

Focus: Safe in the hand of God

Materials:

Prayer Altar: Cross, Candle, Chasuble on stand (priest's vestment) and Altar Cloth
CD-Easter Season-Cycle C
Bible: In lesson plan
Book: The Little Shepherd

Gathering (children find/sit on a carpet square)

Say: Good Morning everyone, my name is _____. Last week we talked about how Jesus asked his good friend Peter to take care of the followers of Jesus., we are his lambs and Jesus is the Good Shepherd. This week we will hear Jesus tell us that he loves us and we can trust him and follow him.

Opening Prayer

Together we make the Sign of the Cross (do in reverse so children can mirror).

Say: Now let's put our hands together and bow our heads.

Let us pray.

Dear Jesus, you are our good shepherd. You love and care for your sheep.

Help us to always follow you as you lead us toward what is good and right.

In the name of Jesus, the Good Shepherd, we pray.

Amen.

Song/Movement

Join in the Dance, track: 1, from Easter Season Cycle C

Play music, encourage children to stretch or move to the music (clapping, stamp feet march in place to the beat), turn to each other and shake hands, saying hello, etc.

Join in the dance of the earth's
jubilation! This is the feast of the
love of God.

Shout from the heights to the ends
of creation: Jesus the Savior is risen
from the grave!

1. Wake, O people; sleep no longer,
greet the breaking day!

Christ, Redeemer, Lamb and Lion,
turns the night away!

2. All creation, like a mother, labors
to give birth.

Soon the pain will be forgotten, joy
for all the earth!

3. Now our shame becomes our
glory on this holy tree.

Now the reign of death is ended;
now we are set free!

Memory Verse

Say: Now let's take a moment together to learn a verse from the bible.

My sheep know my voice

Have the children repeat the verse after you a couple of times.

Say: We all know better than to follow a stranger. Jesus isn't a stranger. We know Jesus, even if we haven't seen him. He is God's own Son who has shown us the way to true happiness. In today's Gospel, Jesus tells us that he is our shepherd, and we are the sheep that he loves. We trust and follow him.

Gospel Story

Say: *Today we are reading from the Gospel of John.*

Have children make sign of the cross on their forehead, mouth and heart saying. *“Lord, open my mind, my lips and my heart so that I may learn it, speak it and love it.”*

Read: None, pp. N/A,

Jesus said: [Chatty hand, thumb to fingers]

“My sheep know by voice.

[Cup your hands around your mouth, like you are shouting]

When I call my sheep, they recognize my voice and my sheep follow me.

[Cock your head, like you have heard something and walk in place]

I give my sheep life everlasting.

[Move your hands forward, open palms up, in a gesture of giving a present]

My sheep will live forever.

[Point to heaven]

No one can take my sheep away from me.

[Shake your head ‘no’]

My Father, who has given my sheep to me, is greater than anyone.

[Move your arms in a grand gesture, indicating the whole world]

No one can take my sheep out of my Father’s hand.

[Hold out your hand, palm up, and shake head ‘no’.]

The Father and I are one.

[Bring hands together in front of your chest in gesture of prayer.]

After the reading say: *The Gospel of the Lord*

Children respond: *Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ*

Discussion Starters:

- *What does Jesus tell us about his sheep?*
- *What does Jesus promise to give his sheep?*
- *Who are Jesus’ sheep?*
- *A good shepherd watches over and cares for his sheep.*
- *How is Jesus like a good shepherd?*
- *How are we like sheep?*
- *Who are the people in your life who care for you and watch over you?*
- *How do they care for you?*
- *Do you listen to them?*

Reflection on Reading:

The Fourth Sunday of Easter is known as Good Shepherd Sunday because the image of shepherd is used to describe the relationship between Jesus and those who belong to him.

In today's gospel Jesus describes himself as a shepherd who loves and cares for his sheep. Those who follow Jesus are his sheep. Like us, sheep like to be with other people and follow a strong leader. For this reason, they need a leader who cares about them and will guide them to things that are best for them. Jesus is our loving leader who guides us toward goodness and shows us the way to our heavenly Father.

Jesus showed us what to do to be good followers. If we imitate Jesus, we'll become the best people we can be. We can be sharing, loving, forgiving and good just like Jesus.

Today's gospel passage tells us that those who belong to Jesus are held safely in the hand of God. Jesus also promises that his sheep will never perish. Not only does Jesus give his followers guidance and protection, they are also promised the gift of eternal life in heaven with God.

Gospel ActivityActivity 1:**The Good Shepherd Says:**

This game is played like Simon Says, but instead of saying "Simon Says", you say "The Good Shepherd says"

Pick a few actions ahead of time when you won't say – The Good Shepherd Says.

The gospels tell us what we should do to be like Jesus. We should pray, listen to and learn from the stories of Jesus, love and serve God and each other. Wouldn't it be wonderful if everyone in the world were the best sheep, followers of Jesus they can be.

Let's practice what Jesus has taught us to do.

Sample Actions-. No one is out, everyone gets another chance:

- Hug your neighbor
- Close your hands in prayer
- Go to Church-(March in place)
- Say peace be with you to your neighbor
- Say Alleluia
- Clap your hands
- Jump one time
- Shake hands with your neighbor
- Praise God-Raise your hands up high
- Listen to Jesus (cup hand around ear)

Activity 2:

Read the book: The Little Shepherd, a child oriented version of the 23rd Psalm.

Afterwards discuss what things sheep need and what things people need.
Talk about what happens when sheep follow the wrong shepherd and they are led into danger.
Discuss what happens when we allow ourselves to stray from the path that God has for us.

Bring up specific situations that children face and ask what our Good Shepherd would lead us to do.

Someone you don't know asks you to help them find their dog.-Mom and dad decide who you can help. If they aren't there you have to go find them or another mom or dad right away.
You are in a store and realize that you are lost. Stay right where you are, this is hard, but this is where mom or dad will come back to look for you. If you see another mom or dad with their kids, ask them for help.
Your friends tell you who you can play with.-Jesus wants us to treat others just like we want to be treated and not to leave out anyone who wants to play a game.

Jesus wants everyone to be safe and when we make good choices we can feel safe and help others feel safe too.

End in prayer:
Father, we are thankful that Jesus holds us safely in the palm of his hand and that nothing can snatch us from his hand. In Jesus' name we pray, amen.

Complete the weekly bulletin as a group-let the children color them if there is extra time

Closing Prayer

(Children respond: "I Believe!")

Ask: *Do you believe in God, who loves you and created you?*
Do you believe in Jesus, who knows you and calls you by name?
Do you believe in the Holy Spirit, who fills our hearts with joy?

Sending Forth

Say: When we go back to church remember to take a quiet moment to thank Jesus for being the Good Shepherd for us. So we can have a safe and fun way to live.

Lining Up/Closing Song

Play "*Rejoice in the Lord*" track 3 from Easter Season Cycle C while children put away any materials and lineup. Hand out weekly bulletins. Remind them it is important that they return to their family quietly so that we may all listen and pray together in church.