


GOD THE GOOD SHEPHERD

UNIT TWO: God's Messengers

Lesson 1: How God Spoke to Samuel

CONTENT:

1. God led his people like a shepherd. He protected them from their enemies using 'heroes' like Joshua, Gideon and David. He also guided his people on the right path by asking certain people to be his messengers. We call them PROPHETS.
2. A certain family came every year to Shiloh to offer sacrifices at the temple: Elkanah and his two wives Hannah and Peninah and his children. Hannah was very unhappy because she had no children and Peninah kept making fun of her.
3. One day Hannah went to the temple and cried out to the Lord for a child. Eli, the old priest there, blessed her. God gave Hannah a baby boy whom she named Samuel. She presented him to God to serve in the temple.
4. One night Samuel heard a voice calling his name. He went to Eli but the priest sent him back. After this happened three times, Eli told him to say, "Speak Lord, for your servant is listening!" He did this, and God gave him a message for Eli and his sons.  Samuel became a great prophet for the Lord.
5. Jesus met Mary Magdalene outside his tomb and gave her a message for his disciples.
6. *God, the Good Shepherd, speaks to us and guides us through the Bible. At Mass he speaks to us through the readings and the homily. We should realise that it is really God speaking to us and listen attentively. We must also be ready to share his message with others. [CCC904-905]*

ASSIGNMENT: Read handout at home. Be a 'messenger' for God and share the story of Samuel with your family and friends. Make a list of prophet's names from the Bible.

REFERENCES: 1Samuel, Ch 1&2.

MATERIALS NEEDED: Handouts. Two sticks, chalk, blindfolds for the 'sheep' of 2 colours (could be old clothes cut into strips).

I. STARTER:

[Take the children to an open space and divide them into 2 teams (flocks). Give one child from each team a stick to show he is the shepherd. Blindfold the 'sheep' using different coloured cloth for each flock. Place the 'sheep' all together in a circle in the centre. Make 2 paths using chalk lines. The task of the shepherds is to guide his sheep through the paths to himself. (Tell them that there is a dangerous marsh on all sides.)

At the signal both the shepherds call out the names of the sheep and guide them, one at a time, by calling out instructions. Any sheep that steps off the path is dead.]

- Last term we heard someone call himself a good shepherd. Who was that? *[Jesus]*
- What does a good shepherd do? *[Protects his sheep, leads them to good grass etc.]*
- God also protected his people from their enemies; but he did it by sending certain 'heroes' to do it. Can you name any of them? *[Gideon, Joshua, David.]*
- Like the shepherds in the game we just played, God also talked to his people and tried to guide them on the right path and keep them safe. How did he do this? Did he shout out from heaven? *[No. God guided his people by talking to certain people.]*
He asked them to be his MESSENGERS *[Write on blackboard]*. We call them PROPHETS. *[Write on blackboard]* These prophets listened to God speaking and then gave the message to the people.

II. DEVELOPMENT:

Today we'll hear how God chose someone to be his messenger. At a place called Shiloh there was a temple where people used to come from far away to offer sacrifices to God. But God was not happy with the priests there. There were two brothers who didn't respect God. When people came to offer animals to God, they would grab the meat and eat it themselves. Their father Eli (*pronounced ee-lie*) was very old. He tried to make them stop but they wouldn't listen to him.

A man called Elkanah used to go every year to the temple at Shiloh to offer a sacrifice to God. He would take his whole family along: His two wives, Hannah and Peninah, and his children. Peninah had many children, but Hannah had none, so Peninah used to make fun of Hannah and keep troubling her.

One day, Hannah went all alone to the temple and stood before God. She cried bitterly and prayed, "Lord, give me a son! If you do, I will offer him back to you to be your servant!" The old priest Eli saw her moving her lips, but heard no sound. He thought she was drunk. "Why do you drink and then come here in this state?" he asked. "Stop your drinking!" But Hannah said, "No my Lord! Don't think such a bad thing about me. I am only very upset and asking God to help me!" Then Eli said, "Go in peace. May God give you whatever you have asked for!"

Hannah felt happy again. She returned to her family and God answered her prayer. She gave birth to a baby boy and called him Samuel, which means '*God has heard!*'

Hannah was very happy. She didn't forget her promise to God. When Samuel was old enough to leave his mother, she took him back to the temple at Shiloh and said to Eli, "My Lord, I am the woman who was praying here and this is the son I was praying for. Now I give him back to God. Let him stay here in the temple and help you."

Every year when the family went up to Shiloh, Hannah would take the clothes she had made for her son. God blessed Hannah with more children: 3 sons and 2 daughters.

Let's go back to the temple and see what was happening there. One night Eli was sleeping in his room and Samuel was sleeping in the temple in front of the Ark of God. (Do you remember the golden box called the Ark?) Suddenly Samuel heard someone call out his name. "Samuel! Samuel!" He jumped up and ran to Eli. "Yes sir, here I am!" Eli said, "What do you want? I didn't call you! Go back to bed!"

Samuel went and lay down again. But again the voice came, "Samuel! Samuel!" Samuel got up again and went to Eli. "Here I am, you called me!" But Eli said, "Go back to bed, boy! I didn't call you. You must be sleeping!"

Samuel was very puzzled, but he went back and lay down again.

After a little while he heard again, "Samuel! Samuel!" This was the third time! Samuel ran back to Eli and said, "I heard you again! You did call me!"

Old Eli scratched his head. Then an idea came to him. He said, "Samuel, if the voice comes again, you must say, "Speak Lord, for your servant is listening!" It may be God who is calling you!"

Of course Samuel was very excited now. He went and lay down again, but he couldn't go to sleep. He kept repeating to himself, "Speak Lord, for your servant is listening!... Speak Lord, for your servant is listening."

Then... Yes! The voice came again, "Samuel! Samuel!"

Samuel jumped up and said, "Speak Lord, for your servant is listening!" Then God appeared to him and said, "Samuel, I want you to be my messenger! My message is this: I am very angry with Eli's sons and I am going to punish them."

In the morning, Samuel was afraid to tell Eli the message, but Eli said, "Don't be afraid. Tell me everything that God said!" Then Samuel gave God's message to Eli.

As Samuel grew up God kept talking to him and giving him messages for the people. Everyone listened to Samuel, because they knew he was a true prophet of God.

NEXT CLASS:

[Give out the handouts and revise the story of Samuel. The students fill in the missing words: 'Speak Lord your servant is listening', PROPHETS, ELI, ELKANAH, HANNAH, PENINAH, HANNAH, SON, SAMUEL, GOD HAS HEARD, GOD, ELI, FOURTH. They then turn their sheets over and pay attention.]

Jesus also once asked someone to be his messenger. This is how it happened. Mary Magdalene was a close friend of Jesus. She was very very sad, because her beloved friend and master had been treated very cruelly and had died on the cross. After he died they had brought his body down from the cross and wrapped it in cloth and put it in a grave. The grave was in a cave, and the entrance to the cave was closed with a huge stone.

Two days later, Mary came to the cave early in the morning, while it was still dark. But when she reached there she got a shock. The stone had been moved away and the grave was empty! Mary stood outside the cave crying. Still with tears in her eyes, she bent down and looked into the dark cave. Then she got a bigger shock: There, sitting on the grave were 2 men in shining clothes. They were angels!

One angel said to her, "Why are you crying?"

Mary answered, "Someone has taken away my Lord and I don't know where they have put him!" Suddenly she felt that someone was behind her. She turned around and saw a man. He asked, "Why are you crying? What are you looking for?"

Mary thought, "This must be the gardener of this garden!"

She said, "Sir, if you are the one who has taken away Jesus' body, then tell me where it is!"

The man looked at her and said, "Mary!"

Mary stared at the man in surprise, and then she got the biggest shock. It was Jesus! He was not a dead body, but a living man! "TEACHER!" she shouted.

Jesus told her, "I have a job for you to do, Mary. Go and tell my brothers that I am alive and tell them that I am going up to my Father."

Now Mary was very happy. Her Jesus was alive and he had made her his messenger. She ran to where Jesus' followers were and said, "I have seen the Lord!" Then she gave them his message.

III. REFLECTION & PRAYER:

- Does God still talk to people nowadays? How does he talk to us? Does he call our names in the middle of the night? Does he come to us looking like a gardener? Does he give us a call on our phone? ... God does speak to us nowadays. He talks to us through holy people. He gives us a message when we look at the beautiful world. But in a very clear way, he talks to us through the Bible. When we read the Bible, God is able to talk to us and guide us. He tells us what to do.
- At Mass we can hear God talking to us in the words of the Bible. We have the READINGS, the PSALM and the GOSPEL. After that the priest gives us a HOMILY. We need to listen attentively because it is really Jesus talking to us. He is not dead, but alive.
- Sometimes we act like Samuel and don't realise it is really God speaking. We may think, 'It's only a man reading, or it's only the priest. But if we say quietly, 'Speak Lord, for your servant is listening!' we will be able to hear him speak.
- God also wants us to be his messengers like Samuel and Mary Magdalene. Are you ready to be his messenger, his prophet, and tell others what he asks you to tell them?
- Be quiet now and ask God to help you listen to his Word at Mass every Sunday. Ask his help to read the Bible at home and listen to him talking. Ask him to make you brave enough to be his messenger. [Students pray silently.]

IV. ACTIVITY:

[Read the rest of the handout. Appoint groups to enact the 2 stories: Samuel in the Temple; and Mary meeting Jesus.]

Home assignment: × Read handout at home. × Be a 'messenger' for God and share the story of Samuel with your family and friends. × Make a list of 10 prophet's names from the Bible.