***Shiloh United Methodist Church***

Jeremiah 29:4-7 Rev. Tyler Amundson May 2, 2021

***Every day Shalom***

The act of welcome greeting or a parting greeting is an art form and varies depending on cultures. One of the things that always intrigued me about Spanish was the variety of greetings depending on time of day, “Buenos Dias” good morning, “Buenos Tardes” good afternoon, or as I first thought of it “good job being late.” Even one of the primary good byes, “hasta manana” sounds so cool, and carries with it the possibility of meeting again. In English our greetings of welcome and parting seem to be so monocultural, hello or “hey” and “see ya” or “goodbye.”

I always remember one of the lines from one of my favorite sci-fi series who said, “The hardest part of the English language is that our primary parting phrase “good bye,” it has no mention of returning to one another.” For this character that was difficult because in their spiritual core they believed there were no real parting where you would never cross paths again. It was an existential certainty of this character that kindred spirits do cross paths in some time or form again.

Jesus believed this too, and it is why we get the beautiful spirituality of the gospel of John. Jesus was conveying the extent of loving relationships and their usefulness in helping build God’s kingdom.

**Story of the Word**

**1**In the beginning was the Word
    and the Word was with God
    and the Word was God.
**2**The Word was with God in the beginning.
**3**Everything came into being through the Word,
    and without the Word
    nothing came into being.
What came into being
**4**    through the Word was life,[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John%201&version=CEB#fen-CEB-26038a)]
    and the life was the light for all people.
**5**The light shines in the darkness,
    and the darkness doesn’t extinguish the light.

I have a story to share with you:

**﻿The Golden Ball**

*There was once a little boy who lived in a cottage with his parents. He often used to play out on the hills, and when it began to grow dark, he would go home. One evening, as he was just returning home, the little boy lingered for a while at the door. Far away, across the valley, he saw a beautiful golden ball. He was spellbound. What could it be, and who might own something so beautiful? That day, he made up his mind that he must make the journey to the other side of the valley, to find his treasure.*

*And so it happened that one morning he packed his little rucksack with some sandwiches and an apple, and set off to make the journey to the other side of the valley. It took him all day. He had never been so far before, and it took him a lot longer than he had thought it would. By the time he arrived, it was late afternoon, and he was feeling very tired, and hungry.*

*Eventually, very close to the place where he had hoped to find the golden ball, he came upon a little cottage, with smoke curling up out of the chimney, and roses climbing around the doorway. But there was no sign of the golden ball. Shyly, he knocked at the door. The family from the other side of the valley were very happy to see him – though a little bit surprised, if the truth were told. ‘You must be hungry!’ the mother exclaimed. ‘You are very welcome to eat with us.’ ‘Where do you come from?’ the children asked excitedly, and the little boy pointed across the valley, to his own little home on the hill, now cloaked in darkness. ‘It’s far too late for you to make the long journey home again tonight,’ said the father. ‘We’ll make you up a bed in the corner,’ said the mother.*

*And so the little boy from across the valley spent the night with his new friends, and as the evening shadows grew longer, they all sat around the kitchen fire, while he told them about the golden ball that he had seen so often from his own home, and asked them where he might find it. ‘We’ve never seen a golden ball like that over here,’ they told him, puzzled. ‘But tomorrow morning, when the sun is rising, we’ll show you our treasure.’ The little boy could hardly wait until the morning.*

*When dawn arrived, the children took him to their doorway, and pointed out their treasure. ‘Look over there,’ they said, pointing straight at his own home on the opposite hillside. ‘Can you see our golden ball?’ And sure enough, there was a little golden ball to be seen, shining out from his very own cottage, where the rising sun was reflected back from his own bedroom window. ‘One day, we will go to the other side of the valley, and find our golden ball,’ his new friends told him. The little boy smiled. Source unknown*

Silf, Margaret. One Hundred Wisdom Stories (pp. 51-54). Lion Hudson. Kindle Edition.

It can be challenging to see the light in our own relationships, the places we greet every day become an easy place to use just the standard greetings of life and in turn we forget to honor those relationships in the same way.

I am struck in my own life, how easy it is to neglect the relationships that are so close to me. My family especially is easy to slip into a complacent space with those relationships.

My wife, Crystal, and I can do it from time to time. It starts with the side huff about something we find, usually a mess I made and didn’t clean up or the thing she left out, that always drives me crazy. Quickly, the closest relationship in my life seeps into a series of annoyance about the behavior of the other person.

Kids do it to parents, parents do it to kids, neighbors do it to neighbors, co-workers do it to co-workers.

It can be easy to slip into the easy greetings with those closest to us of, “Hey, what is up?” or “see ya.”

What would it be like if instead of this slide into the challenging space, we greeted and said goodbye to one another with a word like “Shalom.” For us at Shiloh the word should be familiar. We sing it each week as a parting word, but its meaning is deep and wide.

In simple form many people say, “Shalom means peace.” However, if we dive into its ancient context it can be synonymous with more than peace, it can be tied to the idea of reconciliation. As in whatever is between us, may it be gone, and may we be in relationship once more. In other cases, shalom with God would be a reconciling to God. This Hebrew term carries a deep shalom with it.

Those of you who know me well, know that I sign emails Enthusiastic Peace. This is my version of shalom, it reminds me that spirit filled peace is what I wish for each relationship and what I work toward.

However, as all humans sometimes I don’t make peace in the moment. Sometimes I don’t make peace even in my own home.

The scripture we have for today is from Jeremiah. The people of God have been exiled from Jerusalem to Babylon. They have nothing, but each other. The prophet here invites the people to take up residence in this foreign land, and make their places of hospitality, to even the strangers in their new land.

FYI, rarely are people happy with prophets, and this would have made the people of God angry to hear this. Even if it was possibly from God, because the home they were now in, belonged to their enemy. Yet, the word of God that carries forth from that time was the idea of planting themselves in hospitality, even to their enemy neighbors. Make the city a better place.

As Christians this is what our Shalom means to us, we have to plant ourselves where we are and offer the love of God as we see embodied in Jesus. However, when we slip out of this, we have to remember that we are a people of resurrection and God invites us to try again.

There is a beautiful mountain in the Italian Alps that thousands of people climb every year. Strategically placed throughout the walking trails are “stations of the Cross” that celebrate the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. The final stopping place is a breathtaking outdoor crucifix.

Led by curiosity one tourist decided to go further than the crucifix and see what was beyond the end of the trail. He noticed a path that was overgrown with thickets and thorns. Something inside of him was encouraging him to go further into the woods. He fought through the thorny jungle and to his surprise came upon another shrine that had been abandoned and forgotten over the years. This shrine was of the empty tomb.

Sadly, it had been neglected. The brush had grown around it and thorns, weeds, briars, and dust had taken it over. It was unfortunate that everyone had gone as far as the Cross, but they had stopped there. They had forgotten the tomb.

<https://www.carolinaseniorcare.org/blog/easter-message-tomb-hope%E2%80%A6>

How often do we forget to bring a warm greeting to those closest to us? How often do we ask, “What would bring you shalom this day?”

Let us not be disenfranchised from how we engage our relationships, we are called to relationships the way Christ called us to. To do it with peace, shalom and God in our hearts.

This week I invite you to do a little breath prayer.

Perhaps as you greet the first person you see each day,

As you see their face,

“Shalom”

And as you breathe out,

“How are you this day?”

Practice with me,

Breathe in,

“Shalom

Breathe out.

“How are you this day?”

Grace and peace to you my fellow peace forgetters, and Shalom seekers.