

Becoming a Community of Shalom Series
Study Guide by Rev. Dr. Theresa Latini
First of Four Presentations ~ Spring 2023

The Beauty and Promise of Shalom

The Hebrew word *shalom* and its Greek equivalent appear over 500 times in scripture. Often translated as “peace,” it is much more than this. Old Testament scholar Walter Brueggemann equates *shalom* with God’s vision for all creation: “a dream of God that resists all of our tendencies to division, hostility, fear, drivenness, and misery. *Shalom* is the substance of the biblical vision of community embracing all creation. It refers to all those resources and factors that make communal harmony joyous and effective.”

In this session, we will explore the richness of this dream of God. We will define *shalom*, examine some key *shalom* texts, and consider its relevance for our lives today. And we will meditate upon the beauty of *shalom* and pray for its emergence in our personal lives and in our communities.

Biblical Texts: [Numbers 6:24-26](#), [Isaiah 9:6-7](#), [Colossians 3:12-15](#)

Numbers 6:24-26

²⁴ The LORD bless you and keep you;

²⁵ the LORD make his face to shine upon you, and be gracious to you;

²⁶ the LORD lift up his countenance upon you, and give you peace.

Isaiah 9:6-7

⁶ For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

⁷ His authority shall grow continually, and there shall be endless peace for the throne of David and his kingdom. He will establish and uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time onwards and for evermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.

Colossians 3:12-15

¹² As God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. ¹³ Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord* has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. ¹⁴ Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. ¹⁵ And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful.

Reflection Questions:

1. What dimensions of *shalom* did you find most intriguing, new, or surprising?
2. What does it mean to receive the blessing of *shalom* each week in our benediction in worship?
3. What aspects of *shalom* might God be calling you to practice intentionally?
4. How might you pray for *shalom* this week? Whom and what will you pray for?

Guided Prayer for *Shalom*:

1. Find a comfortable place to sit. Relax and breathe gently. Place your attention on God's presence and God's promise of *shalom* for all creation.
2. Remember that when you are in God's presence, you are not alone. Choose a person or group who has a need for *shalom*, perhaps specifically for healing or security or peace.
3. Hold this person or group in God's light. Visualize God's love washing over them dissolving pain, cleansing wounds, and curing sickness.
4. Imagine this person or group in a state of wholeness in God's light and love. Imagine that all their needs are met in community.
5. Ask God that the beauty of *shalom* be realized for them. Be specific in your prayers. Thank God for the promise of *shalom*.

