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9-2020

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Interrupted by Pain

By Maggie Wilcox



Ruth Burr

▲ Maggie Wilcox

ON JULY 2, 2019, I WAS DIAGNOSED WITH STAGE II HODGKIN'S LYMPHOMA, a blood cancer originating in the lymph nodes. I was 20 years old. After preliminary exams, scans and a port placement, I began nearly four months of chemotherapy on July 26 — eight treatments, two weeks apart, all of it ending on November 1. I have been in remission since then.

Cancer was hell. I was bald and felt horrible. I began to see suffering in every corner of the world. Because my life was threatened, I became aware of suffering far greater than my own in the lives of other cancer-fighters. The vast possibilities of future suffering shook me deeply. Life was nothing like I wanted it to be.

During treatment, I continued pursuing my Violin Performance degree at Andrews University with the

support of friends and faculty. I studied, practiced and struggled to wrap my mind around the existence of suffering. What sort of world was it where babies die of cancer, mothers grieve, young people are torn from a life of purpose and happiness? What sort of world was it that allowed evil to destroy joy?

I suppose all humans, sooner or later, are forced to face the reality of the world we live in. Some lucky ones are shielded from suffering during their childhoods; other children already have seen more pain than many adults will ever face. Incredible beauty and joy is too often interrupted by pain. All of us eventually ask, “Why?”

C.S. Lewis writes in his book, *The Problem of Pain*, that, “Pain is unmasked, unmistakable evil; every man knows that something is wrong when he is being hurt.” You do not have to look far in the world today to see that something is very wrong. Once you see it and experience it, you get to choose what you will believe about it.

Christians believe that good and beautiful things, great or small, come from God. They believe that evil, brokenness and destruction come from Satan. In fact, they believe that the root cause of every “not-right” thing is sin. Sin is the disease that causes pain and suffering, hate and evil. It is why I am broken and why you are broken. It is why people kill people and why others die of cancer. It is why the vast majority of circumstances and realities seem so completely contrary to the love and joy we all long for. The presence of pain awakens us to a choice between good and evil.

Jesus Christ, in His death and resurrection, has made possible the eradication of sin and suffering. His is the only solution, and He has become my hope. I’ve seen these facts in the world: there is joy, there is suffering, there is a Man who told us the reason for it all and who has offered us Himself. Ours is the choice to believe. ■

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