

# Shalom (Peace)

by Rev. Dr. John C. Tittle



## Prayer of Illumination

Speak to us, Lord.  
Speak to us in the waiting, the watching,  
the hoping, the longing,  
the sorrow, the sighing, the rejoicing.  
Speak to us by your Word in these Advent days,  
and fill us with your peace.  
Amen.

## Introduction

We hear about peace, peace treaties, and times of peace. We understand it as the absence of war or conflict. But the Scriptures teach that the Hebrew word “shalom” goes deeper—it involves the presence of something better, in the place of conflict or war. And so, the Christmas story is about peace—the presence and person of peace coming to earth. Jesus is God’s shalom in the flesh. God’s peace isn’t just something better, it’s someone better, Jesus, the Prince of Peace. Jesus brings shalom with no end. He makes us, and our world, more whole and complete. He lovingly “peaces” together our broken pieces. “Peace I leave with you,” says Jesus, “my peace I give to you.”

**Advent Video** from *The Bible Project*: “*Shalom - Peace*” <https://youtu.be/oLYORLZOaZE>

*Let's hear the Word of the Lord from...*

**Scripture: Isaiah 9:6-7 (NRSV)**

<sup>6</sup>For a child has been born for us,  
a son given to us;  
authority rests upon his shoulders;  
and he is named  
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,  
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.  
<sup>7</sup>His authority shall grow continually,  
and there shall be endless peace  
for the throne of David and his kingdom.  
He will establish and uphold it  
with justice and with righteousness  
from this time onward and forevermore.  
The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.

*The grass withers and the flower fades,  
but the Word of God endures forever.*

**SERMON – Shalom (Peace)**

The Japanese culture has long found beauty in unlikely places—whether it be in moss, weeds, or weathered houses. But they especially find beauty and value in their broken pots. Damaged pots, cups, and bowls are not to be discarded. They're to be tended to—their brokenness beckons attention and care. Rather than sweeping up and throwing away the shattered shards, the Japanese teach us to attend and mend the broken pieces that come with the flaws and accidents of time. This tradition of ceramic repair is known as kintsugi. Kin means "golden" and tsugi means "joinery." Literally, to join with gold. And so, instead of cursing when a bowl breaks, the broken pieces are searched for and carefully picked up. They're lovingly cleaned and reassembled like a puzzle, then glued together with a lacquer laced with an expensive gold powder. The damage to the piece isn't disguised—in fact the fault lines are highlighted and made beautiful with the golden glue. These precious veins of gold charge the ceramic vessel with character, heightened worth, and artistic beauty.

Applied spiritually to our lives and world, kintsugi frees us to be at peace, to come to terms with our history, our quirks, and changes. We don't have to cover up or pretend that nothing happened. We can be genuine, real, at peace. We're complete, whole, perfectly imperfect. We're empowered to extend the healing and peace we've received.

God's shalom, Hebrew for "peace", is a similar concept. Shalom has that ability to transcend our trauma and transform our scars into reminders of healing and grace. We can show that we're at

peace after having come to pieces. We're reconstituted. Renovated. To the Jewish mind, shalom is a positive way of being and relating in our broken world. We lovingly help "peace together" fractured situations, healing the disarray rather than fleeing it or pretending it doesn't exist.

Christ the Prince of Peace gives us a heavenly shalom—a holy wholeness and well-being on earth—cohesiveness of community—harmony. It touches body, mind, and soul. With Christmas approaching we'll be singing about peace in many of the great carols:

- Hark the Herald Angels Sing – *"peace on earth and mercy mild."*
- Silent Night – *"sleep in heavenly peace."*

Yet we have trouble remembering Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's Christmas carol that ends with a sigh:

*"And in despair I bowed my head  
'There is no peace on earth,' I said  
'For hate is strong, and mocks the song  
of peace on earth, good-will to men.'"*

In our more cynical moments we wonder, is Jesus really the *Prince of Peace* if all we seem to hear are bad tidings of chaos and jeer? I believe the answer is yes—especially so for such a time as this. We have to keep the struggle for peace going. There's no other real option. Peace is an active and assertive response to injustice and a lack of love. We can't give up hope and we can't give up peace. The importance of this peace was established from the very beginning at the Messiah's birth announcement in the gospels:

*"Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors!"*

Jesus, the Prince of Peace, greets us saying "Peace be with you." When he says goodbye, he says *"Go in peace."* And in between, the peace of Christ gives us the courage to work through the rejection and wounds we collect over our lives so that we can mend, move forward, and forgive, rather than being held hostage by hurt or bitterness.

For Jesus, another name for his peace is "salvation," deliverance, for us and for the world. In Judaism, every believer has been given by God a spiritual task, a calling, a purpose in life called "Tikkun Olam." Tikkun means "repair." But it also can mean to "prepare" or "improve." And so tikkun can be applied to: maintaining a road, setting a table, or devising a parable to shed light on a complex truth or difficult idea. Olam means "the world." So this mission, this vocation of tikkun olam, is one of peace-making: repairing and mending the world. Improving it. Leaving it better than when we first received it. We set the table for people to come together and connect. We bring things and people a little closer to the state they were created for. We bring shalom—peace, wholeness, well-being, completion, a little bit of heaven on earth. And that's why Christ was born—to restore the broken shalom. Isaiah tells us God's authority rests upon His shoulders to do this. He's the Prince of Peace, bringing "endless shalom" and upholding it with justice and righteousness. His peace is solid, enduring, totally different than the world's peace. He doesn't just keep the peace—he grows it, cultivates it, and he feeds a hungry world with a harvest of the fruit of peace.

*Hear the good news all—*

Christ was born not only in Bethlehem, but he is to be born in us. He's not only the King of Peace, but the King of our hearts. Paul tells us to let Christ's peace reign in our hearts. We can have peace of mind and peace of heart. We're empowered and ennobled to do what Christ does, bringing shalom and making shalom. We can bring that golden glue to broken situations. Spiritual kintsugi and life-giving Tikkun Olam. Isaiah tells us this is what God is zealous to do. And we want to do what God does. With Christ, born in us, we can joyfully *"peace together* meaning out of confusion, harmony out of hatred, renovation out of the rubble.

Now what's interesting about the Hebrew word olam is that it not only means "world" but it can also mean "hidden." When we join with God and bring Christ's unending peace, we reveal the hiddenness of the Creator, and we allow God to shine through the cracks and broken pieces. We can remain in one shalom, one peace.

Amen.



*"Kintsugi Art" from broken pieces*

Sermon Art: *The Bible Project "Advent Word Series" Peace Poster*

<https://bibleproject.com/advent-word-series-churches/>

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