

Lectionary
Readings for every day
You Select!



in the HCUC

No. 1

For 5 March 2017

Dear Friends

Hello and Welcome to another season of *Shalom*. I hope you'll enjoy tasting the offerings (at least some) I set before you. Each year before I start writing I need to remind myself that the word "SHALOM" is a doorway into a field of rich meanings and experiences. 'Shalom' points to:-
Peace—Wholeness—Justice—Healing—Unity—Oneness—Compassion—Hope—Love.

Shalom is a Hebrew word and a key word in the bible—used more than 400 times. All the words above that express some aspect of Shalom are abstract words, which means that they are not referring to objects like cars or cabbages, beds or buckets, ie: things you can buy on-line or at the supermarket. Instead they are values, attitudes and ways of living. They are very real and essential for healthy living. They are like a glue that holds us together within ourselves, in our families, in society, as a nation; and in a world of 7+ billion people always in danger of falling apart. Invisible, yes. Yet as real as the rays of the sun, and the liquidity of water.

But ... ! There is a snag. Each aspect of Shalom is constantly confronted by its opposite. We find peace up against unrest and war, justice v injustice, healing v sickness, unity v disunity and on and on goes the list.

In fact in every aspect of life we find the opposites at work—up/down, high/low, left/right. In social values—success/failure, beautiful/ugly, strong/weak. In the deeper issues it is the same: pleasure/pain, good/evil, life/death, God/Satan.

So how do we cope? We try to protect ourselves by building walls. We make circles around issues and people which say - you are in/they are out! He belongs/you don't; keep out/come in!

Wiser people than me have pointed out that nature seems to be beyond opposites. It knows nothing of right or wrong oceans, good mountains or bad ones.

So where might this road take us?

Sincerely - Lester

| | Psalm | Epistle/OT | Gospel |
|---|--------------|-------------------|----------------|
| Monday 6 March: | 19:7-end | Lev 19:2,11-18 | Matt 25:31-end |
| Tuesday 7 March: | 34:4-6,21,22 | Isa 55:10-11 | Matt 6:7-15 |
| Wednesday 8 March: | 51:1-5,17,18 | Jonah 3 | Luke 11:29-32 |
| Thursday 9 March: | 138 | Isa 55:6-9 | Matt 7:7-12 |
| Friday 10 March: | 130 | Ezek 18:21-28 | Matt 5:20-26 |
| Saturday 11 March: | 119:1-8 | Deut 26:16-end | Matt 5:43-end |
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| Sunday 12 March <u>Lent 2</u> | | | |
| Ps 121; Gen 12:1-4a; Rom 4:1-5,13-17; Matt 17:1-9 | | | |

| | Psalm | Epistle/OT | Gospel |
|---|--------------|-------------------------|----------------------|
| Monday 13 March: | 79:8,9,12,14 | Dan 9:4-10 | Luke 6:36-38 |
| Tuesday 14 March: | 50:8,16-end | Isa 1:10,16-20 | Matt 23:1-12 |
| Wednesday 15 March: | 31:4,5,14-18 | Jer 18:18-20 | Matt 20:17-28 |
| Thursday 16 March: | 1 | Jer 17:5-10 | Luke 16:19-end |
| Friday 17 March: | 105:16-22 | Gen 37:3-4,12-13, 17-28 | Matt 21:33-43, 45-46 |
| Saturday 18 March: | 103:1-4,9-12 | Micah 7:14,15, 18-20 | Luke 1-3, 11-end |
| | | | |
| Sunday 19 March <u>Lent 3</u> | | | |
| Ps 95; Ex 17:1-7; Rom 5:1-11; John 4:5-42 | | | |

| | Psalm | Epistle/OT | Gospel |
|---|----------------|-------------------|----------------|
| Monday 20 March: | 147:1-12 | Isa 11:1-10 | Matt 13:54-58 |
| Tuesday 21 March: | 25:3-10 | Dan 2:20-23 | Matt 18:21-end |
| Wednesday 22 March: | 147:13-end | Deut 4:1,5-9 | Matt 5:17-19 |
| Thursday 23 March: | 95:1,2,6-end | Jer 7:23-28 | Luke 11:14-23 |
| Friday 24 March: | 81:6-10,13, 16 | Hosea 14 | Mark 12:28-34 |
| Saturday 25 March: | 40:5-11 | Isa 7:10-14 | Luke 1:26-38 |
| | | | |
| Sunday 26 March <u>Lent 4</u> | | | |
| Ps 23; 1 Sam 16:1-13; Eph 5:8-14; John 9:1-41 | | | |

LEAPING OVER WALLS

Much of life is taken with building walls to keep our ideas, beliefs, values hopes, friendships safe from the opposing views, beliefs, dogmatic mind-sets which threaten our inner peace, or sense of security and stability. It's a bit like children on a see-saw and one wants to tip the child at the opposing end off. Listen to some poets and prophets who touch this topic:

- Robert Frost writes in "Mending Wall":-

Before I build a wall I'd ask to know what it was walling in or walling out. And to whom I was like to give offence. Something there is that doesn't love a wall, that wants it down.
What a great last line. Do we sense this 'something'?

Do we miss something deeper and important when we build a wall?
Put another way, can we go beyond the opposites?

- The Eastern poet known simply as Rumi has a short comment:

"Out beyond ideas of wrong-doing and right-doing there is a field. I'll meet you there."

It looks as if his opposites represent all opposites. He wants us to meet him in this field—this space—this place of wider vision—beyond shallow divisions.

- The poet in Psalm 18:29 has a light touch when he writes:
" ... by my God I can leap over a wall."

However a more recent version changes it to:
"You give me strength to attack my enemies and power to overcome their defences."

The first version appeals because I see Jesus as the great athletic wall-leaper, and not someone who perpetuates the conflict.

- Time and time again Jesus invited people who were outside the circle to come and belong. There was Matthew who was an outsider because he worked for the occupying Romans— "Come and join my team." There were incidents, like with lepers, who were outside the circle and were not to come near the life of their family or village and Jesus met, touched and healed them. He not only leapt over the wall of separation and fear—he acted as if there was no wall. Today we see the same attitude in the "Doctors without Borders" group, or the "White Helmets" in Syria. The common factor is compassion born of the awareness that beyond and deeper than our differences we are one world-wide family of human beings—all children of God—each life sacred.

WALLS COME TUMBLING DOWN

Rusty Schweikert grew up and became a jet fighter pilot. He saw himself as a capable "macho man", and as a regular red, white and blue American who believed what his world taught him—that the world is divided between the "communist world and the free world".

That was back when he became an astronaut in 1969 in the Apollo mission. Then it happened. He was left suspended outside the space capsule, while a problem inside was fixed.

As he floated in space he looked back at Mother Earth. Two things happened for him—or was it to him!

1. He saw the earth to be ' a shining gem against a totally black backdrop' and realised that everything he cherished was on that gem—his family, the land, music, art, friends, the diversity of life, in nature and among people. He felt "an urge to want to hug and kiss that gem like a mother does her first born child." Love and compassion welled up within him—and didn't fade.
2. He became aware that nature knows nothing about divisions and opposites and the walls that we make. Rivers flow over borders, ocean currents wash the shores of Muslim, Jewish, Christian countries. The borders are a human invention. Nature knows it is one field, beyond the opposites we fight over. It is indeed a deeper, bigger, wider vision.

From a different period of history—from a culture that was and is so different from now—from a spiritual tradition that we know (and yet don't know) comes a timeless truth.

Paul's letter to Christians in ancient Ephesus speaks about the same issue we have looked at in this issue of Shalom.

It's in Chapter 2, mainly in Verses 11-23, and especially in verse 14— (Ephesians 2:14)

"...You who were once outside are with us inside the circle of God's love and purpose. The Living Spirit is our Peace.

He united the opposites and divisions. He has broken down the wall that kept us apart. By this action he has made utterly irrelevant the antagonism between Jew and Gentile."

(Gleaned from some modern translations)

No matter what words are used the essence is about Shalom, as "Peace" - by moving beyond the walls that divide us—out into that great field of wholeness, unity, oneness and love.