

Midweek Reflections ~ Introduction

Dear Friends.

Just a quick word of appreciation for your faithful prayers. Renie shared with me her image, from the Mark 2 passage where four men lower a sick friend through the roof to Jesus, of all of you holding onto corners and sides of our pallet as we look up into the face of Jesus ~ a very comforting thought for me right now. In spite of some discomfort, pain and anxiety, this has been an incredible time of spiritual growth for me. I am learning much more about what C.S. Lewis called the Real Presence of God, an experiential knowledge of the Holy Spirit's indwelling, giving real confidence and peace that God is truly present. I have been praying through familiar psalms, and found these lines from a Stephen Mitchell adaptation of psalm 57 very powerful: "You are generous to me, dear Lord: You have taught my soul to trust you, I have crept beside you and found shelter in the shadow of your wings." And I have known that shelter to be very real. I am learning that the Hope we possess is indeed wrapped up in the Real Presence of God. Joan Chittister, a Benedictine Nun says this so well. We have been rereading this so frequently that I will probably have it memorized by the time this is over! :

"Hope and despair are not opposites. They are cut from the very same cloth, made from the very same material, shaped from the very same circumstances. Most of all, every life finds itself forced to choose one from the other, one day at a time, one circumstance after another. The only difference between the two is that despair shapes an attitude of mind; hope creates a quality of soul. Despair colors the way we look at things, makes us suspicious of the future, makes us negative about the present. ***Hope, on the other hand, takes life on its own terms, knows that whatever happens God lives in it, and expects that, whatever its twists and turns, it will ultimately yield its good to those who live it well.*** When tragedy strikes, when trouble comes, when life disappoints us, we stand at the crossroads between hope and despair, torn and hurting. Despair cements us in the present; ***hope sends us dancing around dark corners trusting in a tomorrow we cannot see.*** Despair says that there is no place to go but here. ***Hope says that God is waiting for us someplace else. Begin again.***"

We're choosing Hope to send us dancing around this dark corner into a future where God is very present! I feel I can say with Walter Wangerin Jr. (from Whole Prayer) : "And God was there... I had begun to dwell within the circle of God's presence, wherein is comfort and purpose and life and love and confidence." I will be resting and healing from the surgery at home as we wait for the pathology report on the tumor to know what the next steps are to be. Thanks again for your prayers and support. You are an incredible community!

Love,

Howie