

Good morning church, it's good to see you again! My name is Mark and I'm one of the pastors here at North Shore Alliance. I've got one final announcement for us this morning.

Our women's retreat will be taking place from May 4<sup>th</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> at Summit Pacific College in Abbotsford, BC. Two weeks ago I informed you that the Board had asked our retreat organizers to make a change in their retreat speaker. The Board had some concerns about bringing in a speaker with a healing ministry background, while the Board is in the midst of discerning and defining how God would have us live out His healing mandate at North Shore Alliance.

The retreat organizers have been hard at work, and God has provided another speaker: Ruth Shareski. Ruth, and her husband Ralph, have served for many years as missionaries to Germany with the Christian and Missionary Alliance. The team is excited about Ruth coming, and believe that God will use her to bless every woman who comes. You can sign up online.

I'd like to take a moment to say "welcome back" to those of you who were away during Spring Break. I was away last week with my family but I've heard from a number of you that I missed a great sermon by Pastor Keith...I can't say that I'm surprised. Keith is a gifted teacher and a great blessing to me and our church. A few months ago I asked Keith if he would architect our Easter Sermon Series for this year, and he's done a fantastic job of laying everything out. This morning, I'll be preaching part two of his series.

**Illus:** By a show of hands, how many of you have noticed a new addition to the exterior of our church? Nestled in between our concrete pillars, on the corner of 23rd and St. Georges, we've erected

a cross. A number of months ago, I asked a friend of mine to construct a cross for the outside of our building, and do you want to know why? *I want everyone to know who we are and who we're living for.*

Most of you aren't here on week days, during business hours, and so you don't see the volumes of people from our community who park in our parking lot. When court is in session across the street, our parking lot houses the cars of defendants, claimants, and lawyers. When there is an event going on across the street at Harry Jerome Rec. Centre or the Mickey McDougall gym, there are a steady stream of cars and people flowing in and out.

It doesn't bother me that people use our parking lot, what bothers me is that most people who use our lot, or drive past our building don't know that we are a church: our signage isn't great and our building doesn't identify us as followers of Jesus

Because of our proximity to the court house, we regularly have police officers who park in our lot. Sometimes they're on their way in to testify at a court case, and at other times they will park side by side, roll down the windows and talk with one another while they await their next call.

A couple of years ago, Pastor Dave drove into our parking lot, locked his car door and started to make his way to our building when a rather stern police officer called out: *Hey...what do you think you're doing? You can't park here!*

I wish I could have been there...to see that little smirk on Dave's face would have been priceless. Well...Dave walked over to the police

officers and politely asked, “Excuse me officer, but who do you think this parking lot belongs to?”

“The court house,” came the officer’s reply. “Actually,” said Dave, “this parking lot is owned by North Shore Alliance Church. So...I’m not parking in your lot, you’re parking in mine.” And then Dave added, “I’ll give you five minutes to get out of our parking lot before I call the police.” Dave didn’t actually say that last bit but it would make for a better ending to the story, don’t you think?

Most people don’t know that we are a church, because our signage isn’t great and our building doesn’t identify us as followers of Jesus. It’s amazing how a cross can change everything.

What’s even more amazing is that the cross--an ancient instrument of cruel torture, shame, and death-- has come to be the primary symbol of the Christian church. The cross has become such a common part of our life together that seeing a cross hanging around someone’s neck isn’t any more shocking than seeing a Nike symbol on someone’s shirt. But how would you react if you saw hundreds, thousands, millions of people walking around with tiny gallows, or guillotines hanging around their neck.

What is it about the cross? It’s more than an ancient instrument of execution. And our cross-focus is so much more than a morbid fascination with death. Our focus on the cross is about what Jesus’ death meant, about what was happening as He died, about what His death was accomplishing for us.

Last week Keith asked a question we will be addressing all throughout this series: *what does the king have to do with a cross? What does a cross have to do with a crown?* And the question I will be addressing this morning is, *what does His death have to do with our wholeness?*

Lets get to our text for this morning: Isaiah 53:3-5. If you are using one of the Blue Bible right in front of you, you can find our text on page 1145. **Read**

*3 He was despised and rejected by mankind, a man of suffering, and familiar with pain. Like one from whom people hide their faces he was despised, and we held him in low esteem. 4 Surely he took up our pain and bore our suffering, yet we considered him punished by God, stricken by him, and afflicted. 5 But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed.*

Before I get to our question for the morning, I want to highlight one phrase from the text, and from this phrase I want to accentuate one word. First the phrase...the last line from vs. 5 reads, “*the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed.*” Now for the word...**peace**.

This word, “peace,” is one of the most loaded words in the entire Bible and it’s one of my personal favourites; and if it isn’t already, let me tell you why this word should be one of your favourites as well.

When Jesus arrived on the outskirts of Jerusalem, riding a donkey, the people responded in relief and excitement. The people thought they knew who Jesus was, a powerful teacher, a prophet, a miracle

worker, and maybe much more. Jesus had been to Jerusalem many times before, but this time was different...His little donkey ride was a statement of kingship. Hundreds of years earlier, the prophet Zechariah had foretold this very event:

*“Rejoice greatly, Daughter Zion! Shout, Daughter Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and victorious, lowly and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey...He will proclaim **peace** to the nations. His rule will extend from sea to sea and from the River to the ends of the earth.”<sup>1</sup>*

There it is again...this word **peace**...and it's connected both to the King, and to His Kingdom. By a show of hands, how many of you are familiar with the phrase, “*the Kingdom of God*”? As we read through the eye witness accounts of Jesus' ministry (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John), we find that Jesus talked more about the Kingdom of God than any other subject.

But at present, God's kingdom cannot be categorized like other kingdoms; God's kingdom cannot be defined according to geographical boundaries. One of my Regent professors, John Stackhouse Jr., defines the Kingdom in the following way:

“The Kingdom of God is where, we might say, God's ways are the way, and God's rules are the rule. The Kingdom of God is where God's judgement--which both assesses good and evil and restores

them to their rightful places--has taken place, and [*peace*] characterizes all things. The Kingdom of God is thus where God's authority is joyfully embraced as legitimate and welcome.”<sup>2</sup>

Most of us tend to define peace as the absence of conflict, but the biblical word for “peace,” *shalom*, is an expansive word that covers so much more territory. Here are some descriptors that define the boundaries of biblical *shalom*: health, wellness, the absence of war, prosperity, completeness, wholeness, harmony, fulfillment, and safety.

Stackhouse says that the best word we have to describe *shalom* is the word “flourishing”. *Wherever shalom is present, everyone and everything flourishes*. Now, on one level, what I've just said sounds good, maybe even really good. But on another level, this description of *shalom* is so general and grandiose that it isn't very meaningful. So what do I mean by everything?

Where God's *shalom* is at work, physical bodies, minds, and emotions flourish. Where God's *shalom* is at work, friendships, marriages, and business relationships flourish. *Shalom* also extends to the created order--to animals and ecosystems--God's intent is for all of creation to experience health, wholeness, and harmony...in other words, to *flourish*.

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<sup>1</sup> Zechariah 9:9-10.

<sup>2</sup> John G. Stackhouse Jr., *Making The Best Of It: Following Christ In The Real World*, 19.

God's *shalom* extends to businesses, to work, commerce, and trade. When we think about *shalom*, and God's ultimate aim, think about every person, every animal, every business, every relationship, every family, group, and nation being all that God intended.

You might say to me, "*Mark, that sounds like heaven on earth.*" **Exactly.** John Stackhouse writes, "God created the world and He wants it all back!"<sup>3</sup> But...what God wants back is the world He created, not the world as we know it.

**Illus:** If you grew up in North America, then chances are you grew up with all kinds of Nursery Rhymes: *Jack and Jill, London Bridge Is Falling Down, Little Boy Blue*, etc. But there is one in particular that comes to mind given our subject this morning. Are you familiar with Humpty Dumpty?

"Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall, Humpty Dumpty had a great fall. All the kings horses and all the kings men couldn't put Humpty Dumpty back together again."

Poor Humpty Dumpty...he was sitting on top of the world, but then something happened...a stiff breeze perhaps, a loss of concentration, something unexpected...and he fell from his privileged perch only to be ruined by the fall. How many of us have ever felt like Humpty Dumpty? Broken...beyond recognition, beyond repair.

All the kings horses and all the kings men, couldn't put Humpty Dumpty back together again...his brokenness was fatal. But the Bible offers good news both to broken eggs and broken people alike: a King has come to put us, and creation back together again.

Now currently, heaven is the only place where God's *shalom* rules without rival. In heaven, where God's leadership is universally accepted, there is nothing to compete against, or interrupt, *shalom*; health, wholeness, prosperity, harmony, fulfillment, and safety is the only experience. In heaven, there is no such thing as "brokenness."

But with the arrival of Jesus, God's rule (and the *shalom* that comes with it) is breaking into our broken bodies, broken lives, broken relationships, broken systems, and broken governments...our healing has begun. Jesus came to restore what sin had broken. Remember, what Jesus taught us to pray: *Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, on earth as it is in heaven.*<sup>4</sup>

Because of Jesus, the old is on its way out and creation is being made new, one person at a time. Right now we live in between the times. Jesus has come, His Kingdom is already breaking in, but, His ways and His rule have not yet been embraced by all. And so, in this "in between time," as Keith suggested last week, there are a couple practical things for us to live out.

1. Because Jesus has come, we can never be content with our sin and brokenness. There is a greater measure of wholeness, harmony,

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<sup>3</sup> John Stackhouse.

<sup>4</sup> Matthew 6:9-10.

safety, and fulfillment that God has in store for you on this side of heaven.

2. God continues to make His way into broken systems and governments, He comes alongside people who are broken in body, broken emotionally, broken relationally...and He means for us to join Him in these places. Everyone of us has the opportunity to be a wounded healer.

Now that I've talked about the *shalom* that God invites us into, lets get back to the question I asked in the beginning: *what does the death of Jesus have to do with our peace, wholeness, and fulfillment?*

Allow me to read the Isaiah text a second time. *3 He was despised and rejected by mankind, a man of suffering, and familiar with pain. Like one from whom people hide their faces he was despised, and we held him in low esteem. 4 Surely he took up our pain and bore our suffering, yet we considered him punished by God, stricken by him, and afflicted. 5 But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed.*

The Bible portrays Jesus as a Suffering King; Isaiah describes him as a "man of suffering, and familiar with pain." I have no doubt that some here today could make this same claim; perhaps you are a man or a woman of suffering and familiar with pain. But it's important that we recognize the uniqueness of Jesus' suffering.

The Suffering Servant of Isaiah 53, is not simply familiar with suffering and pain in general; He is familiar with your suffering and pain, with your afflictions, your sickness, your brokenness.

**Illus:** At times as a pastor, I am invited into situations where people are sick and dying. In these situations, ministry is often as much (or more) about the family/friends who aren't dying as it is about the person with the illness. Pain, loss, suffering extends to the spouse, to the children, and to the friends who are perfectly "healthy".

In these situations, I don't know how many times I've heard someone say to me, "If I could trade places with my wife/daughter/brother, I would do it in a heart beat." This friends, is the cry of love. *I wish I could take your place, if only I could spare you this pain...God if only this sickness, these consequences, could fall upon me instead!*

With Jesus there is no "if only;" He can, and did put Himself in the place of our pain and suffering. Isaiah makes it plain: *what Jesus suffered, He suffered for us.* If there is any question as to why Jesus suffered, verses 4-5 clear the air; just look at all of the first-person plural pronouns.<sup>5</sup>

*Surely He took up **our pain** and bore **our suffering**...He was pierced for **our transgressions** (rebellion), He was crushed for **our iniquities**; the punishment that brought us peace (shalom) was on Him, and by His wounds we are healed.*

*What Jesus suffered, He suffered for us.* He took on our pain and suffering. He shouldered the penalty for our rebellion and sin. He

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<sup>5</sup> John N. Oswalt, *The NIV Application Commentary: Isaiah*, 585.

enfolded into Himself all that is broken in the world. And with this burden, He staggered to the cross and died so that it might die along with Him. There cannot be full and lasting *shalom* apart from the death of sin, rebellion, and brokenness.

Some have likened the death of Jesus to divine child abuse...they imagine the Father forcing the Son into death; this accusation is a far cry from the truth. Jesus knew what He was undertaking as He journeyed to the cross. In John 10:18, Jesus said “*No one takes [my life] from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again.*” In John 15:13, Jesus said, “*Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.*”

Jesus came as a Suffering King. Jesus was crushed, that we might be made whole. Jesus was wounded, that we might receive healing. Jesus was alienated, that we might be reconciled. His vicarious suffering has secured our peace and healing.

All the brokenness we see and experience in our world stems from a broken relationship with God. All that is “out-of-order” in our world stems from humanity’s willful alienation from God. Jesus came to bridge the gap, to take on our suffering, to make a way back to God, back to *shalom*, back to wholeness.

Friends, are tired, wounded, sick, broken, or anxious? Are you filled with guilt, shame, despair, or hopelessness? Are you suffering with

pain beyond your ability to bear? If “yes,” then Jesus is the King that you need.

One of 12 disciples, Matthew, was inspired by God to write the following summary of Jesus’ life and ministry. He wrote, “*Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness. When he saw the crowds, he had **compassion** on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.*”<sup>6</sup>

The Greek and Hebrew equivalents of the word we translate “compassion” are much more visceral. It would be more telling if we translated the sentence in the following way: *When Jesus saw that the crowds were harassed and helpless, with no one to protect them, guide them, feed them...it tore Him up on the inside.*

Your pain is His pain. Your wounds, your sickness, the abuse you have suffered, every last bit of it Jesus took upon Himself. Jesus is no ivory-palace-prince; He is the Prince of Peace, and He has won our peace through His death on the cross.

Jesus has offered Himself, His life and death, as an offering to the Father on our behalf. Jesus has done everything necessary to reconcile us to God. He has done everything necessary to invite us into His kingdom and into an experience of *shalom*. All that is left is

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<sup>6</sup> Matthew 9:35-36.

for us to say “yes” to Jesus; everything that He offers to us is contingent upon our “yes.”<sup>7</sup>

By saying “yes” to Jesus, we are acknowledging that His way, and His rule is the way and the rule. By saying “yes” to Jesus, we are acknowledging that we cannot heal our own brokenness, we cannot pay for our sin, nor can we undo the wrong done against others.

By saying “yes” to Jesus, we are acknowledging that we are tired of broken bodies, lives, relationships, systems, and governments. By saying “yes” to Jesus, we are acknowledging that the desire of our hearts is *shalom*...where health, wellness, the absence of war, prosperity, completeness, harmony, and fulfillment are the reality.

I know a King...a King who knows you. He reason He suffers is because you suffer. When you see Jesus, it is almost as if you are looking in a mirror: your wounds, your pain, your sickness has become His. By His death, your wholeness has been paid for, and by His resurrection life, your transformation has begun.

I know a King...and when He is finished with you...you will barely recognize your own reflection, so great will be the glory. Will you give Jesus your “yes” this morning?

Whether your “yes” is the first time or the hundredth time, there is a greater measure of *shalom* in store for you. The reason we pray for God’s Kingdom to come, is because it has not yet come in it’s

fullness. But it will come. His Kingdom has already come, and is coming. Praise be to God!

### **Worship**

### **Benediction:**

*“The LORD bless you and keep you;  
the LORD make his face shine on you and be gracious to you;  
the LORD turn his face toward you and give you peace.”<sup>8</sup>*

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<sup>7</sup> Oswalt, 590.

<sup>8</sup> Numbers 6:24-26.