

## **“It starts with Shalom”**

**Sermon by Pastor Dan Harrison, Church of the Covenant, 7/7/19**

Growing up, we used to make fun of the answer that was eventually spoofed on many films when depicting Miss America contestants, the answer to “What do you wish for the world?” And the contestant would answer, “world peace.”

Though mocked by many of us, in reality the answer is a powerful ideal, and one that shouldn't be so quickly dismissed as childish or unrealistic. We know that Jesus declared, “Blessed are the Peacemakers, for they shall be called ‘God's children.’”

Then Jesus later sends out his disciples to share his message, as we just read in Luke 10. Now looking at the passage, we could point out that he sent 72, symbolically representing the whole community. It wasn't just a section of the community or simply a part of the tribe; 72 represents a wholeness, completeness. So in effect, he sent everyone out as bearers of peace. And interestingly, he didn't send them alone. He sent them in pairs. So each person had another to lean on. They weren't alone. Most of us are here this morning because we crave community with another. We long to belong and be needed, to find a place in which we are valued for who we are, loved and accepted, and at the same time a place where we can contribute back, and help another. We understand the importance of not being alone. To not be alone is a choice that we each made this morning. We wanted to be in community. We wanted to be present with another, and somehow we made it happen. Now, it's not to say that some of us didn't have to fight loneliness to get here. I'm sure some of us did. We had to work extra hard to get out of bed or extra hard to arrange transportation. But we did it, because we value being together.

Finally, Jesus sent the 72 sent them out into the “world” (if you will) to do what? To work. He is said the Harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. But what was the job exactly? First, it was to bring peace to your hosts. Let your shalom rest on them who welcome you. I have covered the concept of Shalom before, but I don't think a little repetition hurts anyone. Shalom is the Hebrew word meaning peace, harmony, wholeness, completeness. It is more than simply peace. It is peace in the sense of putting things together: Tikkun Olam—a Hebrew concept of God taking that which was hidden, the broken shards of creation and pulling them back to together: Restoration. Shalom is complete restoration. The brokenness that exists in our lives finding themselves mended back together, fractures reset, bone and tissue growing back together—blood vessels restored, life pulsating through us once again. This is Shalom. Can you imagine people desiring this level of Shalom on you as they enter your presence? Well, believe it. Shalom to you! In this place in this moment... Turn to the persons next to you look them in the eye and wish SHALOM to them. Give them your Shalom this morning. This is the power of being “peace makers” – that is—Shalom Givers. You are indeed children of God in message and in deed, gifting hope of complete restoration to one another. Now give it to the world.

Secondly, Jesus said to heal those hurting and tell them “the kingdom of God has come to them.” This is a heavy set of steps, none appear insignificant, and none appear necessarily easy. Being present with those hurting in this world, those in most distress, is exhausting, emotionally disrupting, physically demanding, and psychologically unsettling at times—but it is the world of the Shalom Givers. We must be present with those who are suffering. To bring healing into their lives anyway we can, and to share

with them the good news of Emanuel—God with us—that is, God has not abandoned us: We are all God’s children. We are all loved and valued, equally. We are all part of God’s grand design and God wants desperately to bring Tikkun Olam to fruition in our lives, to restore the broken shards into wholeness once again, to gift shalom back into our individual journeys.

As a part of that process, we must take the first step. We must be willing to gift shalom to others. In order to begin the process, I want us each to take the Shalom Stone (that’s what we will call them today) and I want you to think about one person or group of people, or entity, you wish Shalom upon in this very moment. Who will you bring Peace to? For whom do you wish restoration to come? I want you to hold that stone in your hand and think of who it is that needs that which you hold so dear. God’s Shalom. I want you to take turns, those who wish to participate, and drop your stone into this jar (mixed with stones of gratitude that we placed in there a few weeks ago). When you drop the stone in you can vocalize your person or entity if you wish, but you don’t have to. It is between you and God, really. But if confessing it aloud helps you finalize your cause, then do so. This is the start. This is where it often begins. However, for some of you, you may have already started and this is simply the middle of the journey to Shalom for whoever you are pursuing to gift restoration or reconciliation to. Some of you may have an individual in mind. Others may have a people group, perhaps some on the margins of society. Either way, it is yours and yours alone to give. So, please take the time to formalize that process by placing your Shalom Stone here.