

Lent 4 – March 15, 2015

Text: Numbers 21:4-9

Theme: "Grumble, Grumble, Grumble"

**We grumble a lot. Some of us whine and complain. Some of us grouse and grumble. Some of us pout and glower. But regardless of how we manifest it, it amounts to the same thing. We are ungrateful brats. God provides us with more than we can ever use. We Americans even throw away more than most people in the world have. God certainly provides more than we ever deserved and yet still we grumble.**

**I hate buying gifts for people. It's not because I am selfish. I love giving a gift, but I am not a very good gift buyer and rarely do I ever get it just right. It's the wrong size or the wrong color or doesn't have some component or another to make it work. People grumble. Oh they grumble politely but you are well aware that it was not exactly what they wanted. And I know the frustration and irritation of standing in the return line which is usually understaffed and takes forever. So my suggestion is, "How about I just give you cash and you can buy what you want?"**

**"Oh no," I'm told. "That's so impersonal." Okay so you would rather me pick out something you don't like or don't want because it's more personal that way? Apparently the answer is yes. I would rather you pick me out something about which I will politely**

**complain and eventually return or regift than to take money and buy what I want for myself. Okay. Such is the life of a rotten shopper. It's my cross to bear.**

**But we often have the same spoiled attitude with God. God is the perfect shopper. He gives us exactly what we need and if we do not want it, we are wrong for not wanting it because God knows we need it. God gives us every good and perfect gift and still we grumble. He gives us exactly what we need and only what improves our lives and adds beauty to our lives and still we grumble because it was not what we thought we wanted. We pray in the collect of the day, "Your mercies are new every morning, Lord!" But that's not what we really mean. We really mean "your mercies are lovely but could you give me what I want?" It's as though I bought you a beach house in Hawaii and you said, "You know, I really appreciate the thought but the mailbox is completely the wrong color and frankly I prefer hardwood to tile on the floors."**

**How dare we grumble against God and yet we still do. We grumble because deep in our hearts, we think we know best. Here's an important tool for you to use in your life when you are tempted to grumble against God. John tells us in the Gospel,**

**“...the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their deeds were evil. For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. But whomever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his deeds have been carried out in God.”**

**By nature, we love darkness. By nature we are wicked. By nature we hate the light because it exposes our private sin. So anytime we are tempted to grumble against God, we can be certain that we are seeking darkness and not light. God made me a plumber but he should have made me a doctor. He provided a home for me in Villa Park, but he really should have given me a condo on Lakeshore Drive. He made me short and he should have made me tall. We like to think that we know better but in reality, God knows exactly what we need to be, where we need to be, what we need to be doing, and what we need to do it and he provides EVERYTHING.**

**The key is for us to shut our mouths and open our eyes, our ears and our hearts. We are so certain that we know what is best. We shout our opinions from every roof top and rarely ask the question, “What does God want?” If we listen to his Word, God will tell us and show us why we are where we are. He will lay in our**

**path everything and everyone we need to grow and mature as his children and he will provide joy for us. Even though we grumble; even though we hide in darkness; he has sent Jesus to die for us so that we will have perfection with him in paradise, but we can begin living in that joy and light right now.**

**If we prefer to grouse, grumble, and go our own way, so be it. He can always send fiery serpents to remind us of who is in charge, to brighten up our darkness with a little fiery pain. The fiery serpents won't kill you. They'll just make you uncomfortable. Their bites burn and sting, but we have Christ on the cross. He has already paid the price for our arrogance. We are his eternally after we traverse this valley. We are permanent citizens of heaven but the condition of life on our way through this valley is up to us. We can listen carefully for God's voice in his Word and strive to joyfully and thankfully submit to his will, or we can do our own thing and walk among the fiery serpents. Want to grumble and whine that God is not providing what you want? Want to live your own way without being encumbered by God's demands? You are free to do so, and by the way, be sure to enjoy those snake bites. They come with the territory you are choosing.**