

For you have been my hope, O Lord ~ meditation # 51, June 8, 2009

“Deliver me O my God, For you have been my hope, O Sovereign Lord, my confidence since my youth. From birth I have relied on you (Psalm 71 NIV)

On this past Sunday I was part of a six person panel of cancer survivors that answered questions and discussed our diagnosis and how we are coping with treatment at Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center’s annual “Celebration of Life” (an educational event for all who have been touched by cancer: At one point the moderator asked us to share what has been the hardest part of it to deal with and how we cope. I responded

“Early on the hardest thing about this was feeling so helpless, but I have learned and believe that each day I can decide if I will live through it in hope or in despair.” I shared that I had been reading a book by Joan Chittister when the brain bleed came, through which the tumor was discovered. I told them that I have been carrying this page from Chittister’s book with me ever since to remind me of my power, with God’s help, to choose:

“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, 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.”

Joan Chittister, The Psalms Meditations for EveryDay of the year, Crossroad Publishing 1996, New York, NY, page 44

This is one of three such books that Joan Chittister has written which focuses on a line from one psalm each month. She writes an introduction to the monthly theme, like above, then a short meditation for each day of the month. These are wonderful tools for daily prayer that starts in the psalms and then offers the opportunity for application to daily life. I have found these very helpful in deepening my own prayer life and highly recommend them to you.

For you have been my hope, O Lord ~ meditation # 51, June 8, 2009

I finished by saying that the line “Hope sends us dancing around dark corners into a future we cannot see, but in which we know God is present” has been heard frequently around our home in the last year and has helped me choose, with God’s help, to live in Hope rather than despair as we take this on one day at a time.

May you choose to live in hope this day.

Under God’s Mercy,

Howie