

SUNDAY STORIES

Pointless Grumbling / Exodus 16:2-15/ Matthew 20:1-16

QUICK NOTES

The Hebrews are no longer slaves in Egypt. They are completely separated from them and now begin growing as a community with new leaders and only a promise for the future. As Everett Fox puts it, this community is free from the enslavement of childhood moving into the discontent of the teen years to later become an adult community of promise. It takes a good forty years of wandering the desert.

CONNECTING WITH THE STORY OF GRUMBLING

The book of Exodus shrinks a story that took forty years and two to three generations to take place. The book of Numbers tells the same story, but we get a little better understanding of the time it took for the Hebrews to get to the land they would call HOME. That being said it is the book of Exodus that influences Jewish and Christian culture so deeply. The shame comes because most Christians don't even see the connection.

After the Hebrews celebrate their freedom, time passes. They start feeling like Moses doesn't know what they are doing. There are three separate occasions when the murmuring against Moses takes place, "We have no decent water. Now we have no food. Dang nab it, there's no water in this place at all. Send us back to Egypt where even in slavery we were at least given something to eat"

Moses' reply against the grumbling? "Who the heck are we that you should grumble against us? We're just following God's orders. Grumble against us and you grumble against God."

*"Some people are always grumbling because roses have thorns; I am thankful that thorns have roses" –
Alphonse Karr*

CHICKEN-BOY BY ROBERT PLATZ



Sometimes we forget the importance of our blessings.

WHAT'S SO GOOD ABOUT GRUMBLING?

Grumbling, or murmuring, is an insidious form of complaining. We say things under our breath, but just loud enough so someone hears it. It has a tendency to make us feel a little better without taking the courage to really state our case. In a community murmuring has a tendency to undermine the leaders of the community. Eventually the murmuring gets to the right set of ears, in this case Moses. But God has been listening all this time and he gives the people what they need each time. Eventually the continual tug and pull of: *people grumbling and God's giving, God giving orders and people resisting, people grumbling, and God giving* creates something out of the wilderness

experience: A consolidated community; a Sabbath (before the Law of Moses); a Passover Feast that continues to be celebrated. For Christians it also consolidates community as they understand Christ as the Moses who lead us out of enslavement into new freedom, a day of Sabbath, and Passover meal that becomes our Holy Communion.



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THE FIRST BIKE RIDE

A common theme runs through stories of children riding bikes for the first time without training wheels. It's a common and popular story because it happened to so many of us. It involves a parent who takes the training wheels of your bike, balances the bike as you get on, starts to run with you till you gain some speed, they let you go, you wobble, and you fall. The parent is there at your side and even in the midst of some murmuring and fear, with your parent's encouragement you get back on the bike. You may fall a few more times, but with each step you see you're beginning to see your balance is getting better. Finally comes the day when you're able to ride that bike with no help. **The variations on the theme are:** Some of us get right back on the bike without grumbling; some of us cry and say, "I can't do it."; some of us fall once; some of us fall more than once; some of us get it in a day; some of us have to try over a few days or longer. What holds true is: Everyone skins their knees sometime AND there's a parent who bandages us up and encourages us to continue our ride. None of us get to the promised land of balanced bike riding at the same time or with the same wounds.

THE MURMURING WORKERS

Jesus gives us a story that would resonate with many illegal immigrants and homeless men and would not make Jesus popular in Union circles. A Landowner hires some men early in the morning to work his vineyard for the daily wage. He hires some more at 9 am, then 3 pm, and again at 5 pm. At the end of the day they all get the same wage and the workers who worked the longest grumbled against the owner. But his wage was fair and one they agreed to. Isn't it his right to give what belongs to him as he chooses? It's a story about God who gives to us and our grumbling when we don't think it's fair. [Click this link](#) to watch a modern version of Jesus' story. [Click this link](#) to watch a more traditional version.

I DON'T GET IT

In many families the eldest child gets the newer clothes and the siblings get the hand me downs. The eldest child has more responsibilities while the youngest gets away with 'murder'. When we are children we grumble about the disparity of treatment, but if we're lucky enough to have at least one parent that loves us very well being first or last doesn't matter. All of us equally got into the Promised Land of being clothed with a love that carries us through a life time. That's how God is. No matter how unfair it all looks now, no matter how much we grumble, God hears, God loves, and God continues to lead us to the Promised Land if we so choose.

PRAYER

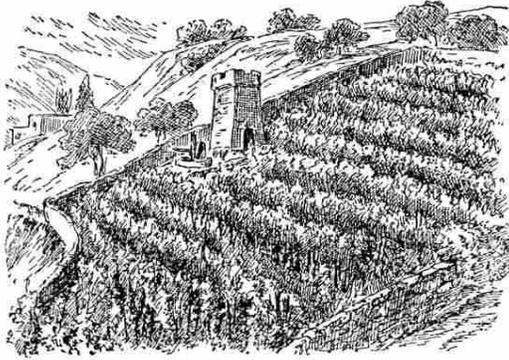
Lord forgive our grumbings and help us to accept and recognize the abundant love you give us each day. Amen

Children's Section

Share the YouTube links with your children and have a discussion about the story. If the story is about God does that change the story for the family? If you can't get to the links here's a fun old Sunday School version from 1922.

THE LABORERS IN THE VINEYARD

So when even was come, the lord of the



said
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his

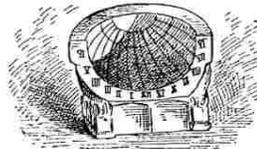


Call the



and give them their hire, beginning
from the last unto the first.

And when
they came
that were
hired
about the
eleventh



they
received

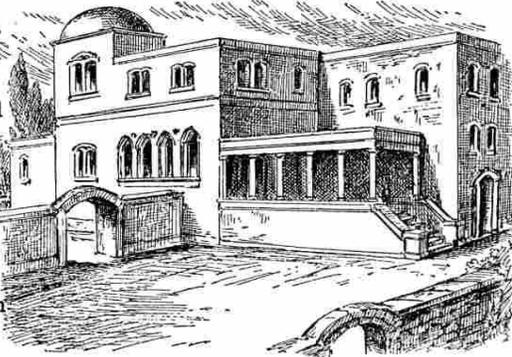
every man a



But when the first came, they supposed that they should have received more; and they likewise received every



a penny.
And
when
they had
received
it, they
murmur-
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against
the
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Saying, These last have wrought but one hour, and thou hast made them equal unto us, which have borne the burden and heat of the day. But he answered one of them, and said, Friend, I do thee no wrong: didst not thou agree with me for a penny? So the last shall be first, and the first last: for many be called, but few chosen.