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# God's Plan for Creation in History

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## **God's Plan for Creation in History**

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## **Eleventh Sunday in Ordinary Time**

Sunday Readings for June 17, 2012 for Cycle B:

Ez 17:22-24; Ps 92; 2 Cor 5:6-10; Mk 4:26-34

### **GOD'S PLAN FOR CREATION IN HISTORY**

*Lawrence E. Frizzell*

The great teachers of Israel showed a reverence for their environment and conveyed this attitude to their listeners. This is based on the insight that "the whole earth is full of the Lord's glory" (Is 6:3). In modern times, when forces unleashed by human beings can destroy our entire ecosystem, many cultures have lost that sense of God's presence shining through creatures great and small. Some people in positions of power think little of the havoc they wreak upon the environment as they exploit nature for greedy gain. Of course, they claim that people have a right to the "quality of life" they are trying to produce. However, one might say with the poet:

Give fools their gold and knaves their power,  
Let fortune's bubbles rise and fall,  
Who sows a field or trains a flower  
Or plants a tree is more than all.

Just as we must maintain the sacred value of every human life from conception to natural death, Christians must also teach reverence in regard to God's work in the world around us. Just as the Master taught the dignity of every person, especially those shunted aside by society, so his parables show an intimacy with the plants and wildlife of the Galilean countryside. The parables in this Sunday's Gospel link the mystery of human history to the progress achieved when the farmer cooperates with nature. In ancient times the seed would sprout and grow and the farmer "knew not how." Modern science has done much to unlock the secrets of nature, with each discovery making us more humbly aware of the marvel of life on every level. Surely this should be a springboard to an ever deepening faith in God's creative power! Jesus taught that the God who clothed the lily in royal attire has a plan for each of us (Mt 6:25-33). The Hebrew term for "kingdom" has two levels. It implies 1) the royal authority of God to which we now respond in faith; and 2) the domain of all creation that will acknowledge God at the consummation of history. The challenge is to seek now the kingdom and the righteousness or integrity of life that God demands of his human creatures. In due time the harvest of divine judgment will demand a reckoning. "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive good or evil, according to what that person has done in the body" (2 Cor 5:10).

There is a danger that people consider the judgment and kingdom only on the individual level. Indeed, the response must be recognized as personal, but it also has social dimensions. Just as the rise and fall of fortune's bubbles affect the multitudes, so too God's plan is for the people covenanted to their Creator to reach out to all the nations with a message of hope that life is richer than our present physical existence.

At the time when the new ruler of Babylon conquered Jerusalem and installed his puppet Zedekiah as King (597 BCE), the young priest Ezekiel was taken into exile with the authentic ruler of Judah. A few years later he used an allegory to describe these historical events: a great eagle (Nebuchadnezzar) broke off the top of the cedar (the descendant of David, King Jehoiachin) and transplanted it in Babylon. This Sunday we hear the end of this long analogy between nature and history. The loss that the Jewish people experienced during the Babylonian Exile does not imply the failure of God's plan. The Lord of history will draw life from the seemingly dead stump of the Davidic dynasty (see Is 11:1). "On the mountain heights of Israel I will plant it. It shall put forth branches... and become a majestic cedar. Under it will dwell all kinds of beasts; in the shade of its branches birds of every sort will nest" (Ez 17:23). Did Ezekiel intend this to be understood of the return from Exile? Perhaps, but it also resonates of hope for Messianic times in the fullest sense. Beasts are mentioned in the Greek text along with birds; perhaps they refer to the nations that will seek refuge in God and find a place in the covenanted community of faith. As noted above, the concept "kingdom of God" has two aspects, relating to the present reign of God and the future domain of the "new creation." So the seed of faith planted in human hearts and society should have an impact on the world now and blossom forth into glory, when God will be everything to everyone.