

Biblical Background

JOHN 10:27-30

GEOGRAPHICAL SETTING: Most of Israel/Palestine is a rocky and hilly desert climate. Only in Galilee are their lush fields that are good for agriculture. Being the land of milk and honey is to be a land that is not optimal for agriculture but is good for sheep. The sheep and goats produce milk and a land flowing with milk is the result. People lived very close to the land and sheep and shepherds were abundant, so it would have been a very familiar sight for Jesus to describe as a parallel to who he is in relationship to his followers.

TERMS: **Good Shepherd** A good shepherd goes out after all the sheep that are lost, and will risk his life out of love and a bond to the sheep. This is a loving relationship that requires the shepherd to go to great lengths to protect the sheep even to the point of risking his own life if necessary. Sheep need to be protected from wild animals, mountain crevices, and becoming cast down (fallen over and unable to get up by themselves).

CULTURAL INSIGHTS: In the time of Jesus, sheep herding was a prevalent profession, so everyone would have understood what was required of the shepherd in caring for his sheep. It would have been common knowledge, just as football is a big part of American culture now. Now days, when people make football analogies, people can understand the meanings they are referring to. The shepherd has a personal relationship with the sheep, a deep bond of love and fidelity. A hired hand does not share in that bond of care and relationship. The hired hand is driven by money, not relationship. Here, Jesus is saying to be driven by money versus love will have disastrous results.

INSIGHTS INTO MEANING: "I know them, and they follow me." Sheep are familiar with their shepherd's voice - it is how sheep sort themselves. They know in a mixed herd who they belong to, who they are bonded to, and who will care for them to the point of laying down their life for them. Shepherds of other flocks do not have this same bond, and will remain detached in the case of danger, much like the hired hand. They do not have anything to lose if they lose the sheep. The good shepherd loves his sheep and is in a state of relationship, for that loving union a shepherd takes great risks for the safety and wellbeing of the sheep of his flock. That is what constitutes a Good Shepherd, one who is bonded in a loving relationship and who will risk their very life to protect and care for the sheep. That is the defining difference from a hired hand.

Family Activities

SHARING THE MISSION AT HOME
AND IN THE WORLD



QUESTION OF THE WEEK: Talk as a family about what it means to know that you can always hear the voice of Jesus the Good Shepherd to guide your life. What does it mean to know that the voice of Jesus will be with you to lead you throughout life in this world and into the next?

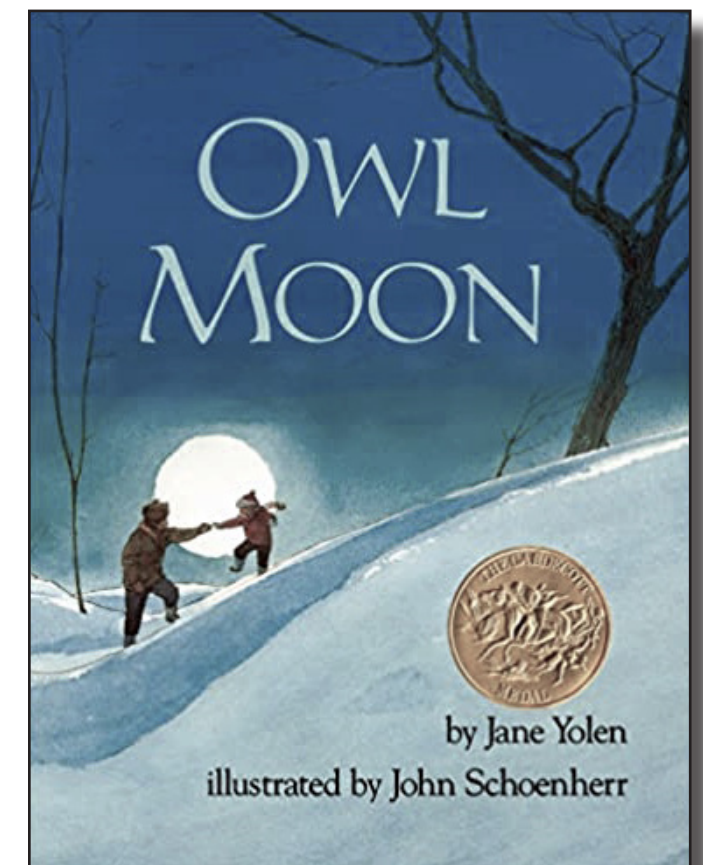
GOSPEL CHARACTER QUALITIES: **BEING WELL-NOURISHED**
INNER VOICE

FAMILY ACTIVITIES: Practice as a family communicating with an animal. Notice how animals communicate without using words. What do they learn from us without using words? What can we learn from them about how we can communicate with God without using words? After talking and listening without using words with an animal, share as a family what each of you experienced.

PARENT BROCHURE
CYCLE C 4TH SUNDAY
OF EASTER

Living Grace

"THE VOICE OF JESUS RESONATES FOREVER
IN OUR HEARTS"



*In **Owl Moon**, a girl and her father go owling on a moonlit winter night near the farm where they live. Bundled tight in wool clothes, they trudge through snow where the trees stand still as statues and the world is silent as a dream. Here and there, hidden in ink-blue shadows, a fox, a raccoon, a fieldmouse, and a deer watch them pass. Wordlessly the two companions walk along, an air of expectancy builds as Pa imitates the Great Horned Owl's call once without answer, then again. From out of the darkness "an echo came threading its way through the trees." We witness how the owl and Pa respond to one another, heard but not seen.*

Art & Faith

CELEBRATING THE BEAUTY & TRADITION
OF SACRED ART



CATACOMB OF CALLIXTUS ~ THE GOOD SHEPHERD
Painting on the rock of the tombs ~ Mid 3rd Century
Cimitero di Callisto ~ Rome, Italy

EXPLORING THE ART:

Beginning in the second century, huge burial tunnels known as catacombs were carved into the soft volcanic rock surrounding Rome, as Roman law outlawed burials within the city limits. The catacombs of San Callisto were built sometime after 150 AD and are named after the Christian Pope Callixtus I who was martyred for his Christian faith. Christianity was illegal until 313 AD when the emperor Constantine signed the Edict of Milan. As Christianity became prominent, catacomb remains were moved to churches, and catacombs fell into disuse. The image here is from the ceiling of the San Callisto catacombs and depicts a commonly found motif from early Christian art - Jesus as a young man, carrying a lamb over his shoulders - the good shepherd willing to sacrifice all for his sheep.

WILLING TO SACRIFICE ALL

Sunday Gospel

JOHN 10:27-30

Jesus said:

"My sheep hear my voice;

I know them, and they follow me.

I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish.

No one can take them out of my hand.

My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all,

and no one can take them out of the Father's hand.

The Father and I are one."

Read-aloud video link:

OWL MOON

Written by Jane Yolen & Illustrated by John Schoenherr

Making the Connections

FOR ADULTS

THE HEART RESPONDS TO THE VOICE OF LOVE WITH HOPE AND FAITH, EVEN IN LIFE'S DARKEST NIGHTS.

In the Easter gospels we learn of the new dynamics of life in the Risen Lord. They teach us how to recognize Jesus in new forms and how to experience this new life as the Body of Christ. *Owl Moon* is a beautiful story about the strength of voice recognition. In the dark forest a Dad and daughter tiptoe silently through the woods. No words are shared, yet they speak to each other through the shared hope in their hearts. Pa cups his hands to his mouth, and an owl hears a familiar hoot through the forest. Through voice recognition old friends are reunited. "All we need is hope that flies on silent wings under a shining Owl Moon," says the little girl heading home from this magical encounter.

Have you had a grandparent visiting from far away? They walk in the house, call your name, your heart leaps with joy. Our voices are much like our fingerprints, they are distinctive. When a person we love is down, we can hear it in their voice, sometimes even more than we can see it in their faces. The tone of our voices, like our body language, can speak louder than words. Voice recognition speaks to the intimate connection we share with our loved ones.

In today's gospel we hear about Jesus the Good Shepherd. In Jesus' time shepherds were a part of daily life. Shepherds were given a big responsibility, to keep a herd of independent sheep moving together in one direction. As long as they stayed together, they would be safe. The shepherd had to build an individual relationship with each sheep. As a young lamb they came to know the voice of the shepherd and to trust the shepherd for care and protection. This bond, established through care, gave the shepherd authority in the sheep's life. Jesus uses this analogy to invite each one of us to a relationship of a loving trust in Him. In this world we cannot see Jesus, but we can hear his voice in our hearts. As we follow his voice and develop strength of connection, he will lead us to places of love and nourishment for our lives.

Jesus will guide us to find the communities, work places, and friends that will provide us with the nourishment we need to blossom into all we can be. His voice will always be there to guide us during difficult circumstances. The voice of Jesus the Good Shepherd gently leads us home. Home to ourselves, our hearts, and back to our loved ones when we go astray. Ultimately the voice of Jesus, the Good Shepherd, will guide us safely into the arms of our loving Father, forever.

Making the Connections

FOR CHILDREN

YOUR STORY: Have you ever gone on a quiet walk in the woods? What have you heard? Does every little sound come alive? Do you ever wake up in the morning and hear all the birds outside? Do you listen or do you ignore them?

THE CHILDREN'S STORY: Do you think the little girl felt pretty special to get to take this great adventure with her Pa? Was it a rite of passage? Did her Pa know the way? What was her job? Was trust and hope important? How did the owl respond once it recognized the call?

THE GOSPEL STORY: Can you hear God's language in your heart? How does it feel? How do you hope to respond? What does knowing that Jesus the Good Shepherd will always recognize your voice when you call do for you?

How might you practice listening for the Good Shepherd's voice in your life?