

Immerse Day 54 :: April 15

There are good times to complain and there are bad times. With COVID pushing our nerves and patience to the breaking point, it's ok to complain about what we've lost. Sometimes complaining is about grieving. With injustice in the spotlight, and racism all over the news in so many forms, it's ok to complain through protests and petitions. Sometimes complaining is about justice. With the political divide widened into a political canyon, and violence becoming the norm, it's ok to complain about refusals to compromise or even listen. Sometimes complaining is about correction.

But well before the pandemic and George Floyd and Donald Trump, we were a culture of complaint, and not the good kind. We complain about anything that doesn't go exactly our way, and even sometimes things that do. We complain about our food at restaurants, the service of our wait staff, the speed of traffic, and weather. We complain about our teachers, our leaders, and even our pastors. And what makes this complaining bad is that it is about selfishness.

The Israelites time and time again grumbled, complained and whined against God. They complained about their hunger, and then about their food. They complained about their leaders, and their neighbors, and their God. And God says, "Enough!"

Do we take it seriously that God actually wiped out a chunk of His own people because of nothing more than their complaining? When we pass on the sixth whiny Facebook post in a row, or agree with the next coworker grumbling at lunch, or complain because someone got in front of us in traffic, do we remember that God hates selfish complaint?

Why is God so angered by our grumbling? Because it reveals a deep ingratitude for all that God has given us. To complain selfishly about what we don't have ignores the amazing amount of what we do have by God's grace. "I have learned to be content in any circumstance," the Apostle Paul writes, and this is right.

So the next time your fries are cold, or gas prices rise, or you don't get your pizza in 30 minutes or less, remember all that God has given you. Remember Paul's lesson about contentment. And remember Taberah (which means "the place of burning"). Let's be a holy people, a people different than the world around us, a people who live content with God's gifts. And let our complaint be for the right reasons.