

Mount Hollywood United Church of Christ – Los Angeles
Sixth Sunday after Pentecost – July 16, 2017 – Summer Parables
Green Sunday

Rev. Anne G. Cohen, Minister

Thomas 9 (The Five Gospels)

FOR REFLECTION

To define environmental awareness we must first understand the environmentalist movement. Environmentalism is an ideology that evokes the necessity and responsibility of humans to respect, protect, and preserve the natural world from its anthropogenic (caused by humans) afflictions.

- <https://www.pachamama.org/environmental-awareness>

Being Green

As we were going to sleep Peter asked me if we lived on the top of the world. I told him there isn't really a top and bottom and went into a longer-than-necessary explanation of Northern and Southern Hemispheres and how we are half way between the equator and the North Pole. And then Peter burst into tears saying, "I'm afraid of global warming and I don't want to drown!"

Who knew that his question about top and bottom had to do with drowning when the ice melts? I held and rocked him – and reassured him that it had nothing to do with being at the top or bottom of the world. We live in the mountains so we will be above the water – it's the people living on the coasts that will have the biggest problem. Small comfort.

Today is our "Green Sunday" – and there is some amount of urgency and anxiety about reflecting on the environment this year. And some of that anxiety come from having a climate change denier in the White House and too many deniers in congress. And, believe it or not, our text this morning refers to just this problem.

Look, the sower went out, took a handful (of seeds), and scattered (them).

This parable has no big surprises. It basically explains the mechanics of farming and the hazards of choosing the wrong kind of soil. It may have been a story from common lore at the time – but most of the Jesus Seminar people do believe that Jesus told it too, in some version or other.

As told by Jesus, it has long been interpreted as a parable about his own teaching. He's the sower, his teaching is the seeds, the soil is his audience. And depending on the person, his teaching does or does not flourish. For instance, some people have difficulty focusing. Their minds are constantly on the go with lots of traffic:

*Some [of his teachings] fell on the road,
and the birds came and gathered them.*

Other people are hard-headed and nothing gets in:

*Other [teachings] fell on rock, and they didn't take root in the soil
and didn't produce heads of grain.*

Then there are the minds corrupted by greed and self-interest and resistance to reason:

*Other [teachings] fell on thorns,
and they choked the seeds and worms ate them.*

And finally, the disciples heave a sigh of relief knowing the last teachings have fallen on them – the open-minded, ready-to-learn, reasonable people:

*And other [teachings] fell on good soil, and it produced a good crop:
it yielded sixty per measure and one hundred twenty per measure.*

Sixty to one hundred twenty per measure is an average yield – not YUGE – but it is enough to be satisfied with. And this is where we come in. 97% or more of scientists believe that climate change is real and is accelerating because of human behavior. The first scientific reports on this were made in the 1970's. And "Earth Day was founded by United States Senator Gaylord Nelson as an environmental teach-in --- first held on April 22, 1970."

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Earth_Day

The planet is teaching us about this daily. Four days ago an iceberg the size of Delaware broke off of Antarctica changing the shape of the continent. The size of Delaware: Let this teaching fall upon good soil.

Denial and panic will not serve us or the planet well under these circumstances. But learning how to change our behavior so that we can contribute to the healing of the earth could be a helpful response.

So, for the greater good, I turn this over to Erik and Leslie.

May we be good soil.

Thomas 9 (The Five Gospels)

Look, the sower went out, took a handful (of seeds), and scattered (them). Some fell on the road, and the birds came and gathered them. Others fell on rock, and they didn't take root in the soil and didn't produce heads of grain. Others fell on thorns, and they choked the seeds and worms ate them. And others fell on good soil, and it produced a good crop: it yielded sixty premeasure and one hundred twenty per measure.

Environmental awareness is to understand the fragility of our environment and the importance of its protection. Promoting environmental awareness is an easy way to become an environmental steward and participate in creating a brighter future for our children.

To define environmental awareness we must first understand the environmentalist movement. Environmentalism is an ideology that evokes the necessity and responsibility of humans to respect, protect, and preserve the natural world from its anthropogenic (caused by humans) afflictions.

Environmental awareness is an integral part of the movement's success. By teaching our friends and family that the physical environment is fragile and indispensable we can begin fixing the problems that threaten it.

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Definition of environment

1: the circumstances, objects, or conditions by which one is surrounded

2a : the complex of physical, chemical, and biotic factors (such as climate, soil, and living things) that act upon an organism or an ecological community and ultimately determine its form and survival

b : the aggregate of social and cultural conditions that influence the life of an individual or community

3: the position or characteristic position of a linguistic element in a sequence

4: a computer interface from which various tasks can be performed a programming environment

<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/environment>