

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

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: You will need copies of the scripture or copies of the bible and the *Book of Common Prayer* (BCP). You may choose to open your class with prayer by inviting the group to read with you the 23rd Psalm. Select the translation you think will resonate best: BCP, p. 613, or the more traditional translation BCP, p. 476.

Beginning: Jesus frequently uses sheep as his illustration – an image that worked well for his culture. Our task is to see how it speaks to us today.

Opening Prayer: Invite the class to read the 23rd Psalm from the BCP. At the close of the reading, say “Amen.” Allow a moment of silence and then ask if anyone has a response to share.

The Scripture: Before reading today’s passage, invite the class to notice what the illustrations said to the people listening to Jesus – and what they may be saying to us as we listen today.

Reflection Questions:

- What stood out for you in today’s reading?
- What are the “wolves” in our lives that may “snatch and scatter” us? (If examples do not come quickly, you could offer: skewed priorities, inappropriate activities, etc.)

- To what extent are we confident that Jesus knows us and that we know Jesus? (What signs of each do we see in our lives?)
- Who might be the “other sheep” that Jesus must bring? What might be our responsibility in helping Jesus bring them in?
- Verses 17 and 18 change the tone. How might the institutional leaders have heard what he was saying? (As yet another sign that Jesus was a threat to their ways.)
- In hindsight, what do we understand Jesus to be revealing? (The Resurrection and the deep relationship between Jesus and the Father.)

Getting Closure: Much in our lives may appear to be spinning out of control. If during our time together today, we have shared concerns, perhaps we could also commit to praying for each other so we are being fellow sheep for each other – following the Good Shepherd.

Closing Prayer: Pray, specifically, for concerns that came up in the discussion. Or close simply by reading, together, again, the 23rd Psalm.

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.”

Printed by the Office for Formation and Vocation Ministries of the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society, 815 Second Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10017.

© 2015 The Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America. All rights reserved.