

Cycle B

Eleventh Sunday in Ordinary Time

Lectionary #92

Reading I: Ezekiel 17: 22-24

This reading from the Book of the prophet Ezekiel is complementary to today's Gospel as it expresses a **promise** to God's people. Although Israel is in exile, God **promises** to bring them back and plant them in their own territory. Ezekiel underlines the fact that God will do this and that the people are called to cooperate with God's grace. This message is applicable to everyone, for God's grace is always available. However, we are called to cooperate with God's grace because the **promise** can only be fulfilled if we are willing to be cooperative with God and God's plan for us.

Reading 2: 2 Corinthians 5: 6-10

The theme of cooperating with God's grace continues in this excerpt from Saint Paul's second letter to the Corinthians. In the first reading, the prophet Ezekiel taught that all growth comes from God. Now, Saint Paul says that we *walk by faith and not by sight*. This is one of the hardest things we are called to do. Oftentimes, as people who are proud of our independence, we would rather make our own roadmap for our lives. Nevertheless, we have entered into a **promise** with God and God with us, and it is our Christian vocation to discern God's will, forsaking our own preferences when they interfere with our journeying with the Lord.

Gospel: Mark 4: 26-34

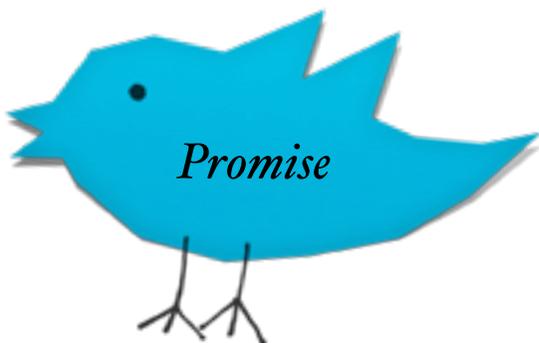
In today's Gospel, we encounter one of Jesus' seed parables and much like the reading from the prophet Ezekiel, the parable reminds us that the Reign of God is a work of human and divine collaboration. Like the farmer, we must do all that we can to provide circumstances in which God's reign can grow. When we do, we are fulfilling our **promise** to God and we are at our best as collaborators with God and God's **promise**.



build. plant. grow.
the word this week



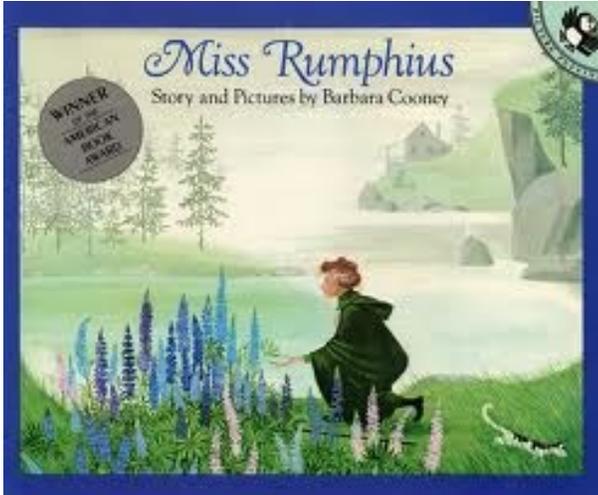
ordinary
time



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reading



children's story



Miss Rumphius

Written by Barbara Cooney

Illustrated by Barbara Cooney

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character
education
activity

To promise is to give your word about something or to guarantee that you will do whatever you are saying you will.

Miss Rumphius

This beautifully illustrated story about a woman who wished to make the world more beautiful has a timeless quality that resonates with each generation. This is a true story about a woman named Alice Rumpus who lived in a house on the coast of Maine. Miss Rumphius, known as the Lupine Lady, scattered lupine seeds wherever she went up and down the coast of Maine. As a little girl seated upon her grandfather's knee, she asked the question that many children ask: *Why are we here?* Her grandfather told her that it was the purpose of each person to bring beauty into the world. With this in mind, Miss Rumphius made it her life's work to bring beauty into the world. No matter what, we are called to do something to enhance the beauty of the world God has given us and to do so with the unique talents God has given to each person. Creation is one of God's **promises** to us and one of our **promises** to God must be to care for all of creation, most especially our brothers and sisters throughout the world.

Activity: What Can You Do to Make the World a More Beautiful Place?

Step One: As a class, have the students brainstorm ways that they might add beauty to their part of the world. They might suggest organizing a recycling effort at the school, taking an initiative to clean up the lunch areas, or to plant flowers and trees around their school and neighborhood.

Step Two: If the children choose to plant flowers, it may be a great opportunity to provide them with the things they need to start growing flower seeds inside the room so that they can watch them develop.

Step Three: Have the students notice the development of the seed into a sprout like they heard about the growth of the seeds in the parable from the Gospel. Invite them to think about how the plant's maturation can only happen if the students tend to the growth process. They enter into the **promise** of caring for the plant that God produces from the soil, the sun, and the water.

A promise is a binding agreement between two or more persons. The special promise made between God and humanity is known as a covenant



case study

**Look.
Feel.
Know.
Act.**

What could you do today?

Think about ways that you can bring beauty into your home. This could include all kinds of things, such as speaking kind words to everyone in your family with the simple use of *please* and *thank you*. You could also add to the beauty of your home by picking up your clothes and toys and making your room and other places in your home neat and tidy. By doing these very simple things, you are, in a way, being true to the **promise** to your family and to God by being loving, caring, and considerate.

Look Feel Know Act

As you look around, you can easily see that you are not alone in the world, but that you belong to many communities. You are a member of your family, your church, your school community, and other teams and organizations. Because of your involvement in these groups, your actions have an effect on the community in either a positive or a not-so-positive way. You may recall from the seed growing project that you had a responsibility to make sure that the seed received light and water so that it could grow. In many ways, what you do will help or hinder the growth of those around you. Think about how you feel when you have done some kindness to another person, and how great that feeling is. Recalling such feelings can remind us that we are called to be elements of God's beauty and care in the world. Make a commitment to yourself and to God that you will, like Miss Rumphius, spread seeds of beauty to enhance the creation God has given us.

It is so important for us to realize that we are called to be collaborators with God in the **promise** that we will do all in our power to enhance the beauty given to us in God's creation. Just as Miss Rumpus spread lupine seeds wherever she went, we are also called to bring beauty to the world through our acts and words of kindness. The images used in today's first reading and Gospel are of seeds being sown and grown by God, and these images parallel the seeds sown by Miss Rumpus. They provide us with the inspiration to spread beauty wherever we go by using the talents God has planted with us.



**closing
tool**

Pray that you will always call on the beautiful gifts God has planted within you so that you may truly be a promise keeper in every possible way. Amen.



**Santa Clara
University**

Character Education at the Markkula Center for Applied Ethics

ethics programs for communities that learn, live, pray, or work together

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