

# The Expectation and Promise of Peace

## Reflection by Rev. Rebecca Bryan

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Peace.

Peace is not the absence of challenges. Peace is not when everything goes the way we think it should.

Peace is not an award and isn't given for those who work the hardest or do as they are told to do.

Peace is within in us. It is a choice to not let the challenges, the difficulties, and the broken promises and dreams get us down. It is a commitment to serenity against all odds.

Do you think Mary expected to give birth in a stable? I bet she expected a Hilton. After all, she and Joseph were doing what they were told was right. They were paying their taxes, following their lineage as people of King David. I imagine they were hungry, tired, and scared. How could they not have been? In addition to doing what they were expected to do, they were also breaking all kinds of cultural norms. Unmarried, expecting a child. Imagine the judgements...

Have you ever done what was expected of you, played by the rules, treated people right, paid your dues, and found that life failed to deliver the reward to you? I know I have. And did the lack of reward bring you down or lead you to resentment or fear? Did it rob you of your peace?

Did you expect a Hilton and find yourself at a stable? And if so, have you realized yet that the promised gifts of playing by the rules, being who people tell you to be, and following a script that is not your authentic expression never lead to peace?

The promise of peace lies within us. No one and no circumstances have the power to rob us of that, and if anyone or thing taught you differently, I am sorry.

But there is time.

It is always possible to choose peace, to focus on the stillness, and to rest in that place of goodness within us even when our expectations are not met, even when things are hard, especially when things are hard.

Peace, my friends, is an unearned gift. It is an

adornment, a friend to accompany us throughout our lives. Peace is one of the surprising guests that show up in the darkest and most vulnerable of hours, when someone is aging or dying or when we are afraid.

Peace comes, often not in ways we expect it, but rather in surprising, unexpected places and conditions – if we are open, if we are willing to enter in.

Oscar Arias Sanchez said, "Peace is not a matter of prizes or trophies. It is not the product of a victory or command. It has no finishing line, no final deadline, no fixed definition of achievement."

Peace is a way of life. It is a choice; it is strong, and it is enduring.

This I promise you.

Take peace.

Amen and blessed be.