

Been thinking about peace.

I noticed Paul's many letters always began with the salutation: "grace, and peace to you." Sometimes he added mercy. His times were not very peaceful. Eras in history are often noted by "war years."

I was a teen in the 60s. Graduated high school, attended Graceland, met Jay, married, finished nursing school and had our first child. Some decade.

In the present, I look for peace. It's not that hard to find if you look for simplicity: the majesty of God's sunrises and sunsets, serving Communion to brothers and sisters, sharing emojis with Lucy, a soaring hawk, kindness of a neighbor, a forest walk with my dog, a video of our son Matt and his 6 yr old, Wes, reading a book, laughing at the story as Wes sounded out some words, kind of in subdued light so that it took on a precious, surreal moment - captured for 5 minutes. It made me think of book given to us by a "church Lady" - they're the best! Matt was born in 1969, but I still have the thin, little paperback written by Catherine Marshall called "Friends With God," stories and prayers of the Marshall Family. I remembered a story from that little book called "Picture of Peace." I want to share it with you:

"There was once a king who offered a prize to the artist who would paint the best picture of peace." The story goes that there were many entries and the king narrowed his choices to two. "One picture was of a calm lake. The lake was a perfect mirror for peaceful towering mountains all around it. Overhead was a blue sky with fluffy white clouds. All who saw this picture thought that it was a perfect picture of peace. The other picture had mountains too. But these were rugged and bare. Above was an angry sky, from which rain fell and in which lightning played. Down the side of the mountain tumbled a foaming waterfall. This did not look peaceful at all. But when the king looked closely, he saw behind the waterfall a tiny bush growing in a crack in the rock. In the bush a mother bird had built her nest. There, in the midst of the rush of angry water, in the wind and the noise, sat the mother bird on her nest - in perfect peace. Which picture do you think won the prize? The king chose the second picture. Do you know why? Because, explained the king, peace does not mean to be in a place where there is not noise, trouble or hard work. Peace means to be in the midst of all those things and still be calm in your heart. That is the real meaning of peace."

I would add my voice to Paul's as he wrote to the Thessalonians: "grace, peace and mercy to you. I thank God for all of you, mentioning you in our prayers. We continually remember before our God and Father, your work produced by faith, your labor prompted by love and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ."

Blessings to all, Wink