



The Parable of the Mustard Seed

The kingdom of God is like...

Matthew 13:31-32

TO HOPE AND ACT WITH CREATION

Discuss: Small but Mighty

Encased in the smallest of seeds is the possibility of the mightiest tree—Jesus uses this imagery to talk about the Kingdom of Heaven and the promise of life everlasting. Consider what it could say about the work of our church communities and members as we undertake the monumental task of bringing the Kingdom of God closer through the reduction of our environmental impact.

Look

Look around your home and church. Notice the places, big or small, where you see room for eco improvements. Order the list from simple to complex.

Listen

The 1998 song “**Hands**” by singer/songwriter Jewel considers how our small hands can make a big difference.
bit.ly/DEGCRE1

Try

Pick one small thing you could do to reduce your personal footprint. Make that change as a prayer practice this season.



The Parable of the Sower

Let anyone with ears listen.

Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23

TO HOPE AND ACT WITH CREATION

Discuss: What if it isn't about the soil?

Often, interpreters of this parable focus on soil quality and the importance of tending the soil of our hearts so it is ready to receive the Word. What if we focus, instead, on the sower? What if the sower wasn't negligent in scattering the seed in poor conditions; what if the sower (God) was willing to take chances and risk some loss for the possibility of gain?

Look

Go back to your list from last week, what is a risky eco improvement you have considered but avoided. What about it scares you?

Listen

In this parable Jesus commands all with ears to listen. Go outside and listen to nature. Prayerfully listen to God's word in the stillness.

Try

Talk with someone to learn more about the logistics for the "risky" eco improvement you have identified. How does this affect your feelings about it?



The Parable of the Growing Seed

The kingdom of God is like...

Mark 4:26-29

TO HOPE AND ACT WITH CREATION

Discuss: The Challenge of Hope

It is part of human nature to try and control as much as we can. But no matter the scenario, there will come a time when everything is out of our hands and we must trust that those elements outwith our control will do what they are supposed to do. Coping with the climate crisis is no different. Even if we do everything in our power, it will not change the magnitude of the problem unless others do their part as well.

Look

In times of crisis, it can feel as though everything is out of control. This is when we must “look for the helpers.” Look for people who are working for change. Who do you see?

Listen

Listen to this short documentary about The Forest Man of India.
bit.ly/DEGCRE3

Try

Think more about the Forest Man of India. How could you and your church adopt his philosophy to address an ecological challenge in your community?



The Parable of the Budding Fig Tree

The kingdom of God is near.

Luke 21:29-33

TO HOPE AND ACT WITH CREATION

Discuss: The Beauty of Hope

There is nothing more hopeful than the approach of a Scottish summer. For a few weeks in May, the sun shines and gardens come to life. In this first fig tree parable, Jesus uses the imagery of a budding tree and the hope of summer to make real the hope of the life that is to come. We can imagine the beauty of the coming season—can we imagine a world where we have halted or reversed climate change?

Look

Pay attention to the buildings and gardens in your town. Where do you see evidence of others working for the good of the environment?

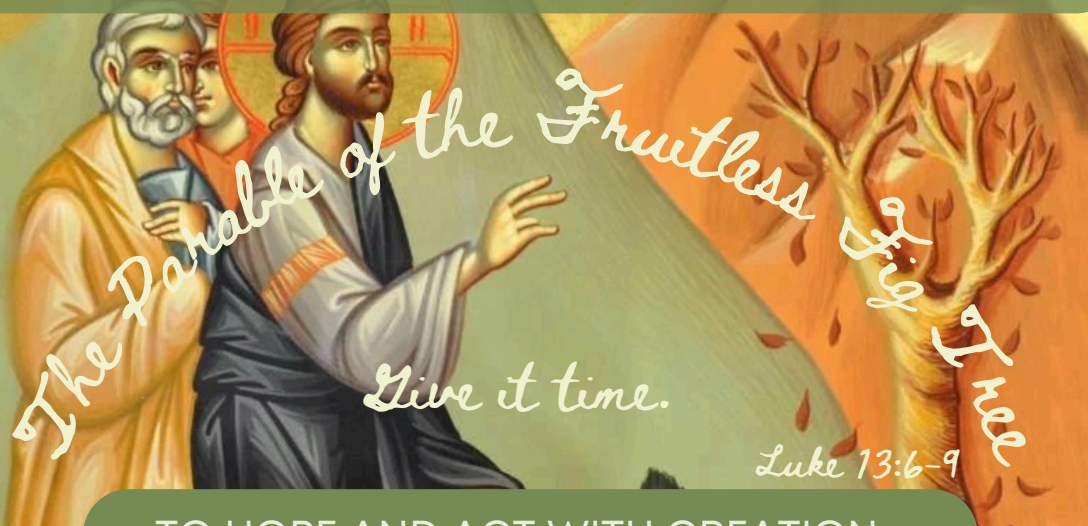
Listen

Hope is the Thing with Feathers, one of Emily Dickinson's most famous poems.

bit.ly/DEGCRE4

Try

Connect with another eco-group or church in your area. Discuss your upcoming eco projects and discern ways you can support one another in the journey towards Net Zero.



TO HOPE AND ACT WITH CREATION

Discuss: The Choice to Hope

Living a hopeful life is a bold choice in the face of an often pessimistic world. Seeing possibility where others have given up takes deep trust in power outside of ourselves. The gardener from today's parable chooses to hope when all evidence points in the opposite direction. The gardener chooses to do the things he can in an effort to create the change needed. How do you choose to hope?

Look

Revisit the list you made in the first week. Now look at your home, church building and grounds. Try to see them as they could be.

Listen

Watch this interview clip of Greta Thunberg speaking to Russell Howard about the choice to hope.
bit.ly/DEGCRE5

Try

Pray using the serenity prayer this week. How does this practice change your perspective?
bit.ly/DEGCREA