

We are going to continue pressing into this idea of Shalom this morning.

In the midst of the chaos and Covid, loss of jobs and loss of lives, warnings, disasters and a virus that is hitting us like a tsunami we have a chance to speak one clear word back to ourselves and our neighbors... **This word, this reality, of Shalom.**

We have an opportunity to speak and bring Peace - **Shalom** - into the void created by those two poles of Panicking and Pretending. It was that word of **Shalom** that Jesus spoke into the raging waters on the Sea of Galilee. It is the word of **Shalom** that he speaks into our lives even now right? As people who have had this word spoken over and into our hearts we have the opportunity to speak that same word into the hearts of our friends, neighbors, and city.

We have a cheap veneer of Shalom that we call peace.

It's when we are personally safe, secure, and happy. It's when things are right in the world... for me.

Amazon Commercial - Ave Maria

There is a near religious quality to this. Ave Maria, the chief Catholic hymn, playing in the background as chaos abounds the dad has found his peace brought by Amazon. And this can all be yours for only \$400.

That is it. We want our happiness, our blue skies, our white clouds, and our mountaintops. We call that peace. Maybe this is what is behind our current cultural fascination with wanderlust? We are searching and seeking for our Shalom...

What is Shalom?

In many ways our English word - Peace - is a poor substitute for such a rich Hebrew word. When we talk about peace we generally mean the **absence of something**. The absence of conflict - countries not fighting or our kids not fighting for that matter. *Can I get 5 minutes of peace around here?* But the Hebrew idea of Shalom is the **presence of something** - it is

peace, harmony, prosperity, welfare, completeness, wholeness.

You could think of Shalom as this complex collection of pieces that are brought together as one complete whole. All of these parts are brought into wholeness. In the Old Testament when Job counts his flock and knows that none are missing he describes his tents as being in a state of Shalom.

Jesus, whom Isaiah calls "the Prince of Peace" or "the Prince of Shalom" gives us 3 stories in Luke 15 that are commonly referred to as the Lost Sheep, the Lost Coins, and the Lost Sons. While that is understandable since each of these stories begins with something that is lost. They ultimately end with something found. In their truest essence these stories are about Shalom as all the lost are found, and all the pieces are made whole.

- Shalom comes through a shepherd leaving the 99 to pursue the 1 that was not there and then rejoicing with a full heart when it is found, making his flock whole again.
- Shalom comes through a woman furiously searching her house in the middle of the night looking for her lost treasure, unable to rest until she finds it, making her fortune whole again.
- Shalom comes through a Father's heart longing to have his boys home with him, making his family whole again..

All of these stories are about completeness, wholeness. This is what Jesus came to bring.

This is why Paul will write that Jesus is our Peace.

Isn't this the crazy part though?

We all want this, in fact I would say we crave it. It is that thing buried into every one of us that knows in our bones that this world is not right. We all want it. Followers of Jesus and non-followers of Jesus. Black, White, Hispanic, Asian, Liberal, Conservative, Democrat, Republican. What sits at the bottom of all our desires is Shalom.

We want it but we can't have it.

We try to find it, but we can never seem to quite grasp it.

It's like that time when we were kids and we could see it, sitting high up there on the shelf, but we couldn't touch it, taste it, have it. It was there but it may as well not have been. And some of us have tried to construct (or mis-constructed) our own hodge-podge, Babalich towers of investments, politics, and religion arranged just so we could get high enough to touch it, only finding it collapses, like a deck of cards, under our own weight.

I believe this is because the path to Shalom is unlike any path we have ever taken. In many ways it is the most counter-intuitive path we could ever imagine. Or maybe, better said, our intuition has been corrupted and we cannot trust ourselves to get us there - like a bad compass. It's going to lead us anywhere but true north.

Isn't this why Jesus came?

He stepped into our world and said, **"Come follow me."**

His path is our path. His footfalls, ours.

The point of these Sundays is to follow him as he brings Shalom into a broken world full of chaos and pain. Each week as we move to Easter we will walk with him into crisis and chaos as he brings Shalom every place he touches.

This week I want us to see as Jesus lays out the two paths we can take. Only one leads to Shalom. And this path is one even his own disciples did not understand because, like I said before, it seems so counter to Shalom. Yet it is the only way forward.

Read with me in Matthew 16...

MATTHEW 16

21 From that time Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised.

Jesus is explaining to his disciples that he was going to die...

22 And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, "Far be it from you, Lord! This shall never happen to you." 23 But he turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance to me. For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man."

You have to love this moment.

Imagine it.

Peter grabbing Jesus by the arm and taking him off to the side and (look at the text) rebuking him! Peter's saying, *"Jesus, Jesus, look, I don't think you know how this Messiah thing is supposed to go. See... you are the hero of the story. You don't die! Far be it from you! You win! We win. That's how this is supposed to go."*

Well... Jesus doesn't mince any words here. He turns to Peter and says, *"Get behind me, Satan!"* Ouch. I think that one stung a little.

Ultimately he is telling Peter that there is a path of God and there is a path of man. **"You are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man."** Peter's compass was not set in the right direction. He was going the wrong way and he was trying to prevent Jesus from going the way he came to go down. So Jesus turns to his followers - this now includes us! - and says...

24 Then Jesus told his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. 25 For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it"

The way of Shalom. It is the way of Death.

Wow. **Talk about counter-intuitive.**

The promise is that whoever takes the path that saves his life will lose it. But... whoever takes the path to lose his life will find it.

Guess which path Peter takes?

You guessed it. He takes the path of saving his life and the life of Jesus.

I guess the *"Get behind me, Satan!"* speech wasn't clear enough for him. But before we jump all over Peter, let's be honest. Jesus has told us all some pretty direct things that we just ignore too right? I'm also guessing that, a lot like Peter, most of us have not taken the path that leads to death. Most of us want the path that has Ave Maria on \$400 headphones.

After that dinner and discussion Peter comes to the Garden of Gethsemane that night packing heat - a sword to be precise. He knew things were about to go down and he was not going to let Jesus get caught unprepared. There would be no betrayal or death as far as Peter was concerned. Not a chance he is letting that happen.

The moment arrives. Judas, the betrayer, comes forward into that night with the temple guard to arrest Jesus....

JOHN 18

10 Then Simon Peter, having a sword, drew it and struck the high priest's servant and cut off his right ear. (The servant's name was Malchus.) 11 So Jesus said to Peter, "Put your sword into its sheath; shall I not drink the cup that the Father has given me?"

I like how this is rendered in The Passion Translation.

JOHN 18

10 Suddenly, Peter took out his sword and struck the high priest's servant, slashing off his right ear! The servant's name was Malchus. 11 Jesus ordered Peter, "Put your sword away! Do you really think I will avoid the suffering which my Father has assigned to me?"

Put away your sword!

This is not the path Peter. This is not the path Church.

What drove Peter to pick up a sword? Was it not the fear of losing his life and the life of Jesus? Peter "knew" the way the story was supposed to go and they didn't die. Peter, driven by fear of losing his Jesus, meets this chaos with a sword. He was protecting his interests and his plans. But this is not the way of Shalom.

In times of fear and chaos we always have a temptation to take up the sword to protect and defend what we have or what we want.

Check out the top results of a quick google search this week on gun sales...

The screenshot shows a Google search for "gun sales". The search bar at the top contains the text "gun sales" and a magnifying glass icon. Below the search bar, there are tabs for "All", "News", "Shopping", "Maps", "Videos", and "More". The "All" tab is selected. Below the tabs, it says "About 2,210,000,000 results (0.72 seconds)". Under the heading "Top stories", there are three article cards. The first card has a photo of people at a gun show and the headline "Neither hurricanes nor 9/11 caused as big a surge in gun sales as coronavirus" from the Miami Herald, posted 6 hours ago. The second card has a photo of a man at a gun counter and the headline "COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic sparks increase in gun sales in Wisconsin" from Madison.com, posted 19 hours ago. The third card has a photo of a newspaper front page and the headline "Gun sales skyrocket in South Florida during coronavirus" from the Sun Sentinel, posted 2 hours ago. A blue arrow points to a link that says "More for gun sales".

Fear is ruling the day. Just like Peter, it is driving us to protect what is ours, and this is what we have to understand.

The Path of Self Preservation is the very destroyer of Shalom.

See... when you try to save your life. You must protect that life. You are pushed by fear. It causes us to take up the sword. It makes us live in anxiety over what we might lose. It seems

right but, in the end, it is a path that leads to death.

And even before you take your last breath, the fear of what you might lose robs you of the life and Shalom Jesus comes to bring.

You settle for the individual pursuit of happiness along with millions of other people each seeking their own happiness - blue skies, white clouds, and mountaintops.

As pieces...

This is not Shalom! Fear of losing our lives: our needs, our wants, our desires, our stuff - ***the things of men***. It drives us to live in fear, possibly take up a sword, go down the wrong path, and never find Shalom. Jesus would say to us what he said to Peter, ***"you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man."***

Yet it was Tertullian, an early church father, who said, *"Christ, in disarming Peter, disarmed every Christian."* We are disarmed, we have a different way, a deeper peace.

We live in a world where peace is brought by whoever has the biggest sword.

In Jesus' day, it was the Romans who had the Pax Romana. It was the Peace of Rome brought to the whole world by Rome. However, Walter Goffart, the famed American historian wrote: *"The volume of the Cambridge Ancient History for the years AD 70-192 is called 'The Imperial Peace', but peace is not what one finds in its pages"*. This was peace brought on the edge of a sword, and if you disagreed with that version of peace then you would simply end up on a cross.

And... this is the twist isn't it?

It was at a cross where Jesus knew true Shalom would be found.

Not intuitive.

The question, "***Do you really think I will avoid the suffering which my Father has assigned to me?***" shows us the true path of Shalom. The way of peace is the way of losing one's self. He would have to enter into that evil and suffering. There was no way around it.

Jesus knew he would have to lose himself. He had to enter into the death, tears, chaos, suffering, and slavery to bring it to an end. There was no other way. God was going to use the worst of this world against itself, and he was going to use Jesus to do it.

This is like the closing lines of Genesis. A book that begins with such beauty and opportunity then descends into death, tears, chaos, suffering, and slavery ends with these words... ***You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives. (GENESIS 50.20)***

This is the incredible beauty of what we call the Sovereignty of God. He takes all of this jacked up, messed up stuff and makes it beautiful. The world can rage with wars, famines, and viruses, but God is bigger. He will take these ashes and make beauty. That is the promise Isaiah said would come through this Prince of Shalom.

Sacrifice is the Way of Shalom

True Shalom is not about individual pieces but wholeness. It is about those pieces being brought back together complete as one. .

The human instinct is to save ourselves at the expense of others. But Jesus understood that the path of Shalom was to save others at the expense of himself.

It has always been the way of sacrifice. Shalom with Israel came because of the animal sacrificed each year on behalf of Israel. Someone or something had to lose it's life in order for others to find their life.

It is what Paul meant when he wrote

ROMANS 12

Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship.

APPLICATIONS

1. **Keep his sacrifice in view** - *In view of God's mercy...*
2. Don't hoard
3. Convoys with those suffering
4. Live with open hands

We must actively enter into the grief and loss of others. We go to those places knowing that we are following the way of Jesus. We are in his footsteps.

When we begin to seek the Shalom of others around us, our attention is moved from ourselves to others. Because we are not paying attention to ourselves, our fear has no place in our minds. As John says, "Perfect love casts out fear."

What have you lost in all of this that you are fighting to reclaim

Peter just had a way he knew things were supposed to go. Expectations of how this peace would come. But like all bad expectations they are basically premeditated disappointments.

The way of peace is not an easy road. It is not a hippie throwing up a sign, or a way out for the weak. It is, as Jesus will show, a path of suffering