

**Oregon City United Methodist Church**  
**18955 S. South End Road**  
**Oregon City, OR 97045**

**Rev. Michael Benischek**  
**503-522-9807**  
**October 1, 2017**

**Series: STAR TREK**

**Sermon: Live Long and Prosper!**

**Ecclesiastes 1:1-11; 3:9-13**

The words of the Teacher, son of David, king in Jerusalem:

2 “Meaningless! Meaningless!” says the Teacher.

“Utterly meaningless! Everything is meaningless.”

3 What do people gain from all their labors at which they toil under the sun?

4 Generations come and generations go, but the earth remains forever.

5 The sun rises and the sun sets, and hurries back to where it rises.

6 The wind blows to the south and turns to the north;

round and round it goes, ever returning on its course.

7 All streams flow into the sea, yet the sea is never full.

To the place the streams come from, there they return again.

8 All things are wearisome, more than one can say.

The eye never has enough of seeing, nor the ear its fill of hearing.

9 What has been will be again, what has been done will be done again; there is nothing new under the sun.

10 Is there anything of which one can say, “Look! This is something new”?

It was here already, long ago; it was here before our time.

11 No one remembers the former generations, and even those yet to come  
will not be remembered by those who follow them.

What do workers gain from their toil? 10 I have seen the burden God has laid on the human race. 11 He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the human heart; yet no one can fathom what God has done from beginning to end. 12 I know that there is nothing better for people than to be happy and to do good while they live. 13 That each of them may eat and drink, and find satisfaction in all their toil—this is the gift of God.

**Sermon**

There are so many ways to say, “goodbye”. How do you say goodbye in Spanish? Adios. How about French? Adieu (or au revoir). Hawaiian? Aloha. German? Auf Wiedersehen. Japanese? Sayonara. Hebrew? Shalom. Many of these use God language. Shalom means peace. Adios and adieu both translate as to God, meaning that you commit each other to God’s protection. As we part each other, God be with you till we meet again. These translations, not only God centered, but hopeful for a reunion. Auf Wiedersehen directly translates as “Until we see again.” Sayonara: If it be thus - desiring for reunification. Life is filled with greetings and with goodbyes.

Our passage out of Ecclesiastes today wonders what’s the point of it all. Why do we bother with meeting and greeting in the first place? It doesn’t matter in the end. Meaningless, meaningless, everything is meaningless! The sun comes up and goes down. No big surprises. The wind blows, the sea is never full, what has been done will be done again, nothing is new. It just doesn’t matter. We’re born. We live. We die. We’ll be forgotten. It just doesn’t matter. But yet, it isn’t all sour. What do we gain? What’s the point of our burdens? To laugh and to love. To eat and drink and be merry. To find blessings today while we are together - and to bless each other in our time here on earth.

Many of you may recognize this greeting and the accompanying hand gesture as being from Star Trek - the traditional Vulcan greeting. So here's a bit of trivia for you:

In the original series of Star Trek, it didn't even show up until it's second season - and it only had three seasons. And it belongs to the Vulcans. Until the second season, we never saw another Vulcan. Just Spock. So when an episode called for Spock to meet and greet others from his own race, a discussion ensued about how Vulcan's should greet each other. We have handshakes, hugs, high fives, salutes, all sorts of ways that we greet each other. The producers talked about taking their hands on each others shoulders, but Leonard Nimoy thought that this was too touchy feely for Vulcans. Just like some of us in here are touchy feely during our meet and greet time, and some of us are "Please don't touch me" kind of people. That's fine, some of us are part Vulcan. What Nimoy proposed was something different. He said to Gene Roddenberry, "What if we use a hand gesture like this:" (VULCAN SALUTE).

They went with it, and the episode aired, and that was the end of it. Except it wasn't. Within days after it aired, people were seeing Nimoy on the Street, and saying Live Long and Prosper, and doing the hand sign to him. Over and over and over again. It became one of the most iconic sayings in the show. So where did it come from?

Nimoy grew up in a Jewish household and they observed the Jewish holidays, even the unpopular ones. In one special service, he was sitting with his father and grandfather - and at the end of the service, the rabbi and the other male leaders up front put their prayer shawls over their heads and faces. His father leaned over and said, "Don't look." Nimoy looked around and saw that everyone was putting their hands over their eyes, turning around, doing their own prayer shawl thing - all trying to block their vision. So he did the same. And then the leaders up front started to make the oddest chanting/singing noises. So Nimoy peaked. What he saw was the leaders had their hands out front in a unique hand gesture, still chanting away.

What they were doing was the shape of a Hebrew Letter, Shin. It's a three pointed letter, and the first letter in many important Hebrew words. Shaddai (a name for God like El-Shaddia). Shalom (hello, goodbye, peace). Shekhinah - which is the feminine aspect for God, the part that lives with humans. We know Shekhinah as the Holy Spirit. And this was a service for the Holy Spirit. Holy Spirit come live with us. Bring peace and prosperity. Bring blessing and long life. Or to put it another way, Live Long . . . You're not supposed to look in the service so as not to see the divine come among you and bless you - hence the closed eyes and loud chanting noises.

So in the end, the Vulcan phrase and hand sign are really an ancient Jewish Blessing and tradition. A benediction to each other, asking for God's blessings on each other.

What's my message today? Live long and prosper. That's my Jewish blessing for you. If you think that is weird or out there - we do the same thing. What's the English word for parting? Good bye. According to the Oxford dictionary, Goodbye is short hand for a longer saying. God be ye. God be ye. God be with you - in today's English. Every time you say Goodbye, you're also saying God be with you! And that's the end of my sermon, so Goodbye. And the family of God said, Amen.