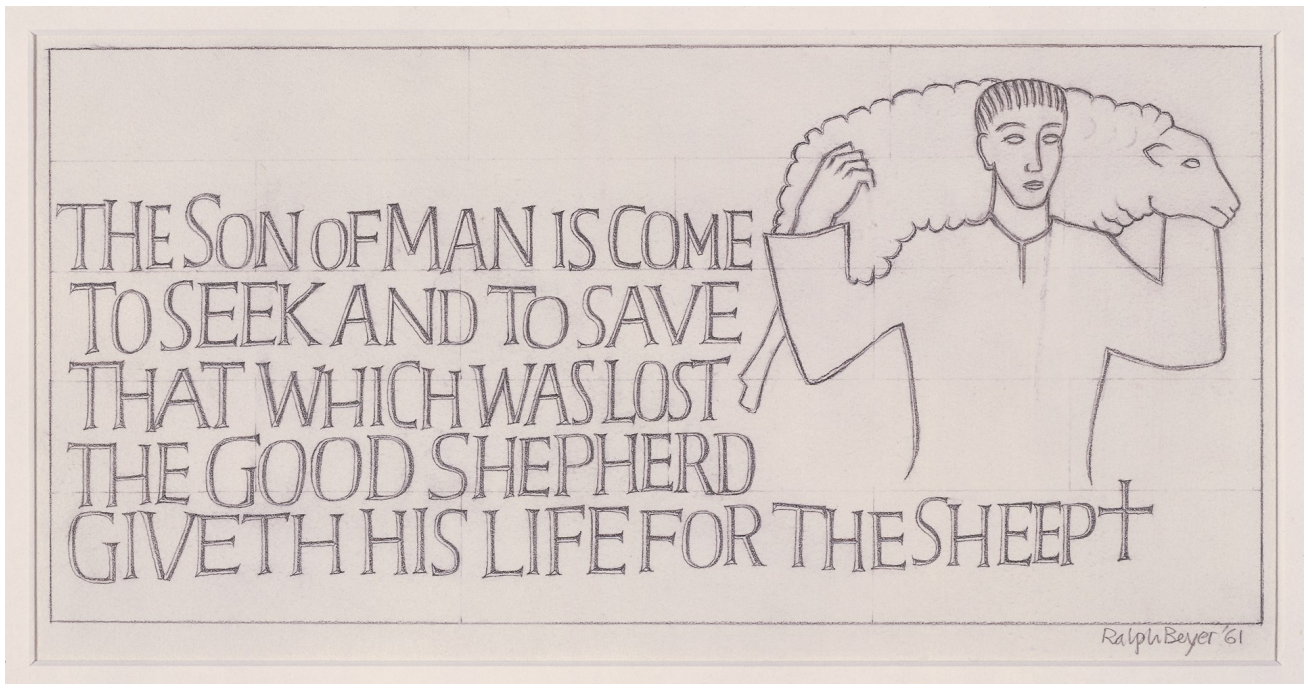


Seeing Beyond

Reflections on art and Christian faith

The Son of Man is come
Ralph Beyer



Pencil on paper, 1961

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This small pencil drawing doesn't look like much. More text than drawing, actually. Only a very simple image of a shepherd carrying his sheep back to the flock.

Of course this is only a design, a study, for the real thing: a large engraved stone block in Coventry Cathedral, more than a metre tall, several metres wide. Easily readable for those sitting or standing at quite some distance from it. One of eight stone tablets engraved with biblical texts and drawings, most of the other drawings even smaller than this one.

Both the drawings and the font style were inspired by those found in the catacombs in Rome, written and drawn by early Christian communities in hiding. The texts, taken mainly from John's gospel, reflect the truths that early Christians came to believe about who Jesus was and what he could do in and to their lives. Here are texts on tablets, not to command and act as boundaries like the tablets that Moses brought down from Mount Sinai, but to set us free and open up new creative possibilities in our lives.

Haven't we all felt lost and lonely at some time or other? Whether by accident or because we have deliberately tried to go our own way. Finding ourselves in a new situation we've never previously been in? Or back in the same maze we thought we had escaped once before? Engulfed by chaos, pain and fear?

What now? Are you ready to let yourself be found again by God? To be brought back into the flock, the caring and loving embrace of God, the pasture where we can flourish – even if we are hurt, injured or half dead? Can you feel those strong shoulders supporting you? Walking as far as needed. Carrying you even through the valley of death. Doing whatever it takes to bring you back. Do you trust the shepherd? Look at how calm and peaceful this sheep is. It knows that it is as good as home already while being held by the shepherd.

That is the God who carried the early Christians through the long dark tunnels underneath the city of Rome. Who was their light and their guide, their strength and their peace, their hope and their life. Will you let yourself be found and trust the shepherd, as they did?

Biblical References

The Son of man is come... ([Luke 19:10](#))

The Good Shepherd giveth his life... ([John 10:11](#))

Moses and the tablets of stone ([Exodus 14:12-18](#))

Jesus the Good Shepherd ([John 10:1-18](#))

The Lord is my shepherd ([Psalm 23](#))

The valley of death / darkness ([Psalm 23:4](#))