

Rev. Janet R. Doyle
Elmer Presbyterian Church
21st Sunday after Pentecost
Sunday, November 2, 2025
Scripture: Philippians 2: 12-30
Sermon: Do Everything Without Grumbling

Three men died at the same time and ended up in front of Saint Peter at the Pearly Gates. Saint Peter said to the first man. 'Why should I let you in?' The man answered, 'I was a doctor and I helped many people get well.' Saint Peter said to the second man, "Why should I let you in?" The man answered, "I was a lawyer and defended many innocent people." Saint Peter said, "Okay, you may come in." Saint Peter then said to the last man, "And why should I let you in?" The man answered, "Well, I was a managed health care professional and I helped to keep health care costs down." Saint Peter thought about this for a moment and said, "Okay, you may come in, but you can only stay three days!"

Health care costs are a very sensitive subject, and a controversial area of life and also an area of life that people continually grumble about. We don't know how to deal with it or fix it so we grumble about it.

We are all good grumblers, aren't we? There is always something to grumble about and we always like to grumble with someone else that likes to grumble.

There is a movie series from the 1990's that is about two men. Here are a few clues to see if you can recognize the movie.

Complaining, negativity, intolerance, uncompromising, griping, fussing, and one more that should give it away, grumpiness....

Answer? – Grumpy Old Men & Grumpier Old Men.

Walter Matthau & Jack Lemmon get away with attitudes and behaviors done in a way to make us laugh. However, if we were to practice their words and actions in real life, we would be far from funny!

In real life no one wants to spend time with a complainer, a grumbler, a grumpy old man or woman, or even a grumpy young man or woman.

Studies have shown that few things are more detrimental to our health than a bad attitude. Because our attitudes begin with our mindset, if our perspective is stuck in the muck of negativity, our body, behaviors, mental, emotional, and even physical health will begin to take on this posture – a posture of negativity!

The opposite of gratitude is ingratitude

Webster defines ingratitude as, *“the failure or refusal to acknowledge receipt of something good from another; the forgetfulness of, or poor return of kindness.”* Have you ever had someone that you helped out or did something good for and rather than thank you act like you had to do it, or they deserved it, it was your job to do it so therefore no thanks necessary?

Ingratitude is the choice not to recognize good or kindness in our life or the life of others. It is the choice to take on the mindset and the spirit of the “Grumpy Old Men.”

When it comes to grumbling and complaining, ranking right up there would have to be God’s chosen people, the Israelites. When I think about grumbling and complaining I’m instantly reminded of the people of God in captivity in Egypt. The Old Testament tells us that they were slaves in Egypt for four hundred years and that God heard their groaning, he heard their grumbling and complaining, and he remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. Now obviously he didn’t forget his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, but he came down from heaven, and Exodus chapter 3 tells us that he met Moses, speaking to him from a burning bush and saying,

“I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am concerned about their suffering. So I have come down to rescue them from the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land into a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey” (Exodus 3:7-8).

And so, God commissioned Moses to go to Egypt and tell Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, that God said, *“Let my people go.”* As you could imagine, that didn’t go over very well with the Pharaoh, but through a series of 10 different miracles God turned Pharaoh’s heart and he let the people go. However, that wasn’t the end of the story, because no sooner did he let the Israelites go then he had second thoughts; he hardened his heart, he changed his mind, and took off in pursuit of them. But once again, God

miraculously delivered them by parting the Red Sea, allowing them to cross through on dry ground before bringing the waves crashing back down on Pharaoh's army and drowning them.

God then led the Israelites through the wilderness performing miracle after miracle; feeding them with bread from heaven, giving them water from rocks, and neither their clothes nor the sandals on their feet wore out (Deuteronomy 29:5). But guess what God's people did? They grumbled and complained. In fact, it's so amazing just how much they remind us of us.

In Exodus chapter 14, they said to Moses in verse 11,

"Was it because there were no graves in Egypt that you brought us to the desert to die? What have you done to us by bringing us out of Egypt? Didn't we say to you in Egypt, 'Leave us alone; let us serve the Egyptians'? It would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the desert!" (*Exodus 14:11-12*).

They were grumbling and complaining, muttering under their breath, and honestly it sounds like so many of us today, doesn't it? But Moses says something that's very interesting, he challenges them with this question in Exodus chapter 16, he confronts them and says,

"Who are we? You're not grumbling against us, but against the Lord" (*Exodus 16:8*).

Now, when I read that I was stunned, because what the word of God is telling us is that when we grumble and complain against our circumstances, no matter whether it's the weather, or against your mother or father, or your children or grandchildren, your neighbors, your boss, or your political leaders it's actually against the Lord.

Moses said, "Your grumbling and complaining is not against us." He said, "I'm not taking it personally, because it's against the Lord." He said they were grumbling against the Lord.

What is it that you grumble about? Some of us grumble because of relationships. Maybe money is tight, or your boss is driving you crazy, it's raining again, or the Wi-Fi's too slow? But what I hope you'll understand is that the problem isn't your circumstances; the problem isn't the weather, the problem isn't with the internet service, the problem is that we've taken our eyes off of the goodness of God and focused on ourselves. That's what leads us to be constantly grumbling and complaining.

The Apostle Paul, whose great goal in life was to preach in Rome and reach the leaders in Rome, he'd be able to impact the whole world with the gospel of Jesus Christ. But what happened is that he got arrested and sent to Rome as a prisoner. His dream was to go to Rome as a preacher, but instead he's locked up for two years, chained to Roman guards 24 hours a day, awaiting what possibly could be his execution. And so, you could just imagine the temptation to grumble and complain, "God this isn't fair, I've been serving you, I've been faithful, and you know how hard the floor is, how bad the food is, and how difficult life has been." But instead of grumbling and complaining, look at what the apostle Paul wrote in a letter to the church in Philippi that we are studying. Here's what he said in Philippians chapter 2:

"Do everything without complaining or arguing, so that you may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which you shine like stars in the universe" (Philippians 2:14-15).

Now what does he say to do without complaining or arguing? He says, "Do everything" right? Whatever it is, wherever you are, do everything without complaining or arguing. The problem is, that many of us have preconditioned our minds to negativity, because the more complaining that you do, the more your brain becomes accustomed to thinking that way. And so, no matter where you are, or what you're doing, you're always going to get what you're expecting.

That was the problem the Israelites were facing, because they were grumbling and complaining when they were in captivity, they were grumbling and complaining when they were released from slavery, they were grumbling and complaining even though they were free to worship the Lord in the wilderness and the Bible tells us that's a very dangerous place to be. And so, what we need to do is to fix our minds on Jesus. It's not a sin to change your circumstances. But it becomes sin when we grumble and complain about it and don't ever do anything about it.

Too much grumbling can cause permanent illness within a church body. There must be peace. The church and the believer must be an example to the world. Christians should be able to love each other and handle differences.

When we focus too much on the grumbling of life, the light of Jesus Christ is blocked and others can't see Christ in our life.

Jesus said, "It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life" (John 6:63). Think about that statement: every word that Jesus spoke contained life. He spoke only as the Father prompted Him according to John 12:50; therefore, not one time did He ever speak in the flesh. That would mean that Jesus never grumbled or complained because grumbling, by its very definition, are words uttered in the flesh.

The word "grumble" means to murmur or speak complaints under your breath against someone or something. One commentary stated that grumbling comes from our agreement with something that is contrary to God's will. It's a symptom of faithlessness, and so our mouth declares our agreement with hopelessness. Given the fact that our mouths contain life and death, Proverbs 18:21 says, "The tongue has the power of life and death and those who love it will eat its fruit."

Our complaints become negative prophecies over our lives and situations when we complain and grumble.

The Israelites' grumbling was so serious to God that it severed their covenant with Him; therefore, they were uncovered and became vulnerable to the enemy. Their complaints aligned them with a spirit of death. What kinds of things come out of our mouths?

Paul wrote, "Do all things without grumbling or disputing; so that you will prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world" (Phil. 2:14-15). One of the ways that we prove ourselves to be blameless and innocent is by doing things without grumbling. God desires that we live above reproach amidst a perverse generation. That means that we are to speak words of "life" no matter what we are doing. That might be why Paul continued to write that we were to hold fast to the "word of life" (Phil. 2:16). Perhaps holding to the word of life is "speaking words of life" every time we talk.

If we are full of the Holy Spirit and filled with His Word, then I believe that our mouths will release content that reveals that truth. Let God sanctify your tongue today. Ask the Holy Spirit to cleanse and fill you. Ask the Holy Spirit to guard your mouth so that every word that you speak is life. Fill your

heart and mind with the Word so that His words spill from your lips rather than grumbling.

May God help us speak words of life and not words of grumbling or complaints. May God cleanse our hearts and fill us all with His Spirit. May we speak as Jesus did with words that are filled with the Spirit and filled with gratitude for all the blessings God has given us in our life.

Come to the Lord's table today with grateful hearts and words of life.