

WEEK 1 SHALOM

JUSTICE

This first week of Lent we begin our focus on shalom, the Hebrew word for peace that appears 237 times in the Bible. It means more than just peace as it can also be translated as security, well-being, health, and wholeness. As we journey through these weeks may we reflect on how we can accept this gift of shalom and share it with the world. Daily scriptures for this week 2 Corinthians 13:11, Matthew 5:9, John 14:27, Proverbs 12:20, Ephesians 2:14, Isaiah 26:3, Philippians 4:6-7

To begin this week, we focus on an aspect of peace which is justice. Without justice there is not true peace. Justice is often a term that gets thrown around with a cultural understanding of what it means. God's justice can be understood differently than many human's understanding. Justice means "as it should be." Justice and righteousness are often used synonymously in the Bible. Since righteousness is the quality or character of being right or just, it is another attribute of God and incorporates both God's justice and holiness. To understand God's justice is to first understand sin. Sin is anything that is contrary to God's holy nature and it causes separation between the sinner and God. Thus, God's justice means there is a penalty for sin. As we know the penalty for sin is death. (Rom 6:23) However, because of Christ death and resurrection if we confess our sins God will hear us and cleanse us from all unrighteousness making us whole. Namely we will be restored to a state of shalom again. (1 John 1:9)

REFLECT- Ash Wednesday begins lent with a reminder that we are all one human race; we are all formed from the same dust and will return to that same dust. We are all in need of God's mercy and grace. We can be confident that God wants to hear our confessions and cries for forgiveness. Take time this week to ask for forgiveness for the times you have neglected to enact justice or took justice into our own hands. As you go through this week think more deeply on what God's justice looks like in your life and how you can seek shalom by seeking justice.