

ELEVENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

LECTIOINARY #92

READING I Ezekiel 17:22-24

A reading from the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel

Thus says the Lord GOD:

I, too, will take from the crest of the cedar,
from its topmost branches tear off a tender shoot,
and plant it on a high and lofty mountain;

on the mountain heights of Israel I will plant it.
It shall put forth branches and bear fruit,
and become a majestic cedar.

Birds of every kind shall dwell beneath it,
every winged thing in the shade of its boughs.
And all the trees of the field shall know

that I, the LORD,
bring low the high tree,
lift high the lowly tree,
wither up the green tree,
and make the withered tree bloom.

As I, the LORD, have spoken, so will I do.

Ezekiel = ee-ZEE-kee-uhl

Read this as an allegory.

Accentuate the verbs. They speak to God's

creative action.

Let your tone communicate the expansive

effects of God's actions.

God does not go back on his word.

READING I

The collected writings of Ezekiel, a priest-prophet,

and one of the first deportees from Jerusalem to Babylon, reflect on Judah's political and social destruction, including the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 BC, or accurately reflects historical events and clarifies that God used the eagles to vindicate the covenant violated by the shoots. Thus, Ezekiel explains what is happening to Judah and its royal household during his time in history.

Lest this allegory for the relationship between God and Judah end on a hopeless note, however, the prophet concludes with a prophecy of restoration (today's reading), using the same poetic language as in the doom. Providing hope for a future in the midst of Judah's darkest gloom, Ezekiel declares that God, and not the eagles, will pluck a shoot from the cedar (i.e., Babylon) and plant it "on the mountain heights of Israel" where it will prosper and bear fruit. Becoming a "majestic cedar" (i.e., the restored nation of Judah), it will shelter birds of every kind, and all trees shall know of it. This exalted vision of a restored Judah emphasizes that all the nations of the earth

For meditation and context:

RESPONSORIAL PSALM Psalm 92:2-3, 13-14, 15-16 (2a)

R. Lord, it is good to give thanks to you.
 It is good to give thanks to the Lord,
 to sing praise to your name, Most High,
 and your faithfulness throughout
 the night.
 The just one shall flourish like the
 palm tree,
 like a cedar of Lebanon shall he grow.
 They that are planted in the house of
 the Lord
 shall flourish in the courts of our God.
 They shall bear fruit even in old age;
 vigorous and sturdy shall they be,
 declaring how just is the Lord,
 my rock, in whom there is no wrong.

Corinthians = kohr-IN-thee-uhnz

Proclaim with the courage that Paul

is describing.

A key teaching in this passage.

"All" will be called, but "each" will be judged.

recompense = REK-uh-m-pens =

compensation

READING II 2 Corinthians 5:6-10
 A reading from the second Letter of Saint Paul to the Corinthians

Brothers and sisters:

We are always **courageous**,
 although we know that while we are at home in the body

we are **away** from the Lord,
 for we walk by **faith**, not by **sight**.

Yet we are courageous,
 and we would rather **leave** the body and go **home** to the Lord.

Therefore, we **aspire** to **please** him,
 whether we are at home **or** away.

For we must **all** appear before the **judgment** seat of Christ,

so that **each** may receive **recompense**,

according to what he **did** in the body, whether **good** or **evil**.

will recognize that God is sovereign over all nations and that God is the great reverser of national fortunes.

READING II

In today's reading, Paul reflects upon his suffering as an apostle and what gives him hope in the face of it.

Paul begins by comparing two possible states of being which are in tension with one another. His current situation is that he is "at home in the body;" its opposite is to "leave the body and go home to the Lord." Thus, for Paul, being in the body

is a form of suffering because he is away from the Lord. We should not interpret this

as negating the incarnational aspect of our faith, but see that it emphasizes what all Christians strive for—eternal life in the presence of God. Although Paul is walking by faith, he is not seeing God face to face. In giving voice to his longing for his true home, Paul describes the destiny of all Christians: being in the body and longing to go home to the Lord.

Thus, Paul concludes that while he and the Corinthians are still in the body, they must do everything possible to please

GOSPEL

In order to better understand the message of Mark's Gospel, it is important to recall that Mark's original audience was a community of persecuted Christians who needed hope.

And why? Because our human lives are meaningful. Our choices reflect our faith in the hope of eternal life, and eventually each person will have to give an accounting of what he or she has done in the body. Against the backdrop of this suffering, Paul finds hope in the promise of his and the Corinthians' future home.

GOSPEL Mark 4:26-34

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Mark

Jesus said to the crowds:

“This is how it is with the kingdom of God;

it is as if a man were to scatter seed on the land

and would sleep and rise night and day

and though it all the seed would sprout and grow,

he knows not how.

Of its own accord the land yields fruit,

first the blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear.

And when the grain is ripe, he wields the sickle at once,

for the harvest has come.”

He said,

“To what shall we compare the kingdom of God,

or what parable can we use for it?

It is like a mustard seed that, when it is sown in the ground,

is the smallest of all the seeds on the earth.

But once it is sown, it springs up and becomes the largest

of plants

and puts forth large branches,

so that the birds of the sky can dwell in its shade.”

With many such parables

he spoke the word to them as they were able to understand it.

Without parables he did not speak to them,

but to his own disciples he explained everything in private.

Insert a comma after “rise” so the opposites are emphasized.

Jesus meets people where they are. He

spoke to them in the form of a metaphorical story they could wrestle with for themselves.

This can be a good model for how we should evangelize others.

Jesus gave additional explanations to his disciples, revealing the meanings of the

parables. How can the homily do the same? What might your assembly need to know about who God is, based on this reading?

Read in this light, today’s Gospel reading offers encouragement in their work of building up the kingdom of God.

Among Jesus’ teachings are parables about the kingdom of God, which often make their point through agricultural images familiar to his audience. Today’s Gospel includes two such parables, as well as a note informing us that Jesus often interpreted his parables privately for his disciples.

The parables of the scattered seed and the mustard seed describe the kingdom of God and contain two powerful insights

into the nature of that kingdom. There is a contrast between small beginnings (scattered seed and a tiny mustard seed) and their final form (fully grown grain and a large plant). Equally important in this passage is the fact that what at present appears imperceptible will grow in mysterious ways beyond human understanding. The unspoken conclusion is that God is at work.

At the end of today’s reading, we hear that although Jesus teaches the crowds in parables, he explains them to his disciples in private. The earlier insight into the slow and mysterious unfolding of the kingdom, as well as the note that Jesus teaches the disciples privately, offers a powerful message of hope in the face of suffering. To Mark’s suffering and persecuted community, who were themselves recipients of instruction on the Gospel, Jesus’ message offers hope that the seed sown by Christ and through their Christian witness is in fact growing and maturing in mysterious and divinely directed ways toward the fullness of God’s kingdom. They need only to hear it, accept it, and patiently allow it to bear fruit. S.L.