**Living Out the Call to Shalom**

Picture Sam shared with us as we gathered in the circle.

Arm in arm, linked in unity, under the banner of peace, with the question “will the circle be unbroken?”

Well, the circle of unity has been broken among the pastors and churches of Squamish for some time.

So as a result of this teaching series, with seeds of peace in my pocket, I initiated a conversation with a fellow pastor here in Squamish.

That morning, as I was preparing my heart to go God gave me these words.

This is what I read…

At the age of sixteen, Patrick was kidnapped from his home by Irish marauders and taken to Ireland, where he was sold as a slave and forced to herd livestock. After six years of slavery Patrick escaped to his native Britain. But rather than becoming bitter, Patrick believed his captivity and deliverance was ordained by God, and devoted his life to full-time ministry. While studying for the priesthood he experienced recurring dreams in which he heard voices say, “O holy youth, come back to Erin and walk once more amongst us.’ He convinced his superiors to let him return to Ireland in 432, not to seek revenge but to seek reconciliation.”

**The 1st** text was Exodus 3:16 where God calls Moses to rescue his people from the tyranny of the Egyptians.

God reminded me that like Moses He had made me a shepherd and equipped me with a shepherd staff. Then I heard the promise, “Now go! I will be with you as you speak, and I will instruct you in what to say.”

**The 2nd** text I read was Mark 6:47 where Jesus walks on the water speaking to his disciples, “Don’t be afraid. Take courage. I am here.”

Then I read the words from St Patrick’s breastplate.

Maybe you are familiar with these words.

***Christ be with me,***

***Christ before me,***

***Christ behind me,***

***Christ in the heart of everyone who thinks of me,***

***Christ in the mouth of everyone who speaks of me,***

***Christ in every eye that sees me,***

***Christ in every ear that hears me.***

That too was y breastplate as I paid my fellow pastor this visit.

That so articulated my heart and desire for what was to take place that day.

This was my putting faith into action.

**What has it looked like in your own life?**

**Are you experiencing Shalom in your home? Family? Marriage?**

So easy to listen to a sermon and gain new insight on a text but do nothing about it? Isn’t it?

I am reminded of what Maria Skobstova once said, a 20th Century nun remembered in Russia as Mother Maria, “The meaning of the liturgy or text must be translated into life.”

So reflects James’ words, faith without deeds is dead.

It has to be translated into life.

As I prepared to go see my fellow pastor I gave a lot of thought to Platinga’s definition of sin.

“*Sin is the culpable disturbance of shalom.”*

As I pondered this definition I thought to myself, how have I contributed to the disturbance of shalom among the churches?

The last thing I wanted to do is go into that meeting pointing the finger at my brother, oblivious and blind to my own sin.

What good would come out of an interaction like that?

It’s easy to point the finger at everyone else and push the blame, but the fact is we are all to blame. That’s the definition of culpable. It’s defined as guilt, deserving blame, blameworthy, responsibility and ownership - culpable is any way we have contributed to the disturbance of shalom we see within the Church in Squamish.

I think we can all see the ways we are all guilty of disturbing God’s Shalom.

**Our #1 value** as a church is to be Refreshingly Grace-Filled. It’s easy to extend grace to those who haven’t yet trusted Jesus, but what about extending grace to our brothers and sisters who maybe practice their faith in a different way than we do?

We’re pretty laid back as a church; can be perceived by other churches as dangerously lax, but in an attempt to be like Jesus and not manage people’s sin; to be known to others in the community as a friend of sinners, we want to remain this way.

If we are gracious enough to embrace people who are new to following Jesus, making plunders and mistakes as they find their way to Jesus, we need to be gracious enough to embrace fellow Christians who make mistakes in communicating God’s love.

I’m sure we all can think of examples in our own lives when we didn’t communicate Christ’s love well.

My fellow pastor friend and I talked a fair bit about closed hand issues – things we hold tight to and are not willing to let go – and things we consider to be open-handed issues. Things we believe in strongly but we’re not going to go to the wall over.

Closed fist issues – what might they be? A key example of closed hand issues would be the **Apostles Creed**?

*1. I believe in God the Father, Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth:*

*2. And in Jesus Christ, his only begotten Son, our Lord:*

*3. Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary:*

*4. Suffered under Pontius Pilate; was crucified, dead and buried: He descended into hell:*

*5. The third day he rose again from the dead:*

*6. He ascended into heaven, and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty:*

*7. From thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead:*

*8. I believe in the Holy Ghost:*

*9. I believe in the holy Catholic Church: the communion of saints:*

*10. The forgiveness of sins:*

*1l. The resurrection of the body:*

*12. And the life everlasting. Amen.*

But it’s not necessarily our orthodoxy that we get worked up about, it’s our orthopraxy – how we live that out in real time.

This is where, like the Pharisees we who wear the cloth can get our knickers in a knot. Myself included. And take how we put these things in practice, how we live this out, personal.

Where we elevate certain open hand issues and unrightly put them in the wrong hand – we end up hanging on way too tight.

So often driven out of fear. When we no longer trust the Holy Spirit, we try to take control. Set up high fences and rules and regulations where they don’t belong.

**Marriage is such a good example of this.**

Those of you who are married. Can you and your spouse disagree on certain things, or do you feel like you have to agree on everything?

When I was first married if Kenda didn’t agree with me on something I got elevated; elevated tone and intensity b/c I thought it was my job to convince her to believe it my way, see it my way.

Not all of it, but a lot of that was driven by insecurities. Not being secure in who we are; separate whole individuals standing on our own two feet. Differentiated. I am different than you and that is OK.

I think often pastors are this way. We get all weird when one of us thinks or has a different viewpoint than the other person. We get ramped up; elevated and intense b/c we think it’s our job to change the other person.

Marriage is a good example for us that we can disagree with people in a way that is understood and still be loving and non-judgmental.

Part of growing up is resting secure in who we are and who God has made us to be; and learn to truly honor one another.

As we were praying together 2 weeks ago Saturday night, praying for the meeting that week God reminded me of a prophetic word Toni dolfo Smith gave me about 12 years ago – that God would drive steel rods in my back so I would stand up straight under Christ, and no longer bend towards others.

I went into that meeting this week with that prophetic word alive in my heart.

You can pray for us as pastors in Squamish that we grow up; differentiate, be whole, healthy people who can celebrate who we are, and who we are becoming.

This week I took ownership of the part I had to play concerning the lack of shalom within the Church and pursued a fellow pastor to make things right.

To talk. To forgive one another. To pursue Shalom. We can both tell you, that as we talked we both experienced the Shalom Jesus promises us.

**I wonder what the Holy Spirit might be asking you to do in order to see Shalom come to the Church in Squamish?**

So if we were Hebrew we would greet one another this way.

Shalom aleichem (literally "peace be upon you").

And you would respond this way, "upon you be peace" (aleichem shalom).

This is what took place this last Tuesday. As I went to my brother in the spirit of reconciliation I declared these words.

Shalom aleichem: Peace be upon you

And he responded in like manner.

Aleichem shalom : Upon you be peace

What relationships in your life lack the Peace of Christ right now? Is there something you are doing, or have done that is contributing to that lack of Shalom?

What might Jesus be asking you to do as a response?

In the Gospels in the New Testament, Jesus often uses the greeting "Peace be unto you".

He does it in John 14 – the passage where he is preparing his disciples for his departure from them.

*"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."*

I like how the Irish Pastor John Davies from a Parish in Ireland puts it.

“Jesus is in the middle of promising his followers "the Advocate, the Holy Spirit" as his replacement once he is taken away from them. When he is gone, Jesus is saying, what will remain with his followers will be his gift of peace to them, and that peace will free them from fear and in that peace the Holy Spirit will come who will empower and enable them to continue to live in Christ while also in the world, to be filled with God's Spirit with a foot in both kingdoms. “

No coincidence that in order to live out Shalom we need an Advocate – the Holy Spirit.

Advocate is someone who to speak in favour of – to support or to recommend publically.

I felt the Holy Spirit go before me this Tuesday as my Advocate.

We pray this all the time – that the Holy Spirit would get there before we do. That He prepares the ground; that He prepares people’s hearts.

Jesus is called the Prince of Peace – experiencing true peace amidst the storms of life is inextricably connected with the person of the Holy Spirit; the Spirit of Jesus.

Jesus is saying, “You want my Peace – you want to learn how to live with one foot in this kingdom and the other foot in God’s kingdom?”

“You want to learn how to live in the tension of the now and not yet of God’s kingdom?”

“You and I will need the Advocate.”

Jesus uses the word "peace" five times in the Gospel of John.

John 16:33 is used in a context similar to John 14, when he warns them that he’s about to leave but assures them that they will know Jesus' peace, even when he’s gone.

Then there are three references in John 20 right after His resurrection when he appears to the disciples and blesses them with the words, "Peace be with you".

What Jesus had in mind was the Hebrew idea of Shalom.

It would have meant welfare, completeness, to cause to be at peace, to make peace, peace-offering, at rest, at ease, secure, safe, to finish well, to prosper, to be whole, to be perfect, to be victorious and, of course, peace.

He would have also had this idea from the Greek meaning salvation, health, wholeness, to desire peace, concord and unity.

How many of you have prayed for unity within the Church of Squamish for years.

You have been praying Christ’s Shalom for Squamish without even knowing it.

This is what the Spirit is all about. With the Spirit who lives in you, comes this desire and calling to unity.

I think many followers of Jesus have misapplied Jesus words in Matt. 10:34.

“Jesus said he did not come to bring peace, but a sword. So we make it our calling to use the sword often, and where it is inappropriate.

To achieve unity, shalom will require we lay down our swords.

We know it grieves the Spirit deeply when there is disunity. Where there is dissension. Division in the body.

You see the Holy Spirit isn’t a force or energy; He is a person who can grieve and be sad.

**This is why Paul says in 2 Corinthians 5:16-21 these words.**

Stop evaluating others from a human point of view – start seeing people through God’s eyes.

Being filled with the Holy Spirit – the Advocate – he is urging you and I to be people of Shalom. Reconciliation. Forgiveness.

Sure Shalom can be used simply as a greeting between two Jewish friends, but the meaning of Shalom in it’s fullest sense is to pursue God’s vision for the world – God’s creation – completeness for the whole environment; where "the wolf and the lamb shall feed together and the lion shall eat straw like the ox" (Isaiah 65:25).

Shalom describes the our hope that one day the world will be made new; redeemed, a vision of what the world will one day be.

So when Jesus used the word shalom, he was describing the world as God intended it to be. He was describing the Kingdom of God on earth and the way in which God's kingdom people - empowered by the Holy Spirit - would live.

Where you and I in the power of the Holy Spirit live out the words of Micah 6:8.

*“He has told you, O mortal, what is good;*

*and what does the Lord require of you*

*but to do justice, and to love kindness,*

*and to walk humbly with your God?*”

Jesus' shalom described the Kingdom of God where God’s people enjoyed an intimacy with God, and right relationship with one another marked by love.

The fruit of the Spirit is love…

And they will know you are believers by your love…

Three things will last forever, faith, hope and love, but the greatest of these is love.

Jesus' shalom is a word, which describes the way that people are in the kingdom of God. Jesus' shalom describes his vision of the world as God intended it to be.

**John Davies** says “and that is what Jesus is promising to the disciples after his departure - that with the help of the Holy Spirit we step inside the kingdom of God, and begin to embrace in our own lives Jesus' vision of the world as God intended it to be.

The Spirit with us gives us the power to translate that vision into action; and that to embrace that vision for the church!

Being in the kingdom of God makes us "peacemakers", "shalom-makers", with the immense power of Jesus at our disposal to play our part in transforming the world into the world as God created it to be.”

Shalom aleichem: Aleichem shalom

Peace be upon you: Upon you be peace

**Communion**

**1 Cor. 11:17-26**

There are divisions among you.

Grieves the Spirit of God.

In order to pursue Shalom we are called to clear up divisions…to the best of our ability.

As you come to the table this is what I would like to do…

Maria has put a few extra cups and juice at each table so if you have something to work out with a brother or sister here, fill your cup and break bread and go to them.

This might be a son or a daughter. This might be a spouse. A friend.

This might be someone in the community God is asking you to break bread with.

With seeds of peace in your pocket, and juice and bread in hand, I encourage you to make the trip.

John 14:23-31

Can’t do this alone. We need the Holy Spirit – we need an Advocate.

And when we are done sharing in communion we will gather back together in a giant circle.

**Circle**

In the spirit of St Patrick I thought we would close with an opportunity for us to bless one another.

I have put a bunch of blessings, some serious, some humorous, in the basket in the centre, and each of us will go pick one out of the basket and one by one we will go around the circle, each one speaking out your blessing.

Then I will close with my blessing. Can we do that?

*“The Lord bless you and keep you;*

*the Lord make his face to shine upon you, and be gracious to you;*

*the Lord lift up his countenance upon you, and give you peace.”*

*(Numbers 6:22-26)*

**With the Holy Spirit as your Advocate, go be His agents peace.**