

## Early Word

Easter 4, Year B

By Beth Barnett

This is a characterised Early Word reading of John 10: 11-18.

<p>You will need:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Text displayed on screen with 'sheep' lines in bold.</li> <li>• 4 readers in symbolic costume to present this reading.</li> <li>• Costumes  <b>Shepherd and Father:</b> two matching brown or grey robes (bed sheets are ideal), matching belts, matching neutral coloured woolen beanies, large wooden stick/staff  <b>Sheep:</b> Sheep shape (see diagram) cut from strong card, (optionally covered in wool or Dacron filling or fluffy fabric such as polar fleece) attached to a piece of wood ~1.3 m in length (a standard broomhandle), tall enough to rest on the floor and have the 'sheep' at shoulder – head height. The reading can work with just one, but for greater impact and to have more non-reader people involved, make several.  <b>Hired Hand:</b> Alternate coloured sheet, belt and beanie</li> </ul>
<p>Time required:</p>	<p>3 minutes</p>

### Preparation:

You will need 4 readers in symbolic costume to present this reading. Display the text on screen or distribute print copies among your gathering.

The readers will need to have prepared and practiced the reading together, in order to make the expression moving from voice to voice work. There are some action notes for the characters to do during the reading. Watch out for those.

## Introduction

Our gospel reading today comes from the book of John. Here Jesus is doing his usual story telling teaching to his followers. Today his story telling teaching is about leadership – lay-down-your-life leadership.

Jesus' words are a mini-drama: The cast includes a good shepherd who owns a flock of sheep, a 'hired hand' who is paid money to look after sheep, the father who is also a shepherd, the same as the good shepherd, the sheep, and a cameo role for a wolf. Jesus takes the role of the shepherd himself. The leader. The laydown-your-life leader.

Our readers are going to help us see and hear Jesus story telling teaching clearly by each taking a role, and of course there's a role for all of us – the sheep. We can all join in on the part of the sheep. If you are a confident reader, read the words for the part of the sheep. If you are a confident sheep baaing noise improviser, please 'baa-aa-aa' when the sheep speak.

If you are a confident reader and sheep baaing noise improviser, you can combine both! That will be wonderful.

Sometimes the shepherd and the father join together to speak, and sometimes the shepherd and the sheep join together to speak.

**Good Shepherd:** "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life  
*(Shepherd lies stick down on the ground)*

**Sheep:** for the sheep.

**Hired hand:** The hired hand,

**Shepherd:** is not the shepherd

**Sheep:** and does not own the sheep.

**Hired Hand:** The hired hand, sees the wolf coming *(looking frightened)*

**Sheep:** and leaves the sheep

**Hired Hand:** and runs away— *(runs away, looping round the perimeter of your gathering)*

**Sheep:** and the wolf snatches them and scatters them.

**Hired Hand:** The hired hand runs away  
*(returns to the front to say this, but then runs away again)*

**Sheep:** because a hired hand does not care for the sheep.

**Shepherd:** *(picking up the stick)* I am the good shepherd. I know my own



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**Shepherd&Sheep (together):** and my own know me,

**Father & Shepherd (together):** just as the Father knows me and I know the Father.  
*(father and shepherd both grip the stick)*

**Shepherd:** And I lay down my life for the sheep. *(Shepherd lies stick down on the ground )*  
I have other sheep

**Sheep:** that do not belong to this fold.

**Shepherd:** *(picking up the stick)*  
I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice.

**Shepherd&Sheep (together):** So there will be one flock, one shepherd.  
*(sheep and shepherd both grip the stick)*

**Father:** For this reason the Father loves me,

**Shepherd:** because I lay down my life  
*(Shepherd lies stick down on the ground)*  
in order to take it up again.  
*(picking up the stick)*  
No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord.  
*(Shepherd lies stick down on the ground)*  
I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up again.  
*(picking up the stick)*

**Father and Shepherd:** I have received this command from my Father.”  
*(sheep and shepherd both grip the stick)*

Thank you to our readers, the shepherd, the hired hand, the sheep and the Father.  
Jesus story telling teaching is the kind of story telling that leaves us wondering, and  
it's good to come back and hear again.  
So let's do the reading together again, listening for what Jesus is saying, and  
listening for the living word of God.  
- repeat reading as above.



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