

The Good Shepherd

Psalm 23, John 10:11-16

(for FPC Early Preschool Chapel Time)

Leader Note: Before opening the Parable box, review last week's story. **Jesus called twelve helpers to follow him and learn from him. Jesus taught his disciples. One way he taught was by telling special stories called parables.**

Put the Good Shepherd box down in front of you and look at it. Take a moment of silence and center yourself. Touch the box gently, with wonder. And say:

I wonder if this is a parable. Hmm. It might be. Parables are very precious, like gold, and this box is gold.

Gently run your hand over the lid.

This looks like a present.

Lift the box and admire it like a present.

Well, parables are like presents. They have already been given to us. We can't buy them, or take them or steal them. They are already ours. ...There's another reason why this might be a parable. It has a lid.

Trace the lid of the box with your fingers.

And sometimes parables seem to have lids on them. But when you lift the lid of a parable there is something very precious inside...I know! Let's take off the lid and see if this is a parable

Lift the lid and peek inside. Put the lid back on and move the box to your side. Then open the lid just enough to take out the materials but not enough for the children to see inside. Take out the green underlay with wonder and say:

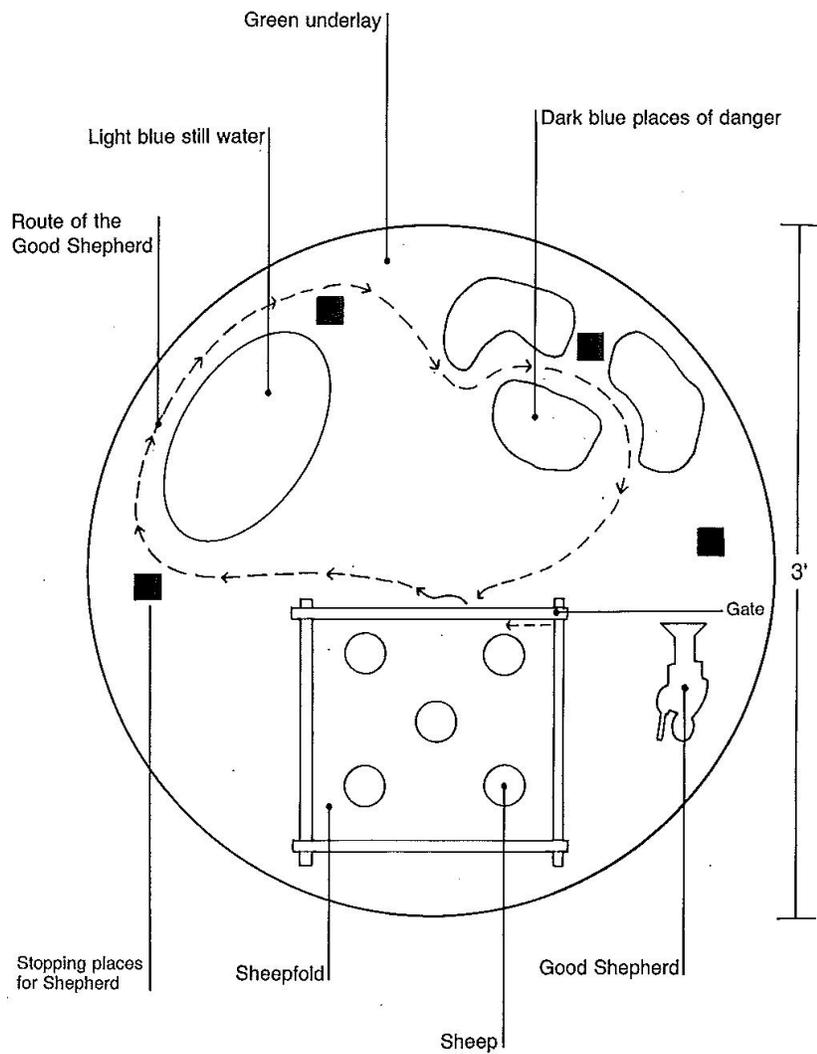
I wonder what this could be?

Begin smoothing out the underlay and say:

It's so green. It's so soft and warm. I wonder what could be so green?

As the children respond, incorporate their responses into the story (don't discuss them.)
For example:

CHILDREN



LEADER

Yes, it could be grass . . . or a bush . . . or a tree . . . or a balloon. . . . Perhaps it is a large green meadow.

Sit back and reflect a moment.

Maybe there is something else that will help us.

Take out the light blue felt. Present it, saying:

Yes. There is this.

Place it on the underlay to your upper left and smooth it out slowly.

It's so blue . . . and cool. I wonder what it might be?

Again, incorporate the responses into your story. For example:

Yes, it could be water. . . . Perhaps it is a piece of the sky . . . or a mirror . . . or a window to see through to the other side. Let's see if there's anything else.

Look into the box and take out the dark blue pieces of felt. Present them.

These are very dark. There seems to be no light in them at all.

Place the dark blue pieces on the upper right corner from you, spaced so the Good Shepherd can lead the sheep through.

I wonder what these could be? . . . I wonder if there is more?

Take out a tan strip from the box.

I wonder what this could be? If I place it here . . .

Place it horizontally near the edge of the circle closest to you and smooth it out.

. . . it looks like a road.

Walk your fingers from one end of the strip to the other, saying:

This could be the beginning, and this could be the end. Or this could be the beginning and this the end.

Bring out another strip and place it parallel.

If I add another . . . then the road could be in between.

Glide your hand between the strips.

Then this could be the beginning and this the end. Or this might be the beginning and this the end.

Place two more strips to make a square and continue laying the remaining eight strips on the first four, as you say:

There are more. If I put one here, and one here . . . I could make this place very strong. It's getting stronger . . . and stronger. Now I wonder what this could be? It could be a log cabin. . . . Hmm, it could be a corral.

Point to the inside of the sheepfold and then to the outside.

There is an inside . . . and an outside in this place. But I think there needs to be a way to go out . . . and a way to come in. . . . I could make a gate.

Make a gate by separating the ends of the strips in the corner farthest from you at your right.

I wonder who lives here?

Look into the box and take out the sheep.

Here are some sheep. If sheep live in this place, then it must be a sheepfold. It is called a sheepfold because the sheep are folded safely inside.

Trace the sheepfold with your finger. Sit back, pondering for a moment, remaining centered and looking at the material. Be sure to keep your eyes on the material during the telling of the story. You do not want to break the story with eye contact. Continue:

Once there was someone who said such amazing things and did such wonderful things that people began to follow him. But they didn't know who he was. So one day they simply had to ask him, and he said . . .

Take the Good Shepherd figure from the box, present it, and place it on the underlay as you say:

"I am the Good Shepherd. I know each one of my sheep by name.

Touch each of the sheep in the sheepfold.

And they know the sound of my voice. So when I call my sheep from the sheepfold, they follow me.

Open the gate.

I walk in front of the sheep to show them the way.

Slide the Good Shepherd out into the open "grass" at the left of the underlay. Slide the sheep one at a time as they follow the Good Shepherd.

I show them the way to the good green grass. . . . I show them the way to the cool, clear, still water. . . .

Slide all the sheep so they are around the blue felt pond, drinking.

And when there are places of danger . . .

Slide the Good Shepherd to the dark blue "rocks." Then move the sheep one at a time.

. . . I show them the way to pass through. . . .

Slide the Good Shepherd through the rocks. Then move the sheep through the places of danger. Then move them into the sheepfold.

...so they can come safely home to the sheepfold.”

Close the gate. Pause. Sit back.

Begin wondering with the children.

I wonder if the sheep have names...

I wonder if the sheep are happy in this place...

Trace the sheepfold with your fingers.

I wonder how many sheep really could live in this place...

I wonder if you have ever had to go through places of danger...

I wonder how the sheep feel with the Good Shepherd...

I wonder how the good shepherd feels about the sheep...

Trace the sheepfold with your fingers

I wonder where this place might really be...

Trace the outline of the whole underlay

I wonder where this whole place might really be...