

ADVENT WEEK TWO

December 12, 2019

Shalom—Peace with Justice

Psalm 146

Praise the LORD! Praise the LORD, O my soul! Psalm 146:1

In this prayer, we are reminded of the Divine's actions that seek a world of "shalom." The Holy "executes justice for the oppressed; gives food to the hungry... sets the prisoners free; opens the eyes of the blind... lifts up those who are bowed down; loves the righteous... watches over the strangers; and upholds the orphan and the widow." This description teaches us that the best way to praise the Holy is by working with the Divine to create a world in which "shalom" becomes a reality.

Throughout the Hebrew Bible, God is consistently portrayed as requiring justice (e.g., Deuteronomy 10:18; etc.). Showing concern for the oppressed, the poor, the widow, the orphan, and the stranger is a common theme among the commandments found in the Torah. Israel is taught to take care of the most vulnerable because that is what God did for them in the Exodus and because that is how they will image God to the world (Gen 1:26-27) and be a "blessing" to others (Gen 12:2-3).

The word "shalom" in Hebrew means much more than just peace; it has a greater sense of wholeness. Shalom seeks the well-being of all. Shalom embraces justice, reconciliation and nonviolence. Shalom is the experience of being in right relationship with God, which would mean that you see yourself, your neighbors, and all of creation as God does—inherently good and worthy of respect.

This psalm and other biblical texts teach us that, when there is brokenness anywhere within the human family, no one can know wholeness. As those made in the Holy's image, we are called to be agents of this divine shalom in the world, creating peace with justice for all.

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