**Guided Reflection**

Sometimes it’s hard to do the right thing, isn’t it? How do you feel when you do something you know you’re not supposed to do? Do you worry that you won’t be forgiven?

Jesus wants to tell us a story about how much God loves us and wants to forgive us. He wants to tell us this story because He knows it’s important for us to know that we will always be forgiven by God.

So…let’s close our eyes…take a deep breath and relax…picture this in your mind…

You are in a field. There are no houses or stores around. You can hear birds singing up in the trees. There are bushes with flowers all around you. There are sheep in the field. Their wool looks so soft! Someone is calling your name…it’s Jesus! He’s sitting under a tree near a tiny lamb. Run over to him…He’s smiling and patting the ground next to him. “Come sit next to me,” Jesus tells you… “I want to tell you a story about God’s love for you.”

“One day as the shepherd was counting his sheep and putting them in a safe place for the night, he noticed that one of the sheep was missing. The shepherd ran over to the other shepherds who were also counting their sheep and putting them in the sheep pen for the night. “Will you please watch my sheep? One of them is missing…it’s one that always wanders off. I need to go find him!” And the shepherd ran off in search of his sheep.

After a few minutes, he heard the sheep calling out for help. “I’m coming!” called the shepherd. He saw the sheep’s foot was caught in a thorny bush. Gently, he removed the branches and lovingly picked him up. He carried him back to the shepherd’s camp. “Look! I’ve found him!” he called to the other shepherds. “Let’s celebrate!” Even though the sheep had disobeyed and wandered off, the shepherd was so thrilled to have him back safely that he happily forgave him!

Now, Jesus turns to you and says, “Remember that God is like this shepherd. He will always forgive you.” It’s time to leave the field now and leave Jesus. Picture yourself saying goodbye as you begin to walk away….

Let’s take a moment and pray: Jesus, sometimes I’m like the sheep in this story and I do things I’m not supposed to do. I’m so happy that you love me and will always forgive me. Thank you, Jesus. I’m glad you are my friend.

Now let’s open our eyes… it’s almost time to share with God the things we’re sorry for. Let’s examine our conscience and think about our sins. You’ll have the chance to say these things and see how God forgives you for it all. When you’re done, a family member will meet you at the tables and you’ll light a candle together. These candles can help us remember that God is like a light guiding us through our life journey. After you light it, you’ll go back to your pew and say a prayer and wait as the other children have their turn making their confession.