

B 11th Sunday 2015 June 14th

First Reading: Ezekiel 17:22-24 (*I bring low the high tree and lift high the lowly tree*)

Responsorial Psalm 92: "Lord, it is good to give thanks to you."

Second Reading: 2 Corinthians 5:6-10 (*We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ*)

Gospel: Mark 4:26-34 (*The seed grows of itself*)

♪♪ Sacred the land, sacred the water, sacred the sky, holy and true.

Sacred all life, sacred each other, all reflect God who is good. ♪♪

That song is a version of the *Canticle of creatures* composed by Francis of Assisi. I thought of it when I was praying over the Gospel and first reading for today.

In the Gospel passage today we hear two parables about seed that grows of itself, the land that nurtures it, the growing plants that bear fruit, & the mustard seed that grows into a shrub that shelters nesting birds. Those stories reveal the truth that all is **sacred** and **connected**.

Jesus lets the seed, the land and the birds speak to us of the love of his father for all creation. He reminds us that we humans are a part of God's creation and are given the job of taking care of the rest of it. The first reading is another parable of God's care for creation which the prophet uses to teach us wisdom. He warns the rich and powerful that they will take the consequences of oppressing the poor and damaging the land, and comforts the lowly with the promise of God's faithfulness to the covenant of love.

Francis, in his prophetic poem, sings of our kinship with all creatures - he calls each of them brothers & sisters - the sun & moon, plants & animals, mother earth, as well as his human sisters & brothers. He sings of how creation teaches us about God's love.

♪♪ All praise be yours through brother sun, bearing a likeness of you, most high one,
Sister earth, our mother who nurtures, feeding, yielding flower and herb,
Sacred the land, sacred the water, sacred the sky, holy and true.
Sacred all life, sacred each other, all reflect God who is good. ♪♪

Unfortunately, we are not always aware and faithful to the sacredness of all life and how it is all connected. In our time we are destroying creatures all over the world - clear cutting forests, draining wetlands, causing widespread extinction of species at an alarming rate - 70,000 species of plants & animals a year.

We ignore the damage we do to the land and the water and the air for the sake of human profit and comfort. We can refuse to see the physical and social side effects of hydrofracking and strip mining and consuming much more than we need to live. When we do so, we cause damage to the people who live on the earth - ourselves & our human brothers and sisters, especially the poor and those who will come after us.

The Declaration of Interdependence from the 1992 U.N. Earth Summit puts it this way, *"When we compromise the air, the water, the soil and the variety of life we steal from the endless future to serve the fleeting present"*.

Paul writes that we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ. In our own time, we are being called to repent of how we are destroying so much of the creation that God loves - the land, the water, the trees & plants & animals that we need in order to survive as a human race. While we argue about climate change, our neglect and inaction contribute to droughts, wildfires & violent storms, like Hurricane Irene & the recent storms in this area.

How can we repent of our neglect and destruction of the earth and our addiction to comfort and profit at the expense of caring for our home planet and the people who live on it? I would suggest three directions:

First - we can live the song I began with - we can begin again to see all creation as sacred, the way native peoples and farmers still do. We are called to love all of creation the way God loves the mustard seed, the lofty cedar, the palm tree, the birds that nest in the bushes and trees, the frogs that create a concert in the spring, & the dogs and cats that welcome us home and sit on our laps.

Second - we can grow in understanding that all things are connected. The natural world itself is a parable of the love of God - teaching us that Abba, our common father, loves the earth, the stars, the sun and the planets, and keeps them in existence by the energy of the Holy Spirit. Once the seed is planted, the land yields fruit of its own accord. We are called to collaborate with the earth to feed ourselves and each other. Farmers know this, but there are too many people that don't even realize that carrots grow underground -they don't just appear on the shelves of Price Chopper.

Third - we can listen to the call to protect all life - not only the life of unborn human children, but the life that emerges from God's love in all of creation. In the words of the UN Earth Summit, *"We respect and uphold the absolute need for clean air, water and soil. We see that economic activities that benefit the few while shrinking the inheritance of many are wrong."*

If we do not care for the earth we live on, it will be like we are burning down or flooding out our own homes. We live and grow on the earth, and the earth depends on us for its continued health and its very survival as our home.

But self interest is not enough reason to change. We need to love all creatures the way we love our own pets. We will not really care for what we do not fall in love with.

Paul writes in the 2nd reading, that we will be judged by what we do in the body. We will also bear the consequences of what we do to the body of Christ. We are responsible for what we do, or fail to do, for our human sisters and brothers and to everything that lives on our earth.

If the call to care for creation - a call proclaimed by Pope John Paul, Pope Benedict and Pope Francis - seems like an impossible task in the face of a global crisis, it is critical to remember that we are not alone - Christ is near and speaks to us still through each other and the natural world. Through faith in God we can come to a deeper awareness that the land, the water, the sky and each other are sacred and connected. Then we have the power to be like the farmer in the Gospel, we can plant new seeds of hope by the way we live out of that awareness.

Once we have heard the Word of God & the call of the Holy Spirit, we are invited and empowered to live the words of this song:

♪ Take the Word of God with you as you go. Take the seeds of God's word,
and make them grow. Go in peace to serve the world in peace to serve the world,
take the love of God, the love of God with you as you go. ♪

