

Jehovah Shalom - The Lord, my Peace

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[0 : 00] Probably the moment in my life at which I most need a bit of peace. Can we just stand up and preach here. Good morning.

My name is Richard Brown and I'm currently part of the leadership team here at Hernaud Baptist Church. Janine, if we could have just the title slide for now and then much, no sorry, not much later, later in the sermon, we'll be going through the rest of the slides.

I'll try and control them from here when we get to that point, but might not manage it. Liz and I took our two or two of our grandchildren to the zoo yesterday in Hertfordshire, four-year-old Daniel and two-year-old Tabitha.

And we were going around and looking at the animals and there was one meerkat enclosure where there was just, for some reason, just one meerkat. And that was easy for Tabitha, the two-year-old.

One, one meerkat, one meerkat. And then we moved around and we saw some penguins. And there was one penguin. There was one penguin. And then a few more penguins emerged.

[1 : 08] And it was two penguins. I go, well, one, two, three, four, five penguins. And she goes, two penguins. And we moved around further and we got to another meerkat enclosure where there were, oh, I don't know, about eight, nine, ten meerkats.

And she looked and she goes, two meerkats. Sometimes our lives are a bit like that. We can cope with the simple thing. But once it becomes a bit more complicated, we don't really know what we're doing.

Today, we'll continue our series on the names of God by looking at Jehovah Shalom. God is our peace. We will, as is often the case with these sorts of sermons, start by looking at the root word for Shalom, considering its fuller meaning and how it helps us understand the nature and character of God and of Jesus.

And then also spend a bit of time thinking about what we can do to enjoy the peace that Jesus offers us. So, and when there are Jewish people speaking people, Arabic speaking people in the audience, you always worry that they'll come up afterwards and say, not quite right.

But from a linguistic point of view, the word Shalom, which means peace, comes from a root word consisting of the letter sounds Sh-la-ma.

[2 : 35] So, Shalom, which has as its core meaning peace, but not peace in the sense of quietness or absence of noise, but of wholeness, completeness or soundness.

Soundness as in the old-fashioned or traditional way of starting a will. I being of sound mind and body. It is not, therefore, a word to do with absence of war or absence of conflict in the way we've been thinking of peace quite rightly this morning, or absence of tension.

Although it does, in places, incorporate all of these things. But the peace, the Shalom of God is something more positive, and maybe even a peace that is nurturing and provides a safe place and a sense of safety for us to grow as people.

A few numbers for those of us who find that sort of thing helpful or interesting. There are roughly 250 uses of the word Shalom in the Old Testament.

And to illustrate the different meanings, about a tenth of those, 10% is when it's used as a greeting or a blessing on someone. So, as you might say today in the Jewish community meeting someone, say Shalom as you meet them.

[3 : 59] Another quarter, or 25%, describe a relationship that is free from conflict, so people who are getting on with each other.

And 65% of the time, so a good proportion most of the time, nearly two-thirds of the time, it is actually associated with a sense of wholeness or completeness, as I mentioned earlier.

On the other hand, in the New Testament, being written in Greek, there is no Shalom at all. But that doesn't mean there is no peace.

There is a Greek word, irene, and it's a word for peace in Greek, which is understood to carry the same breadth and depth of meaning as the word Shalom.

And perhaps we can link these two types of peace with looking at part of the Isaiah chapter 9 and John chapter 14, where in the Old Testament, the promised Messiah, one of his names is the Prince of Peace.

[5 : 07] And in John chapter 14, Jesus, the Messiah, proclaims, Peace I leave with you. My peace I give you. Do not let your hearts be troubled.

And do not be afraid. But why do we need this peace in the first place? Well, certainly I would say we need peace with God, because if we do not make peace with him, we will remain enemies of him.

And who would want enemies living in their kingdom? So peace with God is important so that we can enter into his kingdom. Fortunately, we know that peace was brought about between us and him by his own actions, by coming as the person of the Lord Jesus Christ and dying on the cross for us and thus dealing with the sin in us that gets in the way of our relationship with God and causes us to be enemies of him.

But as I've argued already, God being our peace is more than just the cessation of hostilities between us. And in Romans chapter 5, after telling us that God has dealt with our sin, it goes on to tell us that much more, so not just peace with God, absence of conflict, much more shall we be saved by his life.

That is, peace with God is just the start of us experiencing the peace of God. Although God promises us through Jesus life in all its fullness, or as some translations put it, life more abundantly, which I always think sounds far more exciting, there are many ways in which we end up without the peace of God that he provides for us and that we can only truly find in him.

[7 : 06] And I thought it would be helpful if we went through a few ways in which this might happen. I had thought of hanging this part of the sermon on the seven deadly sins, but discovered that this concept is not strictly a biblical one, but it was rather a later construct of the established church.

And also, I realised that if I was to look at all seven, that might take quite a long time this morning. So, I've picked out four different areas that maybe some of us struggle with as Christians, in a way which means we don't enjoy the peace of God as we should.

And I've called these the need for validation, rumination, or worry about the past, worry about the future, and possibly because I couldn't think of a better word other than a long sentence, perfectionism.

So, to start, what do I mean by the need for validation? Well, it's in the sense that I am not worth anything unless someone else has told me that I am.

And I need to keep hearing that again and again because I never truly believe it, even when God says it. It may be that however often someone tells you how well you are doing, whether in a church role, a work role, as a friend, or as a support in your family, you still insist to yourself that you are actually worthless.

[8 : 49] But if we do not see ourselves as we should with an honest assessment of our character and works, then we can become draining on the goodwill and energy of those we keep looking to for repeated affirmation.

if this sounds a bit like you, then I would encourage you to look at these scriptures and they'll come up later on in the sermon.

Genesis 1, 27, Zephaniah 3, 17, John 3, 16, Roman 8, verses 31 to 35, which can be summarised in this way for those of you who think you have no worth.

God lovingly created us in his image, giving each of us inherent worth and purpose. He is not distant, but dwells among his people as a mighty saviour.

He dwells amongst us as a mighty saviour, rejoicing over each of us with tender love and delight. Out of his great love, God gave his only son, Jesus Christ, so that each of us who believe in him may receive forgiveness and eternal life.

[10 : 09] Because of this unchanging love, believers can live with confidence. If God is for us, nothing can stand against us and nothing in all creation can separate us from his love in Christ Jesus, the love he has for us that tells us we are worthy, otherwise he would not have died for us.

Maybe you're someone who feels no peace because you keep dwelling on the past in a negative way, by which I mean you keep remembering your past sins and worry about what people might think of you.

or maybe you dwell on past mistakes or bad decisions or embarrassing situations and think that you can never move on from them and instead spend your time rebuking yourself.

Again, we can turn to scripture, to Isaiah, Philippians, Psalms and Corinthians and the letters of John. God invites us to let go of the past and look ahead to the new work he is doing in our lives, making a way where there was once none.

Through his mercy, he removes our sins completely, casting them away as far as the east is from the west. When we come to Christ, we are made new, our old life is gone and a fresh beginning is given.

[11 : 49] Even when we stumble, Jesus stands as our advocate before the Father, offering forgiveness and restoration to all who confess their sins.

God, we're often told, is the God of new beginnings. we're also told, new every morning is the love that God has for us. Whatever happened yesterday or the day before or last year or years ago, God offers you a new beginning and the old, he says, what old?

I'm doing a new thing in you. Or maybe the past is not your issue. Maybe you fret and worry about the future and you're living the truth of you've dealt with your past but you worry about what's to come.

And guess what? There are some scriptures that I feel might be helpful for those of us in that situation. Again, Old Testament and New Testament. Jeremiah, Philippians, Proverbs, Matthew.

God assures us that he has good plans for us, plans to prosper us, give us hope and lead us towards a purposeful future. We can trust that the good work he has begun in us will be faithfully carried on to completion through Christ Jesus.

[13 : 17] Because of this, we are called to trust the Lord completely, leaning not on our own understanding but acknowledging him in all our ways, confident that he will guide our path.

therefore, we need not be anxious about life's worries. God provides for us and tomorrow is in his hands so we can live each day in peaceful trust.

And the last sort of person I want to think about this morning is the person I've called the perfectionist. Now, we should surely all strive for perfection and to be the best that we can but the temptation for someone who might be considered a perfectionist is to become frustrated often with themselves or maybe with others who don't seem to strive in a way they think they should or seem even if they strive to be able to reach the reasonable let alone high expectations we may have of them.

There may be fewer scriptures around this and it would be easy just to spend time talking about the sinful nature of man and the various flaws in even the holiest of bible characters to remind us that none of us is perfect but in Matthew 18 Peter asked Jesus Lord how many times shall I forgive my brother or sister who sins against me?

Up to seven times? Jesus answered I tell you not seven times but 77 times next week our preacher Martin Travers is going to be preaching his sermon on forgiveness alongside and as part of his sermon on God is our righteousness and I don't want to steal his thunder but for now I would remind us that where we fail to reach for perfection or we actually don't reach perfection we should not beat ourselves up about it but recognise that we cannot reach for perfection this side of heaven and nor can those we live and work and our church with the perfectionist must learn to forgive others and themselves every time perfection is not reached I'm going to summarise hopefully with some further scriptures the sermon with some more for explanation as well see what happens nothing turn it on

[16 : 11] Jehovah Shalom God is our peace Genesis 1 27 Zephaniah 3 17 John 3 16 and Romans 8 verses 31 as I mentioned earlier on and for those looking for validation these verses for those who have no peace for dwelling on the past these for those who are fearful about the future and these for those who need to learn to forgive themselves and forgive others who don't reach our expectations so just going back over again Shalom the root is core meaning wholeness completeness soundness the spiritual context for us complete well-being that flows from a proper relationship with God Old Testament 10% is a greeting such as in Ezra 4 17 which says if I can find the right piece of paper and the right piece of paper nope oh

I'm sure I had it with me earlier yep it's hiding right under the notices I'll forgive myself Ezra 4 17 back again the king sent this reply to Rehum the commanding officer Shimshai the secretary and the rest of their associates living in Samaria and elsewhere in trans Euphrates and unfortunately the NIV says greetings but the actual Old Testament word says shalom a blessing of peace upon you as we said a quarter a state of relationship that is peaceful or free from conflict or tension as in Samuel the towns from Ekron to Gath that the Philistines had captured from Israel were restored to Israel and Israel delivered the neighbouring territory from the hands of the Philistines and there was peace between

Israel and the Amorites there was shalom between Israel and the Amorites the majority of shalom in the Old Testament completeness or well-being in God as in Jeremiah also seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile pray to the Lord for it because if it prospers you too will prosper whatever you think of the state of London the city we are in we should seek its peace its shalom and its prosperity prosperity as I said in the New Testament there is no shalom but there is peace and Romans 5 says therefore since we have been justified through faith we have peace we have shalom with God through our Lord Jesus Christ not just a cessation of hostilities in our sinful nature but a new possibility of growth and developing in him so some reasons why we might not experience peace we have the need for validation or love and constantly seeking and re-seeking it from others worry about what we did in the past and how it might make people view us now worry about the future or the unknown or what might happen next or the need for perfection and everything to be done exactly perfectly right by ourselves by others and then a couple of other things that

I decided not to look at this morning what I've called trying to keep up with the Joneses what the seven deadly sins might call envy and trying to live an easy life just be at ease with those around you you'll very soon find that that's not a peaceful way of trying to live so what can we do about it as I hope I've illustrated this morning feed on God's word trust in his unfailing love learn to forgive both yourself and others know that you are loved know that you can love others and of course go to God and ask Lord I have no peace please help me find the peace I need in you to do