

Dear Friends,
It is a well-known fact, in our churches at least, that the Greeks have not just one but four words for love.

But I wonder how well known is the fact that the Hebrews who put together the Old Testament in the Hebrew language had at least one word with probably a couple of dozen meanings, at least? Yes? No? Well, they did, and that word is SHALOM.

The most common English translation of the word always was – and is – Peace. And there is nothing wrong with that, especially when we remember that Shalom was said both as a greeting and when you bid people farewell. Shalom – peace be with you. However, we miss some of the point if we leave it at that.

It is now generally agreed that in this one word we have the following sentiments too, all in one form or another connected with Peace: contentment, completeness, wholeness, harmony, welfare, fullness and the total absence of agitation or discord. So, when Jesus used this word

– Shalom – and he often did, I have no doubt that he would wish on his recipient not just one or two but all of those attributes. It is a beautiful word and if said with feeling can convey so much love and truth.

One of my Christmas presents from Margaret was Nelson Mandela's autobiography *Long walk to Freedom* on which the film of the same name – which premieres this month – is based. The book consists of 700 pages but I find it very hard to put it down. If ever there was a man in modern times who like Jesus knew and tried to live the word Shalom, Mandela was one. Just look at those definitions again. However, we should be careful not to turn Mandela into a saint, for by his own admission he did not get everything right and he made many mistakes on his long walk. Only one, Jesus, totally human yet totally divine, did ever and will ever exemplify ALL the attributes of the word, but that should not stop us from striving to learn about more of them, and live them better.

Thought for
the weak



with the Rev Preben
Andersen