

11th Sunday per Annum - B
Ezekiel 17:22-24;
II Corinthians 5:6-10;
Mark 4:26-34
Little Flower - 6-16-24

My Brothers and Sisters,

The parish staff and I want to wish all fathers a very happy and blessed Father's Day. Parents play a special role in the lives of their children. Parents are co-creators with God of their children. All parents are called by God to help their children become holy, i.e., to become the-best-version-of-themselves, the persons God has called them to be. Today, then, we want to celebrate all parents, but especially fathers and those men who help lead and guide young people.

The imagery in both today's reading from Ezekiel and today's Gospel remind us that God is Lord of creation. In the reading from Ezekiel, God says that he will take a tender shoot from the top of the cedar and plant it on a high and lofty mountain where it will become a majestic cedar. In today's Gospel, the first parable reminds us that once the farmer scatters seed, it grows on its own. The second parable tells us that the tiny mustard seed springs up and becomes the largest of plants.

Likewise, both passages remind us that God is Lord of history. In the first reading, written during the Babylonian captivity, God promises to restore the people of Israel to their land where they will flourish. Both Gospel parables are about the coming of God's kingdom. The first suggests that we cannot bring about the coming of God's kingdom.

As Lord of creation and Lord of history, God is Lord of all life. God is the source of all life, God holds life in being, and God is the end point or goal of all life.

On the other hand, today's reading from Paul's Second Letter to the Corinthians speaks to our human limitations. Paul wrote, "*While we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord.*" Later he would write to the Philippians, "*I am caught between the two. I long to depart this life and be with Christ, (for) that is far better. Yet that I remain (in) the flesh is more necessary for your benefit*" [Phil. 1:23-24]. In this life, there are no unmixed blessings. Likewise, when we make choices, we open some doors and close others. Literally, in this life, we cannot have it all.

Second, St. Paul reminds us that "*we walk by faith and not by sight.*" Paul, of course, is referring to our faith in God. People sometimes struggle with faith in God because they find it difficult to believe in a God whom they cannot see. In truth, we walk by faith in many areas of our lives. For example, when couples marry, they are making as big an act of faith in each other as an act of faith in God. Couples have to believe the persons they are marrying have allowed them to know the real persons they are. They also have to believe that the other person is really committing himself or herself to their marriage. They are also making an act of faith that the other person will not change in ways that will destroy their relationship. Marriage is a tremendous act of faith.

Third, we all must appear before the judgment seat of God. Although God is Lord of creation, Lord of history, and Lord of life, we are responsible for our choices. As individuals and as communities, we are called to humanize the world, to make the world a better place for all people both now and in the future. We are also called to become the best version of ourselves, to grow into the likeness of the Risen Christ. When I hear confessions of young people, I often remind them that the choices they are making are shaping the persons they are becoming. This is true for us no matter what age we are.

My brothers and sisters, today we acknowledge God as Lord of creation, Lord of history, and Lord of life. We also acknowledge our limitations, namely, that in this life we cannot have it all, that we have to believe in God and others, and that our choices are shaping the persons we are becoming and the world we are creating.