**Numbers 20:1-13 – A moment of madness, or grace for the rebellious?**

**Opening question:**

* Looking back, have you ever had a “moment of madness” whose consequences you really regret?

**Worship – Psalm 103**

* Read the Psalm together and let it lead into prayers of praise and thanksgiving.
* Music based worship: “The Lord is gracious and compassionate”. Youtube link: [THE LORD IS GRACIOUS AND COMPASSIONATE [Official Lyric Video] | Vineyard Worship - YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7Xzk9qtlvuo)

**Word (Numbers 20:1-13):**

**In this passage, God’s people (God’s “treasured possession” but also “stiff-necked”)…**

* Look to Moses as a scapegoat for their situation, rather than looking in the mirror…
* Are wearing rose-coloured spectacles, which obscure their priorities and hide the reality of their situation…
* Are actually the ones who “quarrel” with God, but it is Moses and Aaron who pay the penalty…
* Are rebels in need of God’s grace…

**In this passage, Moses (God’s anointed but also ultimately flawed leader)…**

* Humbly seeks the Lord’s counsel…
* But fails to perfectly obey the instructions the Lord gives him – branding God’s people as “rebels” and striking, rather than speaking to, the rock…
* This behaviour is dishonouring to the holiness of the Lord and, as a result, Moses is banned by God from entering the Promised Land…
* causes his positive record of faithfulness in servanthood to be tainted by his own sin and thus misses out on what would otherwise have been probably the primary privilege of his calling!...
* Is also, ultimately, a rebel in need of God’s grace…

**This passage confirms that God…**

* Is perfectly holy and therefore cannot tolerate anything other than perfect obedience…
* Is the sovereign judge of all and the one truly in charge…
* Is a god of grace and mercy who does not disinherit his people as a result of their sin, but instead remains with them and indeed offers them redemption…

**This passage reminds us that we…**

* Like the Moses and the Israelites, are rebels in need of God’s grace…
* “Have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23)…
* Have free access to God’s grace and mercy “through the redemption that came by Jesus Christ.” (Romans 3:24)
* Need to come before God in repentance and faith, asking for his forgiveness and restoration.

**Possible questions:**

* Are you ok with what you read in this passage, or are there any elements you struggle with?
* How can we avoid falling into the same traps as the Israelite people?
* What are the areas in which, even as Christians, we can find ourselves looking for scapegoats or wearing rose-coloured spectacles?
* How do we strike the balance of supporting our leaders without simply accepting everything they say and do without critical reflection?
* How, as God’s people today, can we be distinctive in our attitudes and way of living from those around us who don’t know God?
* Do we ever seek God’s counsel but then fail to perfectly obey the things that he tells us? Can you think of any practical examples?
* Do you agree that true servanthood comes at an inevitable cost? How? Why?
* Are there areas in which we, both individually and collectively, need to repent and receive God’s grace?

**Prayer:**

* Spend some time in silence, bringing before to God the things you have discussed, or which he has placed on your heart...
* Pray for each other and those in the fellowship who are experiencing a particularly challenging time at the moment…
* Pray into the situation with the virus, vaccinations etc…
* Pray for peace around the US Presidential Inauguration on Wednesday.

**Join with others in the NMBC fellowship this week at one of the following times on Zoom:**

* Sunday, 8-9pm - Prayer
* Monday, 11-11.30am – Coffee and catch-up
* Wednesday, 7.30-8.30am – Prayer
* Thursday, 12.30-1pm – Reflection on a Psalm