

## **Creation, Not Just Nature**

11<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time (Year B)

June 13, 2021

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Many people like being out in nature. Whether it is camping, fishing, hiking, or boating, they find being in nature therapeutic.

Our readings this weekend focus on nature. In our first reading from Ezekiel, God speaks about a green cedar tree being planted on a tall mountain. This tree grows majestically and puts forth many branches and bears much fruit. We are told that every winged creature comes to enjoy its shade. Then, in our Gospel, Jesus speaks about small seeds growing into large plants- “first the blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear.” Again, like Ezekiel’s passage, the birds of the air come to dwell on its branches. Anyone who enjoys nature, even if they are not religious, would appreciate these passages found in scripture.

As Christians, we enjoy nature, too, but for even deeper reasons than natural beauty. For us, nature is not just that which exists, but it is first and foremost God’s creation. In his 2015 document on the environment, *Laudato Si,* Pope Francis briefly explains the difference between the two, nature and creation. He writes, “in the Judeo-Christian tradition, the word ‘creation’ has a broader meaning than ‘nature,’ for it has to do with God’s loving plan in which every creature has its own value and significance. Nature is usually seen as a system which can be studied, understood and controlled, whereas creation can only be understood as a gift from the outstretched hand of the Father of all, and as a reality illuminated by the love which calls us together

into universal communion.” (76) Unlike nature which is an end in itself, creation points through itself to the creator.

God speaks to us through creation. The tree in the Old Testament reading is like the people of God. Even though they were the lowly people of this world, they were lifted up and nourished by God above all others for the whole world to see. The seeds growing in the New Testament Gospel passage are like the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom grows and expands on its own accord, even when we cannot explain it. It starts small and ends up large. In both examples, complex ideas are made simple by looking at creation.

If God is the creator who speaks to us through creation, then we should take greater care of creation. In the document just mentioned, Pope Francis prays that we “may protect the world and not prey on it, that we may sow beauty, not pollution and destruction.” As Christians, this is not a political stance, a judgment upon the people of the past, or worshipping nature, but a deeply spiritual calling. We want to preserve each and every way that God reaches us, from scripture to eucharist, from Christ to creation.

Our religion is ultimately about love- love of God, love of neighbor, and love of enemy. *As Christians, we should also love creation.* Does my Christian love reach beyond humans to include all creation?

This weekend, we return to the season of Ordinary Time. The color of this long season from Summer into Fall is green. May the color of Ordinary Time remind us of God’s creation and our duty to keep it green.