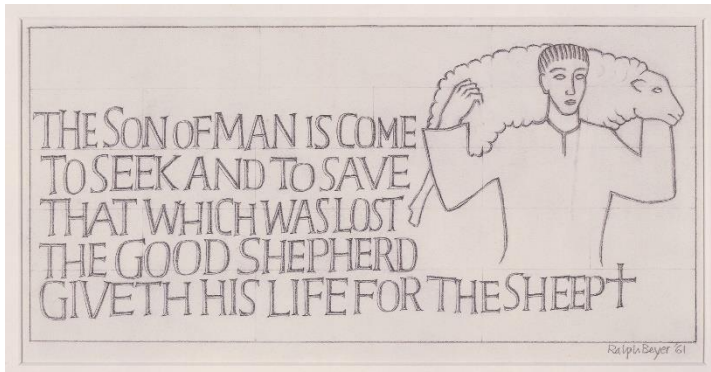




Create a peaceful space to pause, and allow yourself to feel God's presence alongside you, as near to you as your own breath. In following the reflection below, as a church we will draw closer to God and to one another as we grow in faith and deepen our sense of belonging to God.

### John 10:11-15 'Jesus the Good Shepherd'



*'The Son of Man is Come'*  
by Ralph Beyer (1921-2008)  
1961, Pencil on paper

<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".

When I was looking on the internet at images of Jesus as the Good Shepherd, it was remarkable how many portrayed him as a rather romantic figure fondling a cuddly pet lamb. That is terribly misleading, even though it has been perpetuated in stained glass windows and thousands of illustrations. A better image is one that Ezekiel gives us – you can find it in Chapter 34 – of a shepherd who is more like a warrior, leading his people through the rough and tumble of secular life.

And Jesus himself doesn't give a 'cosy' picture of himself as the Good Shepherd. Both Matthew and Luke's versions of his Parable of the Good Shepherd (see Matt 18:12-14; Lk 15:3-7) suggest that we are not only nourished in the safety of the sheepfold, but also on the mountain-side. In other words, not where we are insulated **from** life, but **in** the real world, with all its complexity, pain and frustration.

These images suggest to me that, whilst we may indeed miss all that Sunday worship in our local churches may give us, and all that we receive from each other in our house-groups and fellowship groups, let us thank God that we can be fed spiritually in less obvious ways. And let us thank God that he is wherever people are, and nowhere more so than where his children suffer and call to Him.

### **Prayer:**

Loving God,  
we thank you that you hear us whenever we cry out to you.

Help us in these difficult times to grow in wisdom,  
and to see your love at work in the world.

Teach us patience and compassion for those around us,  
knowing that our Risen Lord Jesus is truly the Good Shepherd,  
who knows his sheep and calls us all by name. Amen.

