



Shalom: The Ways of God's Peace

Shalom. This word occurs more than 250 times in the Hebrew scriptures. That alone underscores how central a concept and theme it is to our understanding of God's purposes for creation. As noted in the biblical background, this word – routinely translated as “peace” – means far more than an absence of war between nations. *Shalom* runs deeper. It points to a broadly inclusive vision of wellbeing in the lives of individuals, communities, and nations. It summons a vision of the good of God's creation being enjoyed by all. And “good” here is not just material “stuff.” *Good* has to do with a quality of life where fear is not the driving force, and want is not the status quo. *Good* has to do with living in harmony with one another, with oneself, and with God.

Shalom comes as a gift and vision from God. One of Israel's oldest benedictions ends by asking God to “lift up God's countenance upon you, and give you *shalom*” (see Numbers 6:24–26). *Shalom* is the prayer and blessing of today's psalm, Psalm 122. While the word *shalom* does not occur in Isaiah 2:1–5, this passage clearly speaks of the consequences of *shalom's* presence. God's peace includes all nations. God's peace transforms weapons that kill life into implements that bring life. To live in God's ways is to live in *shalom*.

Shalom will weave through the Advent texts in the coming Sundays. These Bible passages will prepare us to hear more clearly and deeply the message of angels at Christ's birth: “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth *peace* among those whom God favors” (Luke 2:14).

What might the ways of God's *shalom* look like or involve in our time?

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Settling disputes or working together for the common good in our own communities in ways free from violence or the denigration of others • Creating safe homes and safe schools where children grow without fear • Justice in the halls of power • Sharing by those who have more than they need | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compassionate care for the elderly that does not run out when money runs out <p>And...what would you add?</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> |
|---|--|

Where in our communities do we see the practice, and absence, of God's *shalom*?



My Advent Prayer

Advent is a time of waiting, of looking to the future with hope. The English poet W. H. Auden wrote a long poem called *For the Time Being*, a narrative about the Advent and Christmas seasons. In the centre section, he describes what it is like to live in the period between the routine of everyday life and the excitement and joy of Christmas. We spend most of our lives, Auden says, in “the time being.”

- What is it like for you to live in the “now and not yet” reign of God? What is reassuring? What is challenging?
- In what ways is God’s promised reign of shalom (complete health and wholeness of life) being fulfilled in your community? What remains to be done?

Spend a quiet moment reflecting on the joys of God’s presence you are experiencing at this time in your life and on your hopes and prayers for the future work of God in your life. Compose a prayer to frame your times of reflection this Advent season:

My Advent Prayer
