



## A Recognition of our Hope

I saw her coming toward me before she saw me. I was sitting alone on the beach, watching the light sparkle on the water, just minutes after the rising sun. She had been out walking and seemed pensive. When she came close enough to notice me, she gave me the nod of strangers, looking somewhat preoccupied and downcast. I expected that to end our interaction, but then, as she came even closer, she suddenly greeted me as if I was a long-lost friend, someone familiar and dear.

At first, I thought that she had mistaken me for someone else. Then she spoke. “Shalom! Oh, and to you, too!” she said, with relief and longing sounding in her voice. It took me a minute to understand what she meant. I realized that I was wearing a tee shirt with the word *Shalom* outlined in colorful patterns and surrounding hands. She had seen it, and it had awakened her from her private musings. For a moment, that word made us friends.

Shalom is God’s word. It’s the state of all that was perfect in the beginning and all that we hope for in the end. It’s a greeting and a proclamation of peace, but the word is so much more than that. It’s a name shared by God the Father (Yahweh-Shalom) and by Jesus the Son (Prince of Peace). Genuine Shalom comes from God. It’s one of the first words that Jesus spoke to his disciples when he appeared to them after his death. Walking right through locked doors, “Jesus came and stood among them and said, ‘Peace be with you.’” Shalom. The word itself evokes the divine, and its fulfillment is a longing deep in our hearts.

In the readings this quarter, we will again encounter God’s people suffering the consequences of their rejecting his Shalom. And we will walk through Scripture with Jesus, who is our Shalom. May it wake us from our slumber and draw us closer to the One who calls us friends.

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