

# PEACE

Walter Brueggemann, *Peace* (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2001),

## **1. LIVING TOWARD A VISION**

*I will give you your rains in their season, and the land shall yield its produce, and the trees of the field shall yield their fruit. Your threshing shall overtake the vintage, and the vintage shall overtake the sowing; you shall eat your bread to the full, and live securely in your land. And I will grant peace in the land, and you shall lie down, and no one shall make you afraid; I will remove dangerous animals from the land, and no sword shall go through your land (Lev. 26:4-6).*

*For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility (Eph. 2:14).*

The central vision of world history in the Bible is that all of creation is one, every creature in community with every other, living in harmony and security toward the joy and well-being of every other creature. *In the community of faith in Israel*, this vision is expressed in the affirmation that Abraham is father of all Israel and every person is his child (Gen. 15:5; Is. 41:8; 51:2). Israel has a vision of all people drawn into community around the will of its God (Is. 2:2-4) (Brueggemann, *Peace*. P. 13). *In the New Testament, the church* has a parallel vision of all persons being drawn under the lordship and fellowship of Jesus (Matt. 28:16-20; John 12:32) and therefore into a single community (Acts. 2:1-11) (Brueggemann, *Peace*. P. 14).

That persistent vision of joy, well-being, harmony, and prosperity is not captured in any single word or idea in the Bible; a cluster of words is required to express its many dimensions and subtle nuances: love, loyalty, truth, grace, salvation, justice, blessing, righteousness. But the term that in recent discussion has been used to summarize that controlling vision is *shalom* (Brueggemann, *Peace*. P. 14).

*Shalom* is the substance of the biblical vision of one community embracing all creation. It refers to all those resources and factors that make communal harmony joyous and effective. Ezekiel in a visionary passage expresses its meaning:

*I will make with them a covenant of peace (shalom) and banish wild animals from the land, so that they may live in the wild and sleep in the woods securely. I will make them and the region around my hill a blessing; and I will send down the showers in their season; they shall be showers of blessing. The trees of the field shall yield their fruit, and the earth shall yield its increase. They shall be secure on their soil; and they shall know that I am the LORD, when I break the bars of their yoke, and save them from the hands of those who enslaved them. They shall no more be plunder for the nations, nor shall the animals of the land devour them; they shall live in safety, and no one shall make them afraid. I will provide for them a splendid vegetation (shalom) (Ezk. 34:25-29a).*

This passage from Ezekiel and the one from Leviticus show *Shalom* in all its power. It is well-being that exists in the very midst of threats-from sword and drought and wild animals. It is well-being of a material, physical, historical kind, not idyllic “pie in the sky,” but “salvation” in the midst of trees and crops and enemies – in the very places where people always have to cope with anxiety, to struggle for survival, and to deal with temptation. It is well-being of a very personal kind – the address in Lev. 26 is to a single person, but it is also deliberately corporate. If there is to be well-being, it will not be just for isolated, insulated individuals; it is, rather, security and prosperity granted to a whole community – young and old, rich and poor, powerful and dependent. Always we all in it together. together we stand before God’s blessings and together we receive the gift of life, if we receive it at all. *Shalom* comes only to the inclusive, embracing community that excludes none (Brueggemann, Peace. P. 15).

The vision of wholeness, which is the supreme will of the biblical God, is the outgrowth of a covenant of *Shalom* (Ezk. 34:25), in which persons are bound not only to God but to one another in a caring, sharing, rejoicing community with none to make them afraid (Brueggemann, Peace. P. 15).

*Shalom* is creation time, when all God’s creation eases up on hostility and destruction and finds another way of relating. Another dimension of *shalom* is the *historic political community*. Absence of *Shalom* and lack of harmony are expressed in social disorder as evidenced in economic inequality, judicial perversion, and political oppression and exclusivism. The prophets speak boldly against such disruption of community, which is the absence of *shalom* (Brueggemann, Peace. P. 16).

The consequence of justice and righteousness is *shalom*, an enduring Sabbath of joy and well-being. But the alternative is injustice and oppression, which lead inevitably to turmoil and anxiety, with no chance of well-being (Is. 48:22-; 57:21) (Brueggemann, Peace. P. 18).

Jesus’ ministry to the excluded (Luke 4:16-21) was the same, the establishment of community between those who were excluded and those who had excluded them. His acts of healing the sick, forgiving the guilty, raising the dead, and feeding the hungry are all actions of reestablishing God’s will for *shalom* in a world gone chaotic by callous self-seeking (Brueggemann, Peace. P. 18).

In a letter to the exiles in Babylon, Jeremiah uses “shalom” twice. Jeremiah 29:11 has the affirmation that God wills *shalom* even for the exiles. God does not will evil, even though exiles feel like evil. God wills a future and hope – a promise thrusting to reality. This boldness can surprise when it is spoken in a time of despair and cynicism, when the center cannot hold,” when everything has collapsed and everyone is weary, with hope exhausted. At the root of history is the One who wills *shalom*. At its end is the One who calls us to *shalom*, secure community, a golden calf that frequently seems to be against all the stubborn facts. A lesser resource will scarcely refute despair or enable alienated ones to care. Only being grasped by the Holy One will do this – the One who dares to promise and dream when the rest of us have given up (Brueggemann, Peace. P. 21).

And what does Jeremiah mean? Simply that God is there. We are not abandoned. (Note the affirmation in exilic texts, Is. 41:10, 14; 43:1-2, 5; 49:14-15; 54:7-10 and, in a quite different context, Matthew 28:20). We are heard by God, who also answers (Exodus 3:7ff; Is. 65: 24). Caring, healing communication is still possible. There is this *Thou* who calls every historical I to community. Life is not a driven or an anxious monologue. The Lord is findable, which is gospel theme of great importance when God seems dead or hidden (Deut. 4:29-31); Is. 55:6, both texts from the exile). The vision of *shalom* is most eloquently expressed in times very much like our own, resources for faith to endure are hardly available. Thus, for example, in Is. 64:21, *shalom* motifs come together: in 65:25, reconciled creation in 65:24, assured dialogue. It is natural that the question of *shalom* should vex the church precisely when life seems so much a monologue (Brueggemann, Peace. P. 21-22).

The other use of *shalom* in Jeremiah's letter to the exiles is in Jer. 29:7: *But seek the welfare (shalom) of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the LORD on its behalf, for in its welfare (shalom) you will find your welfare.* A letter written to displaced persons in hated Babylon, where they have gone against their will and watched their life and culture collapse. And they are still there, yearning to go home, despising their captors and resenting their God – if, indeed, God is still their God. And the speaker for the vision dares to say, “Your *shalom* will be found in Babylon's *shalom*.” The well-being of the chosen ones is tied to the well-being of that hated metropolis, which the chosen people fear and resent. It is profound and disturbing to discover that this remarkable religious vision will have to be actualized in the civil community. The stuff of well-being is the sordid collection of rulers, soldiers, wardens, and carpetbaggers in Judah and in every place of displaced, exhausted hope. It is an incredible vision even now for people of faith who feel pressed and angry about the urban shape of our existence, to say nothing about the urban shape of our vision. But again it is affirmed that God's *shalom* is known only by those in inclusive, caring community (Brueggemann, Peace. P. 22).

The letter of Jeremiah to the displaced persons surely did not meet expectations. No doubt they hoped for a pure gospel, a neater promise, a distinctive future. But God's exiles are always learning the hard way that the thrust toward viable unity must find a way to include the very ones we prefer to exclude. Depending on how deep the hatred and how great the fear, this promise of *shalom* with hated Babylon is a glorious promise or a sobering thought; but it is our best vision, a vision always rooted in and addressed to historical realities (Brueggemann, Peace. P. 22).

The Pauline letters speak of *shalom*. There seems to be so many categories and divisions and discriminating marks that separate and pigeonhole, but there is also this:

*There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus. And if you belong to Christ, they you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to the promise (Gal. 3:28-29).*

Called to the Lord's single community, bearers of God's single promise, children of the one Abraham. Paul runs blatantly over our favorite divisions –black-white, rich-poor, male-female, East-West, old-young, whatever –finding them unreal and uninteresting. Those factors count not at all – our anxiety, drivenness, covetousness, injustice, chaos – none of these ever secures our existence. Yet we are secure, called to *shalom* from our desperate efforts at security and our foolish manipulations to ensure dominance. Then Paul comes right out and says it ever more flatly: “He (Jesus) is our peace (*shalom*)” (*Eph. 2:14*) (Brueggemann, Peace. P. 23).

He got the lepers and the Pharisees all together again, the sons of Isaac and the heirs of Hagar, or so the vision lets us hope. He is known in the breaking of bread: he is crucified and risen: he is coming again - he who draws all people to himself, who rose from the dead and defied the governor, but who could not save himself. We say he embodies our vision and empowers us to live it (Brueggemann, Peace. P. 23).

## 2. SHALOM FOR “HAVES” AND “HAVE-NOTS”

### *Shalom for “Have-Nots”*

#### *The Polarity of Shalom*

There are two very different views of *Shalom* in the Bible.

There is the tradition of the “have-nots” concerned with survival. That tradition may be located especially in the prophets, as heirs of Moses. Their mood is always to declare the end of the old, to make radical announcement of God's newness, and to make radical demands for new obedience. They focus on the sharp discontinuity between the way it has been and the way is now is, or is to be, because of God's action... This is a tradition that surely points toward Jesus with his radical announcement of the new age and the new kingdom (Brueggemann, Peace. P. 33).

There is the biblical tradition of the “haves” who value their many resources. This tradition may be located especially in the circles around the kings-persons entrusted with much who are prepared to care wisely for the maintenance of blessings and the prudent utilization of resources. They do not wait a new age because the present age—that is, the present arrangement –already has within it the forces of creativity and generativity (Brueggemann, Peace. P. 33).

In this dual context we may speak of *shalom*. two problems: First, a strong case can be made that *shalom* in the Bible is closer to blessings than to salvation – closer to valuing a prosperous, beneficial order than to the radical expectation of a new one. The second, and perhaps more crucial is that we are by and large a “blessed” people. We are not the deprived, the “have –nots.” We are typically middle-class American, which means that our life is not terribly precarious even though we have our anxieties. Shall we speak of shalom in terms of yearning precariousness or grateful complacency? Shall we focus on “already” or “not yet”? Shall we stress a new future or the maintenance of what is? (Brueggemann, Peace. P. 34).

Jesus practiced both of these. To the “wretched of the earth” he offered a gospel of liberation and the hope of transformed world.

He also spoke to the “haves” about their responsibility and accountability. He spoke about the interconnectedness of life and the need for management of the gifts presented to us. He moved back and forth in this polarity, having a variety of ways of speaking in various contexts (Brueggemann, Peace. P. 34-35).

### **Two Models of *Shalom***

For the precarious, *shalom* can be understood as the assurance that there is hearer for our cries, an intruder and intervener who comes to transform our lives. For the well-off, *shalom* can be understood as buoyant confidence that the world will hold together because there is a maintainer and embracer who abides and who certifies our existence in the face of all its disintegration. *Shalom* is not what we have to do; it is a gift from the intruding transformer and the certifying maintainer. Israel can say both “He comes,” and “Underneath are the everlasting arms.” They are both statements about the one who is father and mother to us – as father who intrudes, as mother who embraces. And we are recipients of the gift of *shalom* (Brueggemann, Peace. P. 35-36).

### **3. SHALOM AS FREEDOM AND UNITY**

Remember that you were at that time without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace; in his flesh he has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us. He has abolished the law with its commandments and ordinances, that he might create in himself one new humanity in place of the two, thus making peace, and might reconcile both groups to God in one body through the cross, thus putting to death that hostility through it. So he came and proclaimed peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near; For through him both of us have access in one Spirit to the Father. So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone. In him the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom you also are built together spiritually into a dwelling place for God (Eph. 2:12-22) (Brueggemann, Peace. P. 39).

### **4. ACTION IN THE BRICKYARD**

### **5. OUR STORY TELLS US WHAT TO DO**

### **6. ORDERING AND EATING**

## 7. PEACE IS A GIFT AND A TASK

## 8. PEACE IS A SHALOM COVENANT

## 9. MIXING RELIGION AND POLITICS

## 10. THE CHURCH: AN UNTANGLED WORLD

I have said these things to you while I am still with you. But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you. **Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives.** Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid. You heard me say to you, I am going away, and I am coming to you. If you loved me, you would rejoice that I am going to the Father, because the Father is greater than I. And now I have told you this before it occurs, so that when it does occur, you may believe. You will no longer talk much with you, for the ruler of this world is coming. He has no power over me; but I do as the Father has commanded me, so that the world may know that I love the Father. Rise, let us be on our way (John 14:25-31).

**The early church:** The vision of *shalom* vis-à-vis (대하여) the world is one that has troubled the church since the beginning. **The very earliest church** worked hard on that question. The church was fearful of the world because it was so big and hostile and resistant to the gospel, so possessed by demons and alien spirit. The image of the early church's memory is of a small, cringing community quite in the waiting, waiting and listening, shivering at every siren and nearly fainting at every rap at the door. The world then, and now, so big and fast, so powerful, so knowledgeable, and so formidable. And our church tradition is that the care of the world belongs to the heart of our faith (Brueggemann, Peace. P 122).

**The world:** The Fourth Gospel, in the farewell address of Jesus, provides some clues about how to think about this big world in relation to this little church. It is the affirmation of Jesus that "the ruler of this world is coming" (John 14:30). Now, this refers to no historical person or institution but, rather, to the destructive, demonic energies loose in our world, ranged against our humanness. How shall we speak of that threatening energy? In traditional language it is the devil; in the mythic language behind the Bible it is chaos. In more contemporary experience it is the driving power of greed and fear and manipulation. But we are not speaking simply of values. We are talking about values that have become objectified so that they have a claim on our lives – values that seem to act on our lives to compel us and coerce us to do what we would not and to be whom we would not choose to be. The ruler of this world is indeed coming. His name is Legion; he is all those coercing values that rob us of our freedom and deny to us the dignity and self-worth that is our inheritance from God. The ruler of this world has enormous power and momentum. His influence is impressive, and we are likely to be intimidated, if not seduced, by him (Brueggemann, Peace. P 122).

But Jesus in his understated comments to his people says this; “He has no power over me” (John 14:30). That surely is gospel. The forces of antihuman, callous self-seeking have no power or legitimate claim over Jesus Christ – and, therefore, none over his community. That, of course, is what was going on in the last days of his ministry, as in the first days (Luke 4:1-13). After the frustration of the early days, the ruler of this world “departed from him until an opportune time” (Luke 4:13). And that time seemed to be in the last days of Jesus’ life. In those days – beginning, end, and we may presume all the days between – the issue was to determine whose person he really was. The power of his faith was to determine that he was God’s person and did not belong to this world. And because we are in “in Christ” we may share the affirmation “He has no power over me.” The little community *shalom* is free, as the world is not. We are not victims of the power of greed and fear and manipulation and oppression and competence, all those powers that daily beset and beguile the world. This contrast is clear and dramatic; the big, impressive world enslaved, and the little, unimpressive community free. It is precisely the “towel” of empowering vulnerability that free us (John 13:1-17) (Brueggemann, Peace. P 122-123).

This community (of Jesus) know that persons are more precious than property; human worth is more precious than ideology; quality is more important than quantity; community-building can’t be based on selfish advancement (Brueggemann, Peace. P 124).

The whole truth by which Jesus lived and by which the church is invited to live does not consist of some obvious values commonly believed. It is, rather, a radical rejection of what the world knows and believes and a radical affirmation of what is absurd from the perspective of the world. The truth into which the church is led by the dying one is that the world is being dismantled, and a new world with a quite different code of operation is at hand (Brueggemann, Peace. P 125).

The world wants *shalom*; but we know the world cannot have *shalom*, on the present terms. The emergence of *shalom* – wholeness for church, people, and earth – requires some radical changes in values, presuppositions, and perceptions. *Shalom* happens only for communities engaged in empowering vulnerability. The world hates and resists those who speak of the dismantling required for *shalom*. The dismantling is required by the recognition that we cannot receive what we crave on the present terms. The world hates those who say such things as the following:

*You can’t get peace by a policy of war.*

*You can’t get public tranquility by a policy of discrimination in any form.*

*you can’t have happiness in society as long as women and children are seen as second-class citizens.*

*You can’t have self-respecting persons on the basis of self-seeking law and order.*

(Brueggemann, Peace. P 125).

Jesus knew the things that make for *shalom*. He calls us friends and shares with us the makings of *shalom*, and that’s fine for the beloved community. But the world will work hard to eliminate the very message about *shalom* that is our ministry. So from the

beginning it has been clear: A church that cares about *shalom* can expect to be in conflict with a world still hoping that another way is possible (Brueggemann, Peace. P 126).

Brueggemann suggests achieving such *shalom will cause us pain*. But this pain is for newness, new life. This pain will be that of labor pain to give birth of a new life. This newness comes with price which is death to all present arrangement, death to fear, death to old visions and to memories. And those who are ready for death to all that the world calls “life” are the ones to whom life can come (Brueggemann, Peace. P 126).

*Shalom* comes not by the norms of the world, not through the acceptance of the world, nor by the reduction of its hostility. The church is called to turn its appeal away from the world to God, to look only to God’s presence for safety, to God’s blessing for joy (Brueggemann, Peace. P 127).

The vision of the church is, therefore, very different from the vision of the world. The world is defensive because it believes things must be as they are. But church does not fear the turn in the world because we know God’s will for *shalom* will win out. We know God’s vision of justice and wholeness will win out, and we need not be fearful or grim as the world is (Brueggemann, Peace. P 127).

God has shows us the truth about *shalom*, and we act on it, we are hated fro it. We practice caring for the whole earth not because it is popular or bound to succeed, not because we are liberal or communist or whatever, but because we have faced a compelling vision of *shalom*. *Shalom* is not only an incredible gif; it is a most demanding mission. But the world that will hate us as we seek its well-being is the same world that the Christ has already conquered (John 16:33). So we proceed with the confidence that the ruler of this entangling world has no power over us (Brueggemann, Peace. P 129).

## **11. NEWNESS: THE CHURCH’S MESSAGE**

## **12. SHALOM TOOLS**

### 13. THE SHALOM CHURCH [Read this section again).

When he had gone out, Jesus said, "Now the Son of Man has been glorified, and God has been glorified in him. If God has been glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself and will glorify him at once. Little children, I am with you only a little longer. You will look for me; and as I said to the Jews so now I say to you, 'Where I am going, you cannot come. I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.'" Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, where are you going?" Jesus answered, "Where I am going, you cannot follow me now; but you will follow afterward." Peter said to him, "Lord, why can I not follow you now? I will lay down my life for you. Jesus answered, "Will you lay down your life for me? Very truly, I tell you, before the cock crows, you will have denied me three times. "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house there are many dwelling places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also. And you know the way to the place where I am going."(John 13:31-14:4)

*"I am the true vine, and my Father is the vine grower. He removes every branch in me that bears no fruit. Every branch that bears fruit he prunes to make it bear more fruit. You have already been cleansed by the word that I have spoken to you. Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me. I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing. Whoever does not abide in me is thrown away like a branch and withers; such branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask for whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples (John 15:1-8).*

*"If the world hates you, be aware that it hated me before it hated you. If you belonged to the world, the world would love you as its own. Because you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world--therefore the world hates you. Remember the word that I said to you, 'Servants are not greater than their master.' If they persecuted me, they will persecute you; if they kept my word, they will keep yours also. (John 15:18-20).*

#### Reflection on the shalom motif in John 13:

### 14. THE SHALOM PERSON

### 15. TEACHING HOW IT HOLDS TOGETHER

**16. HEALTH CARE AS HEALING AND CARING**