

BEHOLD

# ADVENT

A CROSS POINT DEVOTIONAL



PEACE





## SUNDAY: WAITING ON PEACE

As the iconic movie *Miss Congeniality* so famously quoted, “The one thing our society needs most is world peace.” In light of current events, world peace is desperately needed and nearly impossible to imagine in a world plagued by injustice. Peace, according to Merriam-Webster, is “a state of tranquility or quiet, freedom from civil disturbance or a state of security or order within a community.”<sup>1</sup> That peace is what most of us think of when we try to imagine peace realized.

Christmastime is meant to be a time set aside to imagine the world as a better place. Twinkling lights and our favorite Christmas-scented candle make us nearly believe the peacefulness our hearts long for can be achieved through Magnolia decor and Hallmark movies. But

just as quickly as it comes, the false sense of peace flees at the thought of a broken relationship, a recent diagnosis, or the latest world tragedy.

There’s an alternative to the false peace the world offers and that peace is: *shalom*. Shalom is the peace God always intended His people to live with and the true peace our hearts wait for in light of the Advent season. This week we will join people all over the world in the hopeful anticipation of the promised peace, embodied in Jesus Christ.

There are two primary words that are translated as peace in The Bible. *Shalom* (Hebrew) and *Eirene* (Greek). Both words are far more complex than the “state of tranquility” or “freedom from civil disobedience” offered in the world’s definition and *both* are crucial in helping us understand and experience the peace God promised.

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<sup>1</sup> Merriam-Webster. (n.d.). Peace definition & meaning. Merriam-Webster. Retrieved October 12, 2022, from <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/peace>

# SHALOM PEACE BENEDICTION

*Meditation for the day:*

"The Lord bless you and keep you.  
The Lord make his face shine on  
you and be gracious to you.  
The Lord lift up his countenance on  
you, and give you **shalom**."

**NUMBERS 6:24-26 NIV**

## **BIBLICAL DEFINITION OF PEACE**

### **SHALOM**

Hebrew word translated as peace

*Noun:* Completeness or wholeness—no cracks. Complex with lots of pieces, but not missing anything.  
*Verb:* to make complete or restore.

Cornelius Plantinga says it best. “Shalom means universal flourishing, wholeness, and delight, a rich state of affairs in which natural needs are satisfied and natural gifts fruitfully employed, a state of affairs that inspires joyful wonder as its Creator and Savior opens doors and welcomes the creatures in whom he delights.” Shalom is “The way things ought to be.”<sup>2</sup>

### **EIRENE**

Greek word translated as peace

*Noun:* one, peace, quietness, rest

The Advent season is a time of waiting, and while we symbolically wait on the birth of Christ as the fulfillment of God’s promise, we also wait on Christ’s return, the consummation of His eternal Kingdom. We wait on shalom, a new creation, a world restored back to God, fully.

We wait on “the way things ought to be.”

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<sup>2</sup> Plantinga, C. (1999). Not the way it’s supposed to be: A breviary of sin. Eerdmans.

## MONDAY: PEACE DISRUPTED

The need for peace didn't dawn at the start of the pandemic or the introduction of technology or whatever your personal source of fear and worry is. It's an age-old phenomenon whose origin lies in the garden of Eden.

Yesterday we defined shalom as completeness, oneness with God and others. In Genesis, we see a picture of shalom in which God, Adam, and Eve lived together, face to face, in intimate relationship. Until Genesis 3, that is.

If you're unfamiliar with the fall, do yourself a favor and read Genesis 1-3 to help paint a picture of what Eden was like before the fall and

what happened as a result. When Adam and Eve made the decision to eat from the tree of knowledge of good and evil they distorted God's intended creation, they distorted "the way things ought to be." This decision resulted in a self-induced curse and banishment from the garden (Genesis 3:23). Shalom was corrupted. Shalom with God, shalom with one another, and shalom with the earth (Genesis 3:14-24).

As bleak as this reality is, it's important to know the origin of the break in shalom. The human experience, as we know it, is a direct consequence of rebellion in the garden, but it's not the end of the story.

MEDITATION FOR THE DAY  
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"Turn from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it."

PSALM 34:14 NIV



## TUESDAY: SHALOM

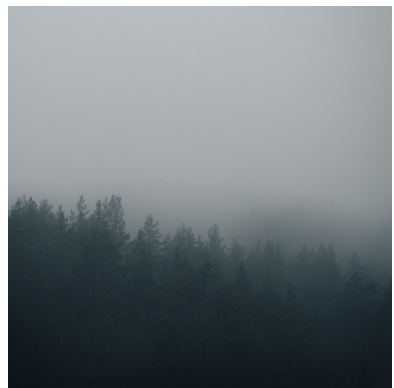
For centuries the Jewish people have greeted one another with the word *shalom* (1 Samuel 25:6). In one simple word they are communicating something much more complex. Something like, “May you be filled with a complete and perfect peace and be full of well-being” or, “May health, prosperity, and peace of mind and spirit be upon you.”

This greeting speaks to the need for shalom since Genesis.

There are four ways in which shalom was corrupted in the garden:

**Shalom with God:** “So the Lord banished him (Adam) from the Garden of Eden to work the ground from which he had been taken” (Genesis 3:23).

**Shalom with others:** “To the woman He said, ‘I will make your pains in childbearing very severe; with painful labor, you will give birth to your children. Your desire will be for your husband and he will rule over you’” (Genesis 3:16).







**Shalom with self:** “And the Lord God said, The man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil. He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live forever” (Genesis 3:22).

**Shalom with the earth:** “Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat food from it all the days of your life. It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your brow, you will eat your food until you return to the ground...” (Genesis 3:17-19).

In other words, these are the four primary, all-encompassing places in which we *need* peace.

Take a few moments to think about each category, both personally and generally. Does your lived experience reflect these truths? If so, how?

**Meditation for the Day:**

“Say to him: ‘Long life to you! Good health to you and your household. And good health to all this is yours!’”

**1 SAMUEL 25:6 NIV**

### **WEDNESDAY: JESUS, THE PRINCE OF PEACE**

Just when you thought things couldn't get any more bleak, our story takes a turn.

To an unrepentant nation whose hearts were far from God, the prophet Isaiah speaks of coming judgment on the nation and the salvation that only God can provide. Isaiah prophesied about the One, Jesus, who would come and rescue them, rescue *us*, from the self-inflicted curse and perverted shalom.

For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us;  
And the government will rest on His shoulders;  
And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor,  
Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. Isaiah 9:6

The "peace" referenced in Isaiah 9 is the shalom we first defined. Jesus is the Prince of shalom. Prince of completeness; the implications of this are exponential.

The book of Isaiah provides a clear picture of the state of human hearts. The consequence of the garden is that our hearts are bent toward rebellion and no matter how many sacrifices are offered, we cannot save ourselves. We need someone outside of ourselves to save us from a world of broken shalom and only God personified, Jesus Christ, is that person.

When Isaiah refers to Jesus Christ as the Prince of Peace, he is speaking of God who will *restore shalom* by sending His Son. The root word for shalom is *shelem*, which is a verb meaning to *complete or to bring restitution* (Exodus 21:34). The implication of this Prince of Peace is hope for restoration between us and God, us and others, us and the earth, and even us and ourselves.

Jesus is the One we've all been waiting for and His birth was just the beginning.

MEDITATION FOR THE DAY

“FOR TO US  
A CHILD IS BORN,

TO US, A SON IS GIVEN,  
AND THE GOVERNMENT  
WILL BE ON HIS SHOULDERS.

AND HE WILL BE CALLED  
WONDERFUL  
COUNSELOR,  
MIGHTY GOD,  
EVERLASTING FATHER,  
PRINCE OF PEACE.”

ISAIAH 9:6 NIV

# MEDITATION FOR THE DAY

"For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through His blood, shed on the cross."

**COLOSSIANS 1:19-20 NIV**

#### **THURSDAY: EIRENE**

On Sunday we learned that the Greek word for peace is *Eirene*. At Jesus' birth in Luke 2, the angels announce Him to the shepherds declaring, "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace (*Eirene*) to those on whom his favor rests" (Luke 2:14).

Throughout Jesus' ministry He extends His peace to the people around Him, fulfilling the prophecy made in Isaiah 9:6. "Peace (*Eirene*) I leave with you; my peace (*Eirene*) I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid" (John 14:27).

This peace isn't the kind of peace that makes wars cease or cancer go

away or prosperity reign (at least not yet). The peace Jesus offers is best described in Colossians 1: "For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through His blood, shed on the cross" (1:19-20).

Jesus' life, death, and resurrection made a way for *Eirene* between God and humanity by restoring connection to God the Father and proving that there is a better hope for what's to come. A life in which suffering ceases to exist and *shalom* is the way of the world.

## **FRIDAY: IN THE MEANTIME**

Jesus' birth was the first advent, in which God took on human form and submitted Himself to human rule and reign. His ministry on earth, His death, and His resurrection overcame death for good and made a way for *Eirene* (peace) with God for anyone who puts their faith in Him. But one scroll through social media or one hour watching your local news channel will remind you that we have yet to experience the restored wholeness Jesus promised.

Today, we wait. We wait for the second Advent. The one in which Jesus returns to consummate His covenant and restore His creation to the way it was always intended to be. A day in which "He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away" (Revelation 21:4). A glorious day.

In the midst of waiting, the command is clear: Be peacemakers (Matthew 5:9). In Paul's letter to the Romans he encourages them to "let us pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding" (Romans 14:19) and to the Colossians he wrote, "And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body (Colossians 3:15).

The charge to all followers of Christ is to embody the Prince of Peace empowered by His Spirit. To "make every effort to live in peace with everyone and to be holy; without holiness, no one will see the Lord" (Hebrews 12:14).

The command is simple, but the question is, "how?"

**MEDITATION FOR THE DAY**



"Make every effort to live in peace with everyone and to be holy; without holiness, no one will see the Lord."

**HEBREWS 12:14 NIV**

## **SATURDAY: PEACE THROUGH THE HOLY SPIRIT**

At the moment of salvation, anyone who puts their faith in Christ has peace with God. Their relationship with God is made whole again as the Father views His sons and daughters through the blood of Jesus.

But, if you remember what happened in the garden in Genesis 3, you know it wasn't just shalom with God that became perverted when sin entered the world. Shalom with others, shalom with self, and shalom with the earth were also in jeopardy.

Before Jesus ascended to heaven, He promised a Helper. He tells His disciples in John 14:15-17, "If you love me, keep my commands. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever— the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you."

The Holy Spirit dwells in every person who puts their faith in Christ, and because of this, we have access to shalom here and now. We don't have to wait on Jesus' return to

experience the shalom He promised, in fact, as we learned yesterday, we're commanded to embody it now. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, we can have peace with others (as far as it depends on *you*—Romans 1:18), peace with the earth, and peace with ourselves. Submitted to Him, He will adapt the desires of our hearts for the reconciliation He has for us.

This is *good* news. So now when we sing Christmas hymns about promised peace on earth, such as *Hark! The Herald Angels Sing*, it takes on a whole new meaning. It is so much more than an idealistic holiday tune; it is the truth our hearts ache for.

### **Meditation for the Day:**

"Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."

**PHILIPPIANS 4:6-7 NIV**



# NOTES