

Lesson Plans that Work
Year B – Fourth Sunday of Easter
Lesson Plans for Older Children

Scripture: John 10:11-18

Background: Easter - the unearned gift of grace. The reflective season of “going in” that Lent provided (no matter what disciplines we undertook, nor even how well we attended to them) explodes on Easter. Of course, we cannot “figure it out.” How comforting, then, to have these scriptures, showing first how the disciples struggled to grasp what had happened and then stories of Jesus before the crucifixion, which are written in the light of the Resurrection.

As Easter people we know, as Paul said, that nothing, not even death, shall separate us from the love of God. We are people who expect life out of death. And so, in Eastertide we celebrate the wonder and prepare ourselves to take the awesome message out into the world on Pentecost.

A Notation for this Week’s Gospel

For the rest of the Easter Season, we have stories Jesus shared before the crucifixion. Now, in the light of the resurrection, they take on a powerful new value. Jesus is portrayed as the Good Shepherd. Even though sheep are not part of our lives like sheep were for the people who first heard these stories, we can resonate to the concept of a shepherd who knows his own and whose own know him. We belong to this shepherd. Yet, if, as Jesus tells us, he has other sheep that are not of this fold that he must bring also, we have work to do – work given to us by the Good Shepherd.

Theme: The Good Shepherd

Before Class: You will need copies of the *Book of Common Prayer* (BCP) and Bibles or copies of the scripture. Choose the translation of the 23rd Psalm you prefer (p. 613, or p. 476 for the older translation).

Beginning: Tell the children that Jesus looked for examples that his followers would easily recognize. And so Jesus often told stories about sheep. Our job when we read stories Jesus told is to see what the stories say to us in our lives.

Opening Prayer: Ask the children to find the translation of the 23rd Psalm in the BCP that you prefer to use today. Invite them to read it along with you as your opening prayer.

The Story: Ask the children to find John 10:11 in their Bibles. Invite someone to read or go around the circle, having each child read a sentence.

Reflection Questions:

- What is a hired hand? (Someone paid to do a job and with no say as to how it is done.)
- What is the difference Jesus makes between the Good Shepherd and the hired hand? (When things get too hard, the hired hand will not stick around.)

- Jesus says he knows his “own” and his “own” know him. (Sheep recognize the voice of the person who takes care of them. Do any of you have a dog that will come when you call the dog? Sheep are like that.)
- Who are some of the people we listen to and who take care of us?
- Who are some of the people who listen to us and who we take care of?

Activity: Create a poster of a silhouette of Jesus with sheep. Label each sheep with the name of someone Jesus takes care of. Have the children add as many sheep as they need, or create additional posters.

Getting Closure: If time permits invite the children to offer suggestions for how we can help Jesus bring those other sheep into our circle. Who might those other “sheep” be?

Closing Prayer: Continuing with the prayers found in the *Book of Common Prayer* (p. 383), today we look at “the welfare of the world.” Invite the children to consider what things would be included (e.g., the natural world, the places animals and birds live; the social world, people with insufficient food, no jobs, or victims of wars and natural disasters). Develop a prayer with the children and say it together.

John 10:11-18

¹¹“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. ¹²The hired hand, who is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and runs away—and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. ¹³The hired hand runs away because a hired hand does not care for the sheep. ¹⁴I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, ¹⁵just as the Father knows me and I know the Father. And I lay down my life for the sheep. ¹⁶I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd. ¹⁷For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life in order to take it up again. ¹⁸No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up again. I have received this command from my Father.”

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