

ALDERSGATE UMC OF BUTTE, MT

May 22, 2022

CONFIRMATION SUNDAY/HERITAGE SUNDAY

Living into a More Beloved Community
Through *Shalom*

*

WORDS FOR REFLECTION



Background to Scripture

This happens to be a lectionary passage of scripture for today and it fits in beautifully with Confirmation Sunday as the Confirmands are blessed and marked by God's grace in striving to be disciples of Jesus. Furthermore, let it be said that we had a number of youth that went through the Confirmation and Beyond program, but decided they were not quite ready to make the commitment. Jill and I appreciated how thoughtful and intentional all the confirmands were in their preparation and consideration of joining the church and its mission. Our thoughts and prayers with those that are still contemplating their decision and may join at a later time. For all those participating in Confirmation and Beyond, this psalm is a reminder of what God has to offer.

This scripture from Psalm 67 is filled with grace as well as blessing for the journey of discipleship and then into apostleship:

Scripture Lesson: Psalm 67 – The Message Bible

God, mark us with grace and blessing! Smile! The whole country will see how you work, all the godless nations see how you save. God! Let people thank and enjoy you. Let all people thank and enjoy you. Let all far-flung people become happy and shout their happiness because You judge them fair and square, you tend the far-flung peoples. God! Let people thank and enjoy you. Let all people thank and enjoy you. Earth, display your exuberance! You mark us with blessing, O God, our God. You mark us with blessing, O God. Earth's four corners—honor him!

The Word of God for the People of God. **Thanks be to God!**

Message

Shalom

Pastor Matthias Krier

I took a confirmation class one time to a Shabbat Service in a Rabbi's home some years ago. I will never forget the feeling of that night ... a feeling of tradition and the greeting Shabbat Shalom meant something. I knew it was a special and a sacred greeting on their Sabbath which is Friday night sundown to Saturday night sundown. The Rabbi greeted us at the door and with a big smile said, "*Shabbat Shalom.*"

We proceeded into the evening sharing the ritual of what they do each Friday night with family and friends in the sharing of scripture, prayers, food and fellowship.

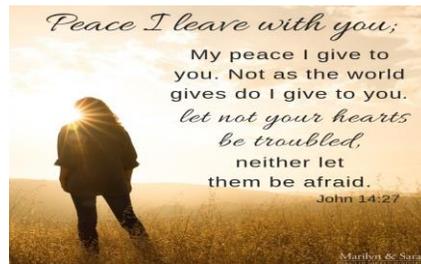
When Jews say "Shabbat shalom – **Sabbath peace**" to family and friends after a draining work week, they mean far more than "have a peaceful and restful day." What they are really saying is: *May you be restored to wholeness on the blessed Sabbath!*

One translation of the word salvation, by the way, is *wholeness*. May we be restored to wholeness in a world where there is so much in the way of turmoil, violence, abuse, chaos and fear for a multitude of things. May we

be restored to wholeness on our Sabbath which is Sunday, the day Mary Magdalene and the disciples found the tomb empty.

I suspect that on that first Easter morning when not only was the tomb empty, so were the disciples. In other words, not only were the followers of Jesus feeling as empty as the tomb, they were no doubt sick with grief, sadness and even anger that their Master was crucified. I suspect that they were numb and maybe even paralyzed with grief!

I also suspect that some of them in the midst of their grief, sadness and no doubt fear, remembered these words from John 14:27 that we heard sung from the choir in their anthem a few minutes ago:



This is Shalom. Deep peace from Yeshua. Salam is an Arabic word closely associated with Shalom which goes beyond this deep peace. This deep peace from God moves us to go beyond ourselves to love as Jesus loved bringing not only peace, but justice so that we can somehow and in some way live in harmony with one another. Hear these words from Kawa Kerami:

The Power of Shalom/Salam

The power that ends violence,
erodes injustice, silences social disruption,
melts hostility, greed, and vice,
stirs solidarity,
resonates love and harmony,
and advocates a free, plural world
is the power of Salam. — Kawa Kerami

In a few moments, Isaac will be baptized and then Isaac and Bradley will be confirmed into the life of the church and the family of God. But first a few words from Jill Graff, our Youth Director and a prayer:

Prayer for Confirmands and Followers of Jesus

Jill Graff

A Holy Pilgrimage

*You walk a holy journey
You have never walked before,
Full of tears and gratitude,
Gentle conversations,
Silences filled with love.*

*No one knows the way,
But you meet each twist and turn
With discernment and courage,
Hope and faith.*

*You walk this pilgrimage,
In many ways, by yourself—
But you are never truly alone.*

*Others walk before you, behind you, beside you,
Surrounding you with love,
Wrapping you in hope,
Touching your spirits in peace.*

*You are loved,
You are held,
You are God's.*

Beth A. Richardson