

It is you alone who are my hope, my trust from my youth. On you have I relied from birth; from the womb you have been my help. Constant has been my hope in you. Ps 71

When I began these reflections I quoted from Joan Chittister in The Psalms about hope and despair, commenting that we had chosen to live through my illness with hope. “[Hope and Despair] are shaped by the very same circumstances... every life finds itself forced to choose one from the other, one day at a time, one circumstance after another”. Joan’s final words in that piece are, “Despair says that there is no place to go but here. Hope says that God is waiting for us someplace else. Begin Again”.

I had taken a copy of these words with me to the hospital for my surgery and I did the same this morning as we returned to the hospital for a conference with my oncologist to discuss next steps. He told me yesterday that the MRI last week showed that my tumor was growing to such an extent that I would need to be pulled from the clinical trial. Both Renie and I admitted to each other on the way home today that we had fought hard to stay positive overnight, both of us praying for the courage to choose hope over despair and to trust in God’s continuing love and care for us.

The Dr. began his explanation of our options the way he has before by reminding us that “there is no cure yet for your disease. What we are looking for is the drug that will best control the growth in your body”. He went on to explain why it would be counter-productive to continue administering a drug that was proving not to be effective in my body. He then outlined some options we have; an FDA approved standard procedure and several phase 2 clinical trials that I would qualify for. We still need to decide which option we will choose for treatment. But God has reminded us both through this roller-coaster ride that we must continue to choose hope over despair, continue to fight the cancer, and continue to trust in the God who has proved to be faithful by his presence and love throughout our whole lives and ministries. And so we “begin again”!

“In you, O my beloved, do I take refuge; Let me never feel separated from You! In your compassion come and refresh me; listen to my cry, answer my plea! Be to me a rock, a tower of strength, a strong arm to uphold me, as I abandon myself into your hands. Be a very Presence to me as fear grips me.. For you, O Friend, are my hope”. Psalm 71

Under God’s Mercy,

Howie

Sources: Psalms for Every Day of the Year, Joan Chittister, Crossroads

Psalms for Praying, Nan C. Merrill, Continuum

Midweek Reflection # 24 ~ Begin Again