

THE WORD BECAME FLESH



CREATION AND THE BEGINNING OF HUMAN HISTORY

#XMAS - The GOOD SHEPHERD John 10:11-16; Psalm 23

PICTURES (Note: Inserted in brackets at the appropriate place in the lesson is the number of the picture to show the students.)

Xmas-1 Manger Scene with Shepherds
Xmas-2 Jesus as a shepherd

Xmas-3 Candy Cane

REVIEW (Before teaching lesson)

Skip the review session for Christmas week. Let the students know that you will review the previous lesson the Sunday following Christmas.

LESSON CONTENT

Note: The Bible verses included in the lesson are from the NIV 1984 edition. The wording of the questions is derived from that version. If another version of the Bible is used, questions may need to be adapted.

This is Christmas Sunday. (The Sunday prior to or on Christmas Day.) In a nativity scene at Christmas, there are always shepherds and sheep, along with Mary and Joseph and the baby Jesus. (picture Xmas-1) Why is that? Jesus' birth was first announced to shepherds who were out in the fields taking care of their sheep. When the shepherds heard the good news of the Savior's birth from the angels who appeared to them, they hurried off to Bethlehem to find the Savior God had promised.

Being a shepherd was a very common occupation in Israel long ago and throughout the Bible are many references to sheep and shepherds. King David was a shepherd before he became king of ancient Israel.

LESSON CONTENT

What does a shepherd's job consist of? A shepherd is responsible to care for and protect his sheep. He leads them to safe pastures where there is plenty of food and water. He keeps the wild animals away that would harm them. He rescues them if they get themselves into a bad place. He takes care of them if they get injured or sick.

People in turn have been described as "dumb sheep." Why would a sheep be described as dumb? Sheep are not very smart animals. They are oblivious to danger; they follow the herd wherever it goes and are easily led astray into danger.

Long before Jesus' birth God had promised to send to Israel a shepherd. Micah 5:2, 4-5 says, 2 "But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times." ... 4 He will stand and shepherd his flock in the strength of the LORD, in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God. And they will live securely, for then his greatness will reach to the ends of the earth. And he will be their peace.

(picture Xmas-2) How did Jesus fulfilled this prophecy? Jesus was born in the town of Bethlehem. He is God and has always existed (origins from ancient times). Jesus calls himself the Good Shepherd in the Gospel of John and when we come into a relationship with him we find peace. Jesus describes himself as the good shepherd.

John 10:11-16

¹¹ "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. ¹² The hired hand is not the shepherd who owns the sheep. So when he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away. Then the wolf attacks the flock and scatters it. ¹³ The man runs away because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep.

¹⁴ "I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me— ¹⁵ just as the Father knows me and I know the Father—and I lay down my life for the sheep. ¹⁶ I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd.

What is the difference between the good shepherd and the hired hand? The good shepherd is willing to give his life to rescue his sheep from what would destroy or harm them. A hired hand cares nothing about the sheep. To him it's just a job.

In this passage what is Jesus saying he will do? He will lay down his life for his sheep. To be willing to die for someone is sacrificial love. The ultimate demonstration of sacrificial love is Jesus dying on the cross. Jesus lay down his life on the cross and took it up again in the resurrection. He did this not only for his sheep, the people of Israel, but for all people who come to him.

1 John 3:16 says, ¹⁶ *This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers.* If we truly love Jesus and appreciate all he has done for us then we will do the same for others.

At Christmas we should think about the full meaning of Christmas. The decorations we use and the traditions we celebrate should help us to focus on Jesus and the reason he came to earth. (Hold up a candy cane or show picture Xmas-3.) The candy cane came into

being because a candy maker wanted to make a sweet that would symbolize the meaning of Christmas.

- What do you think the color white represents? The white color of the candy cane he chose to represent Christ's body, pure and innocent, and Christ's sinless life. (Hebrews 7:26 - *Such a high priest meets our need--one who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens.*)
- What do you think the color red represents? The red stripes were a reminder that Christ shed his blood for us and that by his stripes we are healed. (Romans 5:9 - *Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him!*)
- Why is the candy cane the shape it is? The candy was formed into a shepherd's crook because Christ is the Good Shepherd who gave his life for his sheep. (John 10:11 - *"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep."*)
- What happens if you turn the candy cane upside down? If you turn the shepherd's crook upside down, it becomes the "J" of Jesus, God's Son who saves us from our sin. (Luke 1:31 - *You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus.*)

This Christmas we will work on memorizing Psalm 23 as it depicts what Jesus our Good Shepherd does for us. As we read it think about the occupation of a shepherd and how he is always with and watching over his sheep. Being Christ's sheep and living in his presence means we are given the love and care provided by a Good shepherd. For each of the verses of the Psalm we will associate a word beginning with "P" to remind us of what our good shepherd does for us.

- ¹ *The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not be in want.*
Provision – God is the source of our provision. What are things God provides for us? (Make a list of what the children say.) He provides all we need for life and godliness (both physical and spiritual life).
- ² *He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters,³ he restores my soul.*
Peace – God is our peace. What do green pastures and still waters make you think of? When we abide with Jesus, we can find complete rest, satisfaction and contentment.
- *He guides me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake.*
Piety – Piety is righteousness in action. What is righteousness and where does it come from? Righteousness is continually being and doing what is right and good. True righteousness only comes through a relationship with Jesus. The Holy Spirit works righteousness in us as we submit to and follow him.
- ⁴ *Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me ;your rod and your staff, they comfort me.*
Protection – Why don't we have to be afraid when we belong to Jesus? Jesus watches over and protects us. Our eternity is secure in him.

- ⁵ *You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.*
Privileged position – What does this verse paint a picture of? We are secure in Christ even when we are facing our enemies. In Christ we also have a privileged position, a place of honor because we belong to him and are part of his family. We experience the blessing he wants to provide for his people.
- ⁶ *Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.*
Promises – God’s promises are ours when we put our faith in Christ. What are the promises of this verse? The blessings of abiding with God. Christ has paid the price for our redemption so that we can live forever in his presence.

LESSON WRAP-UP

- **Overview Questions:** What is the difference between the Good Shepherd and the hired hand? How do his sheep respond to the Good Shepherd?
- **Thought Questions:** What does it take to be a good sheep? What will be the outcome? What will a dumb sheep do? What will be the outcome?
- **Prayer:** Thank Jesus for being your Good Shepherd and loving and watching over you. Thank him for giving his life for you so that you can spend eternity in a safe and green pasture. Pray that you would be a good sheep, recognize you are lost without his guiding hand and be willing to follow wherever he leads you, knowing that is the best place for you to be.
- **The Big Question:** **What does the Good Shepherd do for his sheep?**
Let the students give their answers to the question. Share the memory verse. Ask how it answers the question.
- **Memory Verse: Psalm 23**
Our Good Shepherd protects and provides for us.

¹ The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not be in want.² He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters,³ he restores my soul. He guides me in paths of righteousness for his name’s sake.⁴ Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.

⁵ You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. ⁶ Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

ACTIVITIES (Completed after the lesson)

Any age appropriate activity can be included which fits into the class time. The activities with a star are included on the class notes.

- ★ **Lesson Notes:** Ask the students to summarize in one sentence what the lesson was about. Then have them give three main points covered in the lesson. An example is below.

Theme: Jesus is our good shepherd.

1. A hired hand will run away when there is danger because he does not own the sheep.
2. The Good Shepherd lays down his life to protect and save his sheep.
3. The sheep who belong to the Good Shepherd hear his voice and follow him.

Why do I need to know this?

It is helpful for me to think about Jesus in this way. He wants to lead me and watch over me. I need to listen to his voice and follow him.

- ★ **Memory Verse:** Read the memory verse on the cover of the booklet and then have the students fill in the blanks in the verse in the inside.

- ★ **Activity Page:** Matching

Instructions: Match the right "P" word with the section of Psalm 23.

JOURNAL

The daily journal inside the booklet has six readings that relate to a theme. It would be beneficial for the teacher to work through the journal readings also.

Journal Focus: What does our shepherd do for us?

Reading 1: Psalm 100:1-5 Our shepherd made us.

Why can we worship the Lord with gladness?

Reading 2: Psalm 28:6-9 Our shepherd hears our cries.

Why can we praise the Lord?

Reading 3: Psalm 80:1-3 Our shepherd restores us.

How does our shepherd restore us?

Reading 4: Isaiah 40:9-11 Our shepherd keep us close to his heart.

Why does our shepherd keep us close to his heart?

Reading 5: Ezekiel 34:11-16 Our shepherd seeks after us.

Why does our shepherd seek after us?

Reading 6: Revelation 7:9-17 Our shepherd will lead us to springs of living water.

What will our shepherd do for us? Why is he able to do that?