unfaithful lifestyle, with an unfaithful worship style, who seems so unloveable. Do we have any sympathy for a lady just trying to get some water and didn't ask to be rejected and so down and out? For a lady that just seems, I don't know, tired?

And where do we find ourselves on this spectrum? From the grumblers to the down and out. If you are a grumbler who finds yourself angry, finds yourself lashing out at others, finds yourself saying "well if we did it MY way things sure would be better." Then my challenge for you today is to sell all you have and go live in a tent in the desert for 40 years. And no, you haven't seen the red sea part – but what has God done to you to make you so angry? Are you lacking for food or water? Then please see any of the food banks in town. Do you not have a warm place to sleep? If so, we can probably find a spare room among us.

We are some of the richest people in the world. King Solomon couldn't flip a switch and get a hot shower. The scholars of old didn't have access to the resources we have. We have imaginary worlds at our fingertips, just turn on the screen. We can see the relatives hours away that were weeks away for anyone else not living in the last one hundred years. We may not have seen the red sea part but we've seen the wonders of the universe. We've heard the eyewitness testimony of the resurrection – the sign of Jonah! And we shrug them off – “too much traffic, too expensive, not enough time – got to get back to the rat race that makes us miserable for 5 days a week. Y'know, priorities.” And then we turn and say, “Man God, I don't know if you're good. I don't know if you're fair – I sure don't deserve this, they do! Man, I sure would do things different than you...” We grumble...

But maybe that's not you. Maybe you look at the world and you see beauty and you see wonder and amazement, but it just doesn't seem to ever come your way. I saw a research report that said 10% of Americans are on anti-depressants – more than any other country in the world. Now, please, don't hear what I'm not saying – I am not saying there are not reasons for medication. But I am saying that there are a whole lot of people out there who think their value, their meaning, their purpose, their reasons for hope, are running out. There's a whole lot of people who can't see a whole lot of joy and think they are unloveable. There's a whole lot of women at wells out there.

To these, this lowly pastor gives, maybe out of pocket, gives just a few thoughts: 1. are there decisions you are making that are robbing you of joy? Staring at bad news on the TV isn't going to generate a lot of positivity. Nor will social media. Nor will 60 hours in an office and 0 with the kids at the dinner table. Second, constant distraction or self-medicating might alleviate the pain for a time, but that only addresses the symptoms, not the underlying cause. That's like getting water from a well, you will thirst again. 3. It's the same with all the self-help stuff. Now, this may seem contradictory to point 1 (about making healthy choices) But again, this is aimed at the underlying cause. Self-help concepts aren't bad ideas. Exercise, diet. God made us body and soul, so by all means – make those healthy choices. But again, no self help regimen can stop time or age or death. When that heart fails, when the bones break, when the chemo hits. What then? Where is there hope for people who can't help but see that this life is so unfair and we are all rocketing towards age and death? I wonder if the woman at the well felt like that at times. Just tired, and not expecting anything great.

And maybe that's you, or maybe you are a mixture of both – the grumbler and the tired one.

The good news is, well just that, Good News – and it is the same good news no matter where on the spectrum you are.

The good news is obvious in our gospel lesson. Here this unloveable woman will be loved and offered living water. And we rejoice in that beauty don't we? Do we rejoice in the Old Testament lesson? Did you miss it, the grumblers, they get their water too. Do you not see the patience of God? And his love?

His love for grumbling, chosen people, who should know better and be more thankful. His love for an unloveable, not well born, social and theological outcast. They both get the water. God's goodness comes to them. Does God condone their grumbling? No, he names the place after those things as a reminder, and yes, later they will grumble again. And this woman, does Jesus condone her sin? Does he say it's OK for the Samaritans to worship on the high places? No. But he does then tell her where to look for the Goodness of God.

And so you, grumblers or tired ones. Look to Jesus. Look to God who is patient and merciful and abounding in steadfast love. Look to the gifts he offers. Gifts poured out from a cross where the Savior of the World, the One with the water of life said, "I thirst." As he succumbed to the wrath of justice for sin. Look to the one who, knows all about that word "deserve" that the grumblers like so much. You deserved to be there, he didn't. Yet he goes for us. Look to the one who was so tired he needed help carrying his cross, and there poured out everything he had, his whole life for the "unloveable." And as he was pierced out came blood and water. For us.

That gift is yours! Who needs a new phone? Who needs an earthly temple or high place now? Who needs water? We could be in the middle of the sahara, dying, and have all we need for life – life abundant and eternal! Lets pray that the Holy Spirit would use these realities and gifts to change our hearts, our priorities, our anger, our hopelessness. Jesus died for you, for the world, no one is unloveable, because he loves them! And that includes you. Jesus died a death we deserve, so those things you love so dearly, folks, those are gifts – not deserved. Each breath you take, each meal you eat, each accessory, each toy. Gift. And that’s not a guilt trip - God doesn’t begrudge the gifts he gave his people – the red sea parting, the pillar, the manna. He gave them freely. Why should he begrudge your hot water, your car, your phone? Celebrate those gifts, by all means – he gave them to you. But can we look at them as just that: gifts. And be thankful for them, and not hold them above the gift giver who gave his whole life for you!?

Our God IS good, even if his ways are not ours. Our God is loving. And he gives us gifts here and now, he gives us gifts eternal from his risen son. May we then, be a people of compassion, trust, and steadfast Hope. May his Spirit and Word guide us into such things by his grace which overflows like water, in a flood of mercy.

Amen.