

EcoPreacher **examples of sermon synopses**

“The Gardener—An Easter Sermon,” by Leah D. Schade
John 20:1–18

The central metaphor for the risen Christ in this sermon is the shape-shifting “gardener” Mary sees at the opening of the tomb. The garden’s image is reiterated throughout the sermon as the site in which life begins both in Genesis and through Jesus Christ. Thus, the stage is set for a hermeneutic of Earth-orientation from the beginning of the sermon. The metaphor is then buttressed throughout the sermon with references to Jesus’ interactions with Creation and his use of nature images in his teachings throughout the gospels. Those include sowing seeds in good soil (Mt. 13:3–8, 18–23; Mk. 4:1–9, 13–20; Lk. 8:4–8, 11–15), the tenacity of the mustard seed (Mt. 13:31–32; Mk. 4:30–32; Lk. 13:18–19), comparing himself to a grape vine (Jn. 15:1–11), and fertilizing fig trees (Lk. 13:6–9).

—Leah D. Schade, *Creation-Crisis Preaching: Ecology, Theology, and the Pulpit* (Chalice, 2015), p. 143

“Living in Hope,” by Carolyn J. Sharp
1 Thessalonians 5:1–11

Linking the apocalyptic language of crisis in 1 Thessalonians 5 with the violence highlighted relentlessly by our crisis-driven news media, this sermon addresses listeners’ feelings of anxiety, disempowerment, and disconnection by inviting them to contemplate the sacred text of nature. The sermon focalizes Paul’s exhortation to put on the armor of faith, love, and hope, exploring those through three models of exemplary resilience: fiddler crabs, goby fish, and proboscis monkeys in the coastal mangrove swamps of Borneo. As fiddler crabs go deep into their burrows when the tide has receded, so we can go deep in prayer to help us keep breathing when we feel ourselves under threat. As goby fish wait in water-filled tunnels until their habitat is flooded again, so we can immerse ourselves in actions of justice and compassion, creating habitable micro zones even when the larger environment is inhospitable. [Debra Rienstra’s 2022 book *Refugia Faith* had not yet been published when I preached this, but its relevance is clear.] As proboscis monkeys have unique skills for digesting what is indigestible and flinging themselves exuberantly from tree to tree, so we can use our talents to make nourishment out of what is unpalatable and fling ourselves into the Gospel work of peace.