

Lesson Plans that Work
Year A – Fourth Sunday of Easter
Lesson Plans for Younger Children

Scripture: John 10:1-10

“I have seen the Lord!” exclaimed Mary Magdalene. At first she does not recognize who is standing beside her. When she realizes it is the risen Jesus she wants to grasp him. He holds her off and tells her to go and share what has happened: He has walked through death and has created a path for us to follow, now and on through our own death.

In these 50 days of Easter, celebrating what Jesus has done for us, we are invited to recognize Jesus standing beside us, as he did with Mary. What is he calling us to do? Perhaps we can train our eyes to look in the direction that this Jesus, standing beside us is looking. What might he be looking at? Do we dare follow where he is leading? Can we notice and honor the various ways Jesus “appears” to people?

A Notation for This Week’s Gospel

For the next three Sundays, to help us prepare for Pentecost, we have flashback pre-resurrection passages of Scripture. Today Jesus tells us the story of the Good Shepherd. In the story, instead of looking at ourselves as the sheep where we may be tempted to whine, what if we look at the qualities of an authentic leader? What implications can we find for ourselves?

Theme: Who Will We Follow?

Before: The assumption is that your children do not see sheep up close very often. Obviously, if your community has access to sheep you will want to change the story to include that. (“This could be a story about sheep like the ones on Mr. and Mrs. Whoever’s ranch.”) To do today’s activity, you will need enough cotton balls for each child to have several (the larger size is easier to work with) and some leftover Easter grass. You will also need a small box lid. Experiment with pulling on the cotton ball to form the head of the sheep. Then pull down the front two legs in one block and the back two legs also in one block. Stand the sheep on a little clump of Easter grass to steady them. If you have a picture of a sheep, from a child’s book or downloaded from the Internet, bring it to show the children.

Beginning: Ask the children to help you set up the worship space. Light the candle. Remember to blow it out after the story. Ask the children if they have ever seen sheep? If they have let them tell you about sheep. Then tell them that today we have a story Jesus told us about sheep and the shepherd who takes care of them.

Praying: Thank you, God, that you love us and take care of us. Amen.

The Story: Jesus told a story about sheep and the shepherd who takes care of them. Sheep were very common when Jesus was telling this story. We don’t have many sheep in our town, do we? But Jesus saw the sheep and the people taking care of the sheep all the time. Jesus told the people that a good shepherd takes good care of the sheep, leads them to where they can find tasty grass to munch and clear, clean water to drink. At the end of the day, the shepherd calls the sheep, and

the sheep all come to him because they know his voice, and they know they can trust him. At the end of the day, the shepherd takes the sheep into a safe place. The shepherd stays with the sheep all night so they are safe.

Activity: Help the children pretend to be sheep. At first, the teacher is the shepherd, and then the children can take turns being the shepherd. To make a sheepfold, turn a table on its side so the children can huddle in the enclosure while the shepherd stands guard. The shepherd can lead the sheep by whistling, or just calling so the sheep can hear his voice and go where he goes. The shepherd can look for tasty grass and sweet springs of water and lead the sheep to these places. Then the shepherd can lead the sheep back to the sheepfold. At this point, ask for a volunteer to be the shepherd, and keep playing the game until each child who wants to has a turn as the shepherd.

Activity: Bring the art supplies you have gathered and invite the children to shape the cotton balls into sheep. Then, arrange the sheep on the lid of the box, steadying them on pieces of torn Easter grass. They may also make a sheep to take home with them. When the children are satisfied with the gathering of sheep, place the box lid on your worship space table.

Getting Closure: Light the worship space candle and ask the children to hold in their hands the sheep they have made to take home. You hold one, tenderly, also and tell the children that when you are afraid you remember that Jesus is holding you just as tenderly as you are now holding this little sheep.

Closing Prayer: Thank you, God, that Jesus is holding us safely. Amen. (Blow out the candle!)

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