

Year A, Week 23 (May 4, 2008)

Matthew 18:12-13, John 10: 2-4, 7, 11 Kingdom of heaven: Lost Sheep/Good Shepherd

Hymn suggestions: *I am the Good Shepherd*

Items Needed:

- Jesus figure
- Shepherd figure
- Sheep figures
- Blocks to build a three-sided sheep pen

While Jesus was on Earth, he talked about the kingdom of God. When the crowds heard him, they probably thought about a king like King David, who was mighty in battle. But Jesus talked about a different kind of kingdom, the kingdom of heaven.

One day, Jesus said, “Suppose a shepherd has a hundred sheep, and one of them gets lost. (*Set out sheep and shepherd – place one sheep off to the side to get “found.”*)

“Doesn’t the shepherd leave the 99 on the mountain and go looking for the one who is lost? (*Move shepherd around, looking for lost sheep.*)

“And when he finds it ... (*have shepherd find and return the one lamb*) ... he rejoices over it – he’s even happier about finding the one than he is about the 99 that never got lost.”

Jesus also told them another story. (*Use blocks to build a three-sided sheep pen around the sheep as you talk.*)

He said, “The good shepherd doesn’t climb over the fence like a thief. The good shepherd walks right in through the gate. (*Move shepherd figure through the gate.*) The sheep recognize their shepherd’s voice, and he calls his sheep by name and they follow him because they know him and trust him.”

Jesus said, “I am the good shepherd who will take care of my sheep. I am the good shepherd who will lay down his own body to make a gate that will protect my sheep from any wolves or thieves.” (*Lay down the Jesus or shepherd figure along the open side of the pen to show how the shepherd would sleep in the opening to be a gate.*)

Jesus said, “I am the good shepherd who will even lay down his life for his sheep.”

Questions without Response:

- I wonder ... why Jesus talked about sheep and shepherds so much?
- I wonder ... if you got lost, if your parents would search for you until they found you?
- I wonder ... how it feels to know that God will search for us, too.
- I wonder ... how it feels to know that Jesus is our good shepherd, talking care of us, protecting us, always with us, and even laying down his life for us.