

# COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

## (Sermon Summary)

### Reading: Exodus 16:1-36

The events related here took place in the early days of the Israelites journey from Egypt to the Promised Land. It was a period in their history where they enjoyed remarkable provision. But it was also a time where we read that the people complained often. These complaints are recorded, for example, at Exodus 15:24; 16:2-3; and 17:2. Looking on further, the same pattern is seen in Numbers 11:1 and 14:1-4.

Harvest is a time to remind us not to complain but to be very grateful. This is how we should be, not only at Harvest, but all the year. We need to learn from Paul (see Philippians 4:11-13).

In the passage in Exodus, Moses and Aaron were frequently targets for the people's complaints. That was their usual complaints procedure. But actually, their complaints were made ultimately against God Himself. It is God who hears their complaints against Him (Exodus 16: 6-7, 9-11).

#### **1. God provides in times of need.**

God has endowed the world of nature with abundance. There is plenteous provision. The Lord's people had seen this in Exodus 15 with the bitter water being made sweet. Then there is the supply of manna and quail. There would also be the provision of water from the rock. This is supernatural in nature but then the Lord also works through secondary causes through nature itself.

Another harvest is another sign of the Lord's continuing goodwill and mercy towards us all. This is despite the fact that the world is growing old and we are witnessing some very extreme weather events. Neither is it withstanding the problems encountered in the world and scarcities of, for example, water in many places. Yet it is also part of the Lord's provision that richer and better supplied nations should supply the needs of less favoured peoples and places. It is one of the upsides of the revolution in communications that needs in one place become quickly known in other places.

#### **2. We are given to complaining.**

It is not just a disagreeable trait in the UK that people are always complaining. Here the people of Israel are doing exactly the same. Why do people complain so much? One reason might be that their hopes and expectations have not been met. This leads people to be angry and to complain. People think they

have a right to expect particular things. Perhaps we are expecting too much from this fallen world? There will only be an end of grief, need and death in glory (Revelation 7:15-17; 21: 3-4). Have we been fooled into thinking that earth is our home? Have the wonderful advances in medicine, and treatment of diseases and conditions, made us feel we will live forever? Have Governments in the West promised us too much and raised our hopes of trouble-free living too much? Or we have become so much the centre of our own worlds that we expect everything to be for our satisfaction?

The disappointments we might feel can lead to bad behaviour. People look to blame someone for what has gone wrong to them. They blame leaders (Exodus 16:2), such as political figures or leaders in the church. Sometimes children blame their parents for the things they feel they lack. At other times people can be irrational in their behaviour, forgetting past mercies and provision. It is extraordinary that the people, at times, could look back at slavery in Egypt so positively.

Somewhere in this thinking, there is a complaint against God, that He has been unkind and ungenerous. We question His mercies and His providences. The Lord therefore has His own complaints procedure and treats the complaints as having been made against Himself.

How quickly we forget the Lord's goodness to us as a church over the last couple of years. How often we forget the good health the Lord has granted us in the past. We do not bring to mind the happy experiences we have had and the resources that the Lord has seen fit, at times, to put into our hands. There have been so many answered prayers. Have we remembered to thank the Lord for His goodness?

### **3. Look what we have.**

Today is like Remembrance Day in respect of the Lord's goodness to all mankind in providing for us. We have good food that is provided to very high standards. We have, by and large, an excellent health care system. In our country, corruption and a culture of bribery is not endemic. We have resources beyond what we need for essentials so that we are able to provide for others who do not have so much, such as through the work of Christian Compassion Ministries in Manila.

And beyond all else, we have the Lord our Helper. We have His ear and can ask Him for the things we need, seeking from His hand our daily bread. Perhaps then we should be more cheerful and positive, showing to our nation, still burdened by COVID, that we are a grateful people who are well provided for by our Heavenly Father.