

Rev. Janet R. Doyle
Elmer Presbyterian Church
20th Sunday after Pentecost
Sunday, October 11, 2026
Scripture: Exodus 16: 1-12
Sermon: But God... Provided

We all have questions we wish God would answer don't we? Questions about our world, our community, loved ones and ourselves.

Sometimes our questions to God may contain a touch of criticism or an element of complaint. It is so easy to complain and grumble about things.

Psalms 13: 1-2 states "How long, O Lord? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me? How long must I wrestle with my thoughts and everyday have sorrow in my heart? How long will my enemy triumph over me?"

Sometimes these are similar words to what we may be feeling about our relationship with God. Most of the questions we think about or voice to God have already been asked at one time or another. The Bible shows us that we are not alone in our struggles. Many answers God gave to other men and women can also be a guide to our life.

The Old Testament is the story of a people of God who constantly forgot what God had done for them. His goodness, his love, his care and his provision for the people of Israel were seldom remembered. But God...provided. God did not forget his people, and God allowed them to have a fresh start many times.

Abraham, Moses, Elijah, Sarah, Hannah, and Esther all tried to follow God and were not afraid to bring their questions and their complaints to God.

In the Bible there are several Hebrew words that are frequently translated by the one English word, **COMPLAIN**. The word **ANAN** refers to someone who "sighs" habitually. They may not speak their complaint but there is no doubt that there is a complaint.

LUN is a word that means murmur or grumble. Anyone who has ever had to live with someone who grumbles all the time knows why it is so difficult. The sky always looks like rain—no chance of sunshine.

SIACH, the third Hebrew word, is often translated “**Complain**” but it has another meaning. It can also mean “**Meditate**”. To recognize that complaining to God can also be a form of **meditation** opens a new door in our relationship with God.

In one sense when we question God about something, when we complain, we are also calling out to Him to come closer and to mediate His will for our life. We are asking him to help us work something out, to help understand him and his ways more for our life.

It is a time that God never refuses us, for this can be a time that we come to know him better, and we learn to trust him. When we learn to trust him, we find that we are increasingly ready to obey first and ask questions later.

As Isaiah 54: 4 says about Jesus, “Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows.” We are not alone in our questions and in our times of complaining.

Many times when we are faced with a new situation in life we look back at our life and say “Boy, those were the good times.” And then we get into another situation and we look back at the previous situation and say “Wasn’t that the best of times?” Or someone you loved died and all you remember are the good times with that person. You have a hard time remembering some of the difficult times.

I don’t know why looking back with rose-tinted glasses is such a big part of human nature. But we all seem to do it at some point in our life. Some people do it all the time where the past looks more attractive than the present or the future. The known is more comfortable to us and the unknown is scary because it requires us to depend upon God more than ourselves.

The children of Israel were certainly not unusual in remembering only the good things about Egypt. Forgotten were the trials of serving their taskmasters in Pharaoh’s brickyards. Forgotten was the whip and the harshness that could command the death of all their baby boys. Now they had their freedom and the only thing they could remember was the food and that they weren’t hungry back in Egypt. They remembered they had all they needed. Or did they?

When we lived in Central Asia, the former Soviet republics, many older people wanted to go back to communist rule because at least they had food and a job.

It was the same for the Israelites. They were wondering if they had made a big mistake in leaving Egypt with Moses. In the beginning they were excited about the adventure and the new found freedom.

But after nearly two months on the move, they were hungry and discouraged. Rations were running low and tempers were getting short. It was natural for them to turn to Moses and Aaron, the two men who had brought them into this uncomfortable situation.

Moses had not been eager to take the job of leading his people out of slavery into Egypt. Only the strongest sense of calling had sent him to Pharaoh in the first place. Since then he had seen the Hand of God faithfully pull him out of one tight situation after another until finally the people were free to go back to their homeland.

When the Israelites came and complained about him bringing them out into the desert to die of starvation, Moses wanted to set the record straight. If the people had praise, the praise belonged to God; if they had a complaint that also belonged to God.

Complaints need to be directed to the right person or group who is responsible for the problem and not to spread division or discord within the family or community by grumbling or complaining to the wrong person.

Problems are part of the human condition and the circumstances in which we grow and mature. Difficulties then can become learning experiences that help us mature in our relationship with God.

There was a couple who knew God wanted them to move to another city for the husband to take a new position. They didn't like moving and changing from the familiar but they knew God wanted them to move. They enjoyed the new town and then a few years later the husband lost his job. At this point they could have looked back like the Israelites in the desert and said, "Why did we ever come here? We wouldn't have been in such a difficult position if we had stayed where we were."

It would have been a natural reaction to look back, but instead they looked forward and what God wanted them to do next. The husband was out of a job for months, and their faith in God was being tested. But they continued to say, "God will work things out for the good." Soon the husband found a job that was better than the one he had before.

Moses was in a similar position of testing when the Israelites pressed him with their complaints. God had brought them out of Egypt and having

brought them this far, he wasn't going to leave them in the lurch now. Hadn't God provided in the past? Wouldn't He provide now?

If the people were hungry, God would provide. Moses was even specific about the food God would send. There would be meat that evening and in the morning there would be bread.

The people doubted, the people complained, the people grumbled...but God provided food. God provided meat for them that evening through a migrating flock of quail and manna in the morning.

But the Israelites soon complained about this food because they had grown tired of it and wanted more variety. The Lord became angry at the constant wailing and complaining. Instead of being grateful for all that God had already done for them the Israelites were continually finding fault.

We can see ourselves in the Israelites today. As a human race we are seldom content and without complaint.

We are grumbling people of God. God provides but yet many times we want something different or something more than what is given.

We see that with children at times. They want something specific and when they get it they are excited until later they want something bigger and better.

We are a people who are rarely satisfied, and we are a people that don't always recognize the hand of God at work in our lives.

Too often we are unaware of the many ways in which God surrounds us with his love and care. We all have many blessings from God that we fail to recognize as the Hand of God at work in our day to day lives.

God can take our complaining, but God also wants our hearts to be filled with the joy of His presence.

God wants us to trust in Him and give our lives over to Him—to put our lives into His hands knowing that He will guide us in our decisions and during our desert times.

In everything we should turn to God in prayer, asking God for his will and guidance. God will give us what we need in life and will provide for us. "The Lord will provide" in Hebrew is "Jehovah Jireh".

Just like the children of Israel had to take just enough manna and not hoard it, we also need to trust in God's provision for our lives and not complain that God isn't there or isn't doing what we want.

We need to recognize the hand of God in our own lives.

There is a story about a father and daughter in their last moments together at the airport. They hugged each other and the father said, "I love you. I wish you enough."

She said, "Daddy, our life together has been more than enough. Your love is all I ever needed. I wish you enough, too, Daddy."

They kissed and she left. He walked over toward the window watching his daughter walk away. The father began talking to an onlooker. The father asked the man, "Did you ever say good-bye to someone knowing it would be forever?"

The stranger said to the man, "Forgive me for asking, but why is this a forever good-bye?"

The father said, "I am old and my daughter lives far away. I have challenges and the reality is, the next trip back will probably be for my funeral."

"When you were saying good-bye I heard you say, 'I wish you enough.' May I ask what that means?" said the man.

The father smiled. "That's a wish that has been handed down from other generations. My parents used to say it to everyone." He paused for a moment and looking up as if trying to remember it in detail, he smiled even more. "When we said 'I wish you enough' we were wanting the other person to have a life filled with just enough good things to sustain them," he continued and then began sharing something from memory.

"I wish you enough sun to keep your attitude bright. I wish you enough rain to appreciate the sun more. I wish you enough happiness to keep your spirit alive. I wish you enough pain so that the smallest joys in life appear much bigger. I wish you enough gain to satisfy your wanting. I wish you enough loss to appreciate all that you possess. I wish you enough "hello" to get you through the final 'Good-bye.'" He then began to cry and walked away.

God knows what is best for us and what we need and when we have enough.

There is a song by the name of "MY LIFE IS IN YOUR HANDS" by Kathy Trocoli. "Life can be so good, life can be so hard, never knowing what each day will bring to where you are. Sometimes I forget, sometimes I can't see that whatever comes my way you'll be with me. When I'm at my weakest you will carry me. Then I become my strongest Lord, in your hands. My life is in your hands and though I may not see clearly I will lift my voice and sing because

your love does amazing things, Lord I know my life is in your hands. I trust you Lord. My heart is in your keeping, I'm never without hope, not when my future is with you. My life is in your hands."

Recognize the hand of God working in your life as you trust in Him and put your life in His hands.

Let us not grumble like the Israelites but to trust that God will provide for our needs.