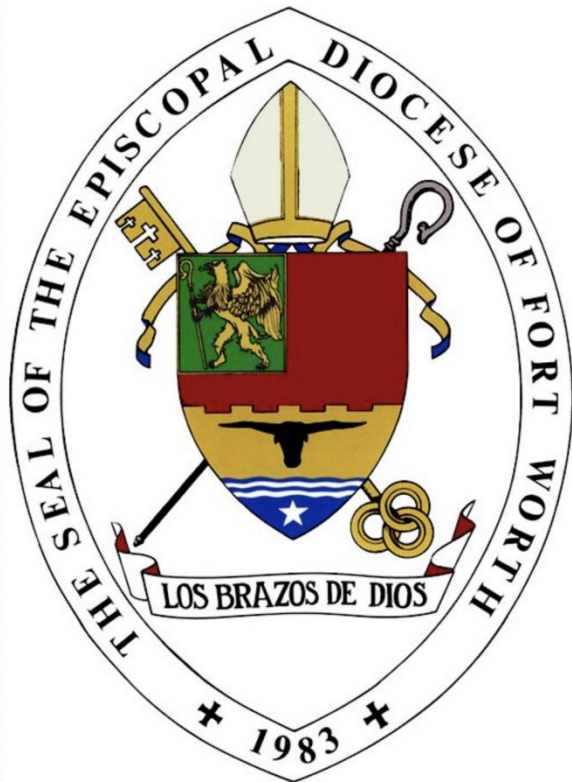


EQUIPPING THE SAINTS

A lectionary-based Sunday school curriculum for Pre-K through High School



**FOURTH
SUNDAY OF
EASTER**

Year A

A free resource created by the Christian Education Commission
of the Anglican Diocese of Fort Worth

Sunday School Curriculum

for the Fourth Sunday of Easter, Year A

Lectionary Texts:

Acts 6:1-9, 7:2a, 51-60

Psalm 23

1 Peter 2:13-25

John 10:1-10

Acts 6:1-9, 7:2a, 51-60

Seven Leaders Are Chosen

6 In those days the number of believers was growing. The Jews who followed Greek practices complained against the Jews who followed only Jewish practices. They said that the widows of men who followed Greek practices were not being taken care of. They weren't getting their fair share of food each day. ² So the Twelve gathered all the believers together. They said, "It wouldn't be right for us to give up teaching God's word in order to wait on tables. ³ Brothers, choose seven of your men. They must be known as men who are wise and full of the Holy Spirit. We will turn this important work over to them. ⁴ Then we can give our attention to prayer and to teaching the word."

⁵ This plan pleased the whole group. They chose Stephen. He was full of faith and of the Holy Spirit. Philip, Procorus, Nicanor, Timon and Parmenas were chosen too. The group also chose Nicolas from Antioch. He had accepted the Jewish faith. ⁶ The group brought them to the apostles. Then the apostles prayed and placed their hands on them.

⁷ So God's word spread. The number of believers in Jerusalem grew quickly. Also, a large number of priests began to obey Jesus' teachings.

Stephen Is Arrested

⁸ Stephen was full of God's grace and power. He did great wonders and miraculous signs among the people. ⁹ But members of the group called the Synagogue of the Freedmen began to oppose him. Some of them were Jews from Cyrene and Alexandria. Others were Jews from Cilicia and Asia Minor. They all began to argue with Stephen. ² "Brothers and fathers, listen to me!" Stephen replied. "The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham. At that time Abraham was still in Mesopotamia. He had not yet begun living in Haran.

⁵¹ “You people! You won’t obey! You are stubborn! You won’t listen! You are just like your people of long ago! You always oppose the Holy Spirit! ⁵² Was there ever a prophet your people didn’t try to hurt? They even killed those who told about the coming of the Blameless One. And now you have handed him over to his enemies. You have murdered him. ⁵³ The law you received was brought by angels. But you haven’t obeyed it.”

Stephen Is Killed

⁵⁴ When the Sanhedrin heard this, they became very angry. They ground their teeth at Stephen. ⁵⁵ But he was full of the Holy Spirit. He looked up to heaven and saw God’s glory. He saw Jesus standing at God’s right hand. ⁵⁶ “Look!” he said. “I see heaven open. The Son of Man is standing at God’s right hand.”

⁵⁷ When the Sanhedrin heard this, they covered their ears. They yelled at the top of their voices. They all rushed at him. ⁵⁸ They dragged him out of the city. They began to throw stones at him to kill him. The witnesses took off their coats. They placed them at the feet of a young man named Saul.

⁵⁹ While the members of the Sanhedrin were throwing stones at Stephen, he prayed. “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit,” he said. ⁶⁰ Then he fell on his knees. He cried out, “Lord! Don’t hold this sin against them!” When he had said this, he died.

Psalm 23

A psalm of David.

¹ The LORD is my shepherd. He gives me everything I need.

² He lets me lie down in fields of green grass.

He leads me beside quiet waters.

³ He gives me new strength.

He guides me in the right paths
for the honor of his name.

⁴ Even though I walk
through the darkest valley,
I will not be afraid.

You are with me.
Your shepherd’s rod and staff
comfort me.

⁵ You prepare a feast for me
right in front of my enemies.
You pour oil on my head.
My cup runs over.

⁶ I am sure that your goodness and love will follow me
all the days of my life.
And I will live in the house of the LORD
forever.

1 Peter 2:13-25

¹³ Follow the lead of every human authority. Do this for the Lord's sake. Obey the emperor. He is the highest authority. ¹⁴ Obey the governors. The emperor sends them to punish those who do wrong. He also sends them to praise those who do right. ¹⁵ By doing good you will put a stop to the talk of foolish people. They don't know what they are saying. ¹⁶ Live as free people. But don't use your freedom to cover up evil. Live as people who are God's slaves. ¹⁷ Show proper respect to everyone. Love the family of believers. Have respect for God. Honor the emperor.

¹⁸ Slaves, obey your masters out of deep respect for God. Obey not only those who are good and kind. Obey also those who are not kind. ¹⁹ Suppose a person suffers pain unfairly because he wants to obey God. That is worthy of praise. ²⁰ But suppose you receive a beating for doing wrong, and you put up with it. Will anyone honor you for that? Of course not. But suppose you suffer for doing good, and you put up with it. God will praise you for that.

²¹ Christ suffered for you. He left you an example. He expects you to follow in his steps. You too were chosen to suffer. ²² Scripture says,

“He didn't commit any sin.
No lies ever came out of his mouth.” ([Isaiah 53:9](#))

²³ People shouted at him and made fun of him. But he didn't do the same back to them. He suffered. But he didn't say that bad things would happen to them. Instead, he trusted in the One who judges fairly.

²⁴ He himself carried our sins in his body on the cross. He did it so that we would die as far as sins are concerned. Then we would lead godly lives. His wounds have made you whole.

²⁵ You were like sheep who were wandering away. But now you have returned to the Shepherd. He is the Leader of your souls.

John 10:1-10

The Shepherd and the Flock

¹⁰ “What I’m about to tell you is true. What if someone does not enter the sheep pen through the gate but climbs in another way? That person is a thief and a robber. ² The one who enters through the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. ³ The gatekeeper opens the gate for him. The sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. ⁴ When he has brought all of his own sheep out, he goes on ahead of them. His sheep follow him because they know his voice. ⁵ But they will never follow a stranger. In fact, they will run away from him. They don’t recognize a stranger’s voice.” ⁶ Jesus used this story. But the Jews who were there didn’t understand what he was telling them.

⁷ So Jesus said again, “What I’m about to tell you is true. I am like a gate for the sheep.

⁸ All those who ever came before me were thieves and robbers. But the sheep did not listen to them. ⁹ I’m like a gate. Anyone who enters through me will be saved. He will come in and go out. And he will find plenty of food. ¹⁰ The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I have come so they can have life. I want them to have it in the fullest possible way.

Overview of the Texts:

Easter, like Christmas, is not just a single day. It is an entire season for us to celebrate Jesus’ resurrection and the way that it changed the whole world. This week is the fourth Sunday of Easter. In today’s Scripture passages we begin to see the very real challenges that come with sharing Jesus’ message with the world.

Stephen feeds those in need, presents the Good News, and is taken and stoned to death outside of Jerusalem. Peter reminds the church that Jesus suffered for us. We should be willing to follow in His footsteps and suffer for doing what God has called us to do without complaint or pushing our pain off onto others. Peter also explains why and how this is possible. A Christian must share what they know about Jesus because it is desperately needed by the world around us. A Christian can be strong enough to do this, because God gives us His strength and support. Peter ends by referring to Jesus’ followers as sheep and Jesus as the Shepherd.

In the Gospel reading, Jesus attests to his uniqueness and refers to himself as the sheep gate, the one by whom all enter into eternal life. He also warns that others who come are merely thieves and robbers who have no care for the sheep. In both 1 Peter and the Gospel, Jesus is concerned with his sheep either as their shepherd or as the gate that allows them entry into his eternal kingdom. This Sunday is typically called "Good Shepherd Sunday" for this reason.

PreK-Kinder Lesson Plan:

Opening Prayer: Lord's Prayer

Supplies & Preparation:

Supplies: Craft (popsicle) sticks, tacky glue, paint and brushes

Preparation: If you have limited time, you may wish to hot glue the gates for the children ahead of time.

Activity (part 1):

Tell your students that you will be making a gate out of craft sticks. Set them to dry so that they can be painted following the discussion.

Discussion:

Read the Gospel lesson.

Jesus talks a lot about sheep, and in this lesson he calls himself the sheep gate. When we talk about Jesus being the gate, we have to look at how sheep were tended to. There would be a pen where the sheep were kept so they would be safe from wolves and thieves but they would have to be taken out to graze. Jesus desires us all to be a part of his flock and he will keep us safe and also lead us to good land for grazing. Jesus calls himself the gate because He is the only way that we can enter into the fold of God. If a thief wanted to come and steal a sheep, he wouldn't come through the gate, he would climb the fence in another place. We know when people come to us proclaiming a way other than Jesus that they are trying to mislead us. Give the example that if someone is trying to get us to do something that we shouldn't, they won't do it in front of our parents or teachers, they will do it somewhere away from those people who want us to do the right things. Jesus wants us to come and go through his

love. He wants us to come to Him in worship at church and in prayer at home and he wants us to go out into the world all through his love.

Activity (part 2):

Have your students paint the now dried gates.

Closing Prayer: Lord's Prayer

Elementary Lesson Plan:

Opening Prayer: Lord's Prayer, Hail Mary, Glory Be

Supplies & Preparation:

Supplies: Craft (popsicle) sticks, tacky glue, paint and brushes

Preparation: Precut a good number of popsicles sticks in half to help form letters.

Activity (part 1):

Tell your students that you will be making a gate out of craft sticks. Just let them be creative and glue the craft sticks together to form a panel of a gate. Give them the idea to spell the name "Jesus" with their sticks in the gate. Set them to dry so that they can be painted following the discussion.

Discussion:

Read the Gospel lesson.

Jesus talks a lot about sheep, and in this lesson he calls himself the sheep gate. When we talk about Jesus being the gate, we have to look at how sheep were tended to. There would be a pen where the sheep were kept so they would be safe from wolves and thieves, but they would have to be taken out to graze. Jesus desires us all to be a part of his flock and he will keep us safe and also lead us to good land for grazing. Jesus calls himself the gate because He is the only way that we can enter into the fold of God. If a thief wanted to come and steal a sheep, he wouldn't come through the gate, he would climb the fence in another place. We know when people come to us proclaiming a way other than Jesus that they are trying to mislead us. Give the example that if someone is trying to get us to do something that we shouldn't, they won't

do it in front of our parents or teachers, they will do it somewhere away from those people who want us to do the right things. Jesus wants us to come and go through his love. He wants us to come to Him in worship at church and in prayer at home and he wants us to go out into the world all through his love. Explain to your students that if someone comes to them and tells them that something other than Jesus can lead them to happiness or to God, then they are being misled. Jesus is very clear that He is the way and that He is the one who calls and leads his sheep.

Activity (part 2):

Have your students paint the now dried gates.

Closing Prayer: The Collect of the Day

Junior/Senior High Lesson Plan:

Opening Prayer: Lord's Prayer, Apostles' Creed, Hail Mary

Supplies & Preparation:

Supplies: Copy of the Gospel reading.

Preparation: None

Discussion:

- Have one of your students read the Gospel Lesson
- Ask your students what they think Jesus means when he says that he is the gate. *After some answers explain that because of the disobedience of our first parents, mankind was separated from God. There was no way for us to return to being in the kind of fellowship with God that Adam and Eve enjoyed. Jesus became incarnate in order to reopen that path. He is essentially the portal, the door, the gate by which we reenter into fellowship with God.*
- Ask what it is that keeps us from God. *The answer is sin.*
- How do we get rid of our sin, can we do it ourselves? *No. Through faith in Jesus Christ, by repentance, and submitting ourselves to his will, we are forgiven of our sins and able to more actively and purposefully resist further sin. Without this we cannot be reconciled to God. So, in a very real way, Jesus becomes the gate by which we enter into the sheepfold of God.*

- Reread verse 9. Once we have entered into the sheepfold, we know who our shepherd is and can come back for safety and protection as well as go out to find provision and to be an example to the world of our hope and security we have in Christ our shepherd.
- Ask your students to think of some ways in which we return to the sheepfold for security and protection. *We come to church to worship. We go to God in prayer. We surround ourselves with fellow Christians for support.*
- How do we go out to find provision as an example of good sheep? *Going out to school or work and sharing our faith with others.*
- Reread verse 10. Ask your students what they think Jesus means when he talks about thieves coming in to kill and destroy. *We need to be cautious of people who will come and offer us a way to happiness and fulfillment that isn't through Jesus.*
- Who and what are some of these thieves? *Other religions that deny the uniqueness of Jesus as the way to salvation, people who deny that God exists or that he cares about what we do, the temptations of the world – money, lust, power.*

Closing Prayer: The Collect of the Day