

## Interactive lesson



picture from <https://www.freebibleimages.org/photos/shepherds-sheep/>;  
photo credit: David Padfield

What do you know about sheep? <Let them respond>

What do sheep do? Can you act like one?

<Let them respond>

What are those sheep doing? <Let them respond>

Are they more in the green area or the brown area?

Why? <Let them respond>

What is the water like? <Let them respond>

Do you think they would prefer it faster, splashing and noisy? Why/why not? <Let them respond>

What did the shepherd lead the person to in the psalm? <Let them respond>

What would happen if a wolf came into this scene? <Let them respond>

Who do you think would protect the sheep better, their shepherd or someone hired to watch them temporarily? Why? <Let them respond>

A good shepherd takes care of the sheep, doing what is best for them. Because the shepherd helps them, the sheep trust and follow the shepherd. Who does the church call the Good Shepherd? Why?

<Let them respond>

May each of us trust and follow our Good Shepherd in

love. Amen.

## Gospel lesson

We hop back to the Gospel of John today, to immediately after Jesus healed a blind man at the temple and pointed out to the Pharisees that rather than the blind man, it was the Pharisees who had sin because they did not believe in Him.

Jesus then began speaking about thieves trying to enter the sheepfold and how His sheep know Him. Today's reading is the second half of this "Good Shepherd" discourse.



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photo credit David Padfield

## John 10:11-18

(NRSV)

<sup>11</sup> "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.

<sup>12</sup> The hired hand, who is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and runs away--and the wolf snatches them and scatters them.

<sup>13</sup> The hired hand runs away because a hired hand does not care for the sheep.

<sup>14</sup> I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own

know me,

<sup>15</sup> just as the Father knows me and I know the Father. And I lay down my life for the sheep.

<sup>16</sup> I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd.

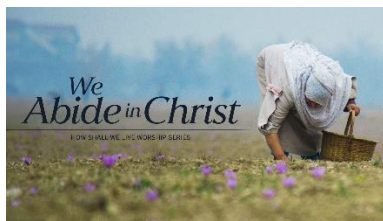
<sup>17</sup> For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life in order to take it up again.

<sup>18</sup> No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up again. I have received this command from my Father."

*The word of God for the people of God*

<Hymn "The King of Love My Shepherd Is" UMH #138

## Message: We Abide in Christ



picture from

<https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/worship-planning/third-sunday-of-easter-year-b-lectionary-planning-notes/third-sunday-of-easter-year-b-graphics>

Please pray with me?

Beloved Good Shepherd,

as we take time now to further consider today's scriptures, please

- speak Your words through my mouth,
- open our ears to hear Your message, and

- abide in our hearts,  
That we may abide in You and proclaim Your glory with  
our lives. Amen.

Today we consider how “We Abide in Christ”:

“Our final week in [this] series, “How Shall We Live?” calls us to live out the love and joy we have found in our life in Christ. [T]he challenge for us today is to seek to be in community with, to be transformed by, and to be dependent on others, in mutual relationship.”



picture from <https://www.facebook.com/ChenangoCountyFireAlerts/>

When there is a fire, firemen respond on the fire trucks to the scene. They may take on one of several roles in fighting a structure fire:

- † Driver of the firetruck typically stays with the vehicle, operating the pump and the radio.
- † Firemen place hose, get tools off the truck, may spray water on the fire from outside the structure.
- † Interior firefighters wear SCBA and search inside the building for victims and internal fire progression.
- † Others may have roles related to use of a ladder truck, going to get water if a source is not close

at hand, and other scene-specific duties.

All of the firemen work together to put out the fire, under the direction of the Fire Chief on scene. The Chief is responsible for everyone there. A good Fire Chief will know the capabilities of each of the firefighters working on the scene and deploy them in the best tactical way to minimize injury and damage.

If the firefighters know and trust their chief, then they obey commands without delay, making the firefighting more efficient and effective without putting themselves or other at undue risk. They save lives and property in a desperate situation.

We live in a sin-filled world, desperate for restoring love and peace with justice. God calls the faithful to address situations where God sees our capabilities fitting best, with each of us having different roles to fill in order for souls to be saved and peace to be restored.



picture from <https://www.freebibleimages.org/illustrations/qnpi-acts4/>

In the reading from Acts, the temple leaders thought they were in charge, and got angry at the apostles for disrupting normal temple business. But Peter made it clear: God is the one directing faithful, and the apostles would listen to God even if the temple

leaders did not.

A lot of people look to selfish ways, rejecting Christ, and hating on their neighbors. Some even prey upon the vulnerable, like wolves upon sheep. But we know better. We know Jesus.



picture from <https://www.freebibleimages.org/illustrations/qnpi-063-good-shepherd/>

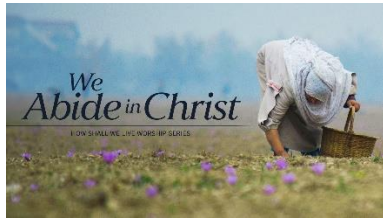
Jesus is the Good Shepherd, who takes care of the faithful even to giving His life to save them. The hired hand runs away in the face of danger – like the temple leaders ran to arrest the apostles, because they felt their livelihood was threatened.

Those who love the Christ know they can trust in the Lord, as David wrote in the famous psalm of today. No matter what is happening, the Lord is with us. And we owe God far more than we can ever repay.

The epistle of 1 John points out that we know Jesus laid down His life for us, and we ought to love one another too. Yet again and again, we see – or are – people with possessions choosing not to help others in need, making excuses not to do what we can. Is that really what God's love calls us to?

I think God calls us, enables us to do better. Jesus taught love by example; the Holy Spirit pushes us to

help our neighbors, and to protect the vulnerable.



picture from

<https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/worship-planning/third-sunday-of-easter-year-b-lectionary-planning-notes/third-sunday-of-easter-year-b-graphics>

So if you claim to be Christian, consider what abiding in Christ means for you. As John said, “All who obey his commandments abide in him, and he abides in them.” Jesus said the greatest commandment is to love God with all our heart, all our mind, all our soul, and all our strength – everything that we are. The second is like it – to love our neighbors as ourselves. Those are the commandments to obey!

So abiding in Christ means:

- † Loving God, giving thanks for Jesus, and being obedient to the Holy Spirit’s direction.
- † Knowing love for yourself: self-worth, self-respect, and being secure in who you are.
- † Loving your neighbor: appreciating their uniqueness, fostering their wellbeing.
- † Protecting the vulnerable from those who would do them harm – even if it is from themselves.
- † Loving and caring for all of God’s children, all people, even if you do not know them. This may mean looking at inequities in society and seeking to address them in a way that everyone can flourish – often a difficult solution to find.

But do not simply throw your hands in the air and seek to serve your own interests. Trust the Good Shepherd, listen to the Holy Spirit, and work to build God's kingdom on earth for all to find rest.