



# REFLECTIONS

September 17, 2017

**[God], through Christ... gave us the ministry of reconciliation... We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us.**

*2 Corinthians 5:18, 20*

## Shalom

“Shalom,” the stranger said. “Shalom,” my new boss answered in return. It was a day in September a few months after I had entered a new stage of life, in a new city, a new job, and now I would learn, into a new world. My adventure had only begun and exposure to Jewish customs added to the newness.

Shalom. I had no idea what it meant, but I sensed something warm and sincere. “It means peace,” my boss later explained. The definition sounded good enough for me, especially when I learned that the season on the Jewish calendar provided two unplanned holidays granted to this Christian boy by his Jewish employers. I liked that new word!

Shalom. The word lingered in my life over the years before I began to further grasp its meaning. Peace, the simple definition given me, seemed satisfying enough at the time even when my Jewish mentors tried to explain that Shalom expresses a broader wish for well-being than “peace” as we use it in English.

“Peace be with you,” we share sometimes with others during our worship services. We usually mean it to express a prayer for inner tranquility. On the world scene, we pray for peace on earth seeking absence of war. But as my understanding of the Hebrew word grows, I think “shalom” is a prayer for well-being—an unbroken circle of communal peace. Shalom. It mirrors the all-encompassing love in God’s kingdom.

Since Adam and Eve ate the apple and Cain took his brother’s life, shalom has been absent from this world. So, peacemaking is a role almost everyone is called to play at one time or another in our lives. “*Blessed are the peacemakers,*” Jesus said. And yes, Jesus told us to turn the other cheek when we are slapped across the face. But turning the other cheek is an action step *for* peace, not a passive concession to the evil provoking it.

Shalom. Jesus taught us, “*Love your enemies.*” “*Love your neighbor as yourself,*” and to “*forgive up to seventy times seven.*” Do those lessons not lead us to Shalom? And the Ten Commandments, don’t they spell out God’s recipe for Shalom?

Shalom—the all-encompassing circle of love in God’s kingdom. Shalom calls us to be salt and light to the world. *Blessed are the peacemakers, they will be called the sons of God.* So, even in the minuscule time and space we have in this world, we are blessed that, through Christ, God made us his ambassadors with the ministry of reconciliation.

Shalom...

*You are the light of the world,*

*Richard +*

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