

**9/17/23 Handling A Bruised Reed: Jesus Heals Spiritual
& Emotional Wounds *Matthew 12:9-21***

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A small child, not even old enough for school, went into one of those mirrored mazes at an amusement park. When her father discovered that she had slipped away, he saw her trying to find her way out of the maze and beginning to cry in fear. She became increasingly confused by all the possible paths, until she heard her father call out, “Don’t cry, darling. Put your hands out and reach all around. You’ll find the door. Just follow my voice.”

There are times in our lives when we need to know that there is someone who is conscious of our needs and cares enough about us to help find the open door he has already provided.

There are many people all around the world who gropingly search for the open door to peace and healing. So many people are suffering from physical and emotional wounds.

I believe that the 9-11 attack 22 years ago is a kind of metaphor for what many people face from repeated and insidious assaults from a power that is far more persistent and resourceful than al-Qaida. Satan, our great adversary, thrives on paralysis and inflicting maximum woundedness on as many as he can.

But rejoice!! The prophecy of Isaiah (*Isaiah 42:3*) tells us a great truth about Jesus the Christ. “*A bruised/battered reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out...*”

NOTE: The Hebrew word for “bruised” means to break the power of anyone, to deprive of strength and to debilitate emotionally. See *Luke 9:39* (Right after the Transfiguration Jesus is begged by a father to heal his son from a demonic spirit who “wounds him...hardly ever leaving him.”)

The Hebrew children would often go down by the riverside to play. That was where the reeds grew... what these reeds were useful for was that they made good flutes. So, the children would cut them down, hollow them out and make flutes out of them. The riverbank would be full of these reeds, and many of them were less than perfect. If they came across one that was cracked or bruised, they would break it in half and toss it

away. After all, they needed reeds of a certain quality in order to make a flute that would play well. Cracked or bruised reeds were worthless.

NOTE: The Greek word for “reed” literally denotes that which is fragile, easily waved by the wind or broken down. (Barnes Notes Commentary says, this bruising refers to those who “are conscious of feebleness & sin, moved and broken by calamity, powerless to bear the ills of life.” p. 100.)

“Bruised reeds” can easily be seen as symbols of people, and I believe that is what Isaiah is talking about here. Actually, the word "bruised" is used by him and other writers to refer to oppression. It is also used to refer to discouragement in someone's life. We have all been bruised reeds from time to time. We all have experienced times when we were oppressed and discouraged, bruised and almost broken.

The MESSIAH will not break the bruised reeds? The children would break them and toss them away because there were thousands more along the river. One broken one wasn't important and besides they weren't good for anything anyway. In any case there were plenty more available. We are infinitely more important than reeds found at a riverbank. *"A bruised reed He will not break..." (Isaiah 42:3)* Barnes Notes says, “Messiah will not deepen their afflictions.” (p. 100).

“... *And a dimly burning wick He will not extinguish.*” (The 2 metaphors parallel each other.) The Hebrew homes, of course, didn't have electric lights. They had to light their homes with oil lamps. They looked much like an “Aladdin's lamp.” In fact, they looked almost like a gravy dispenser you may use at home. Most had an open top. The bowls were filled with oil and contained a wick made of flax or linen. As long as the wick would stay moist with the oil, it would burn. Occasionally, when the oil would burn out, the wick would smolder and burn and give off smoke. The thing to do was to extinguish it and toss it away. There was plenty of flax where the first wick came from. (Source: <https://minorprophetssermons.wordpress.com/2012/04/11/isaiah-421-4/>, accessed 8/16/23).

But God will not extinguish such a dimly burning wick. Again, these wicks can be compared to people. They represent people who are exhausted, or “burnt-out” in their Christian lives. We have all "burnt dimly" from time to time and have met others who do the same.

God says that He will not break the bruised reed or extinguish the dimly burning wick. I believe He puts this in negative terminology because that is precisely what you would not expect Him to do. When you think about these illustrations in terms of people, you realize what He is saying. These people are the down-trodden, the failures, the outcasts, the "problem people." They are the embarrassing people who don't have their lives together. They are the people who do not live up to others' expectations. They are the kind of people we might feel threatened by and don't want to be around. Some are quick to dispense with these people, but Jesus is not.

I am convinced that multitudes of people all around us, and perhaps some of you right here this morning, have hurts and deep wounds that are internal. You need all sorts of inner healing. It can be superficially dealt with by caring counselors and friends but can only be truly healed by the loving power of Jesus Christ!

[Book Recommendation: "When the Night is Too Long" by Rev. Robert L. Wise, Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1990]

Today, many people are desperately asking if it is possible to find any real help for their emotional problems. Inner turmoil has become a hallmark of the last half of the 20th and beginning of the 21st century. Even though psychological services and discoveries have multiplied at an ever-increasing rate, personal need has risen at an even more staggering pace. "Through the power of the Holy Spirit, millions of hurting people have found the healing of their past is truly possible. As negative and painful experiences have been touched, emotional chains have been broken." (Rev. Robert L. Wise, Former Pastor of Our Lord's Community Church, Stillwater, OK)

My message today will concentrate on what some Bible teachers have called, "the healing of memories." Now, memories can be very precious, can't they? *"Memory is the best of all gardens. Therein, winter and summer, the seeds of the past lie dormant, ready the spring into instant bloom at any moment the mind wishes to bring them to life."* (Hal Boyla)

But what do you do with experiences that your mind and spirit won't let you forget? Many of us as children have had things happen to us that have had profound effects FOR YEARS!

Here is an important truth: THE PAST CAN TRULY "INFECT" THE PRESENT.

I. DIAGNOSING THE NEED FOR INNER HEALING:

A. Some of the Symptoms

1. Chronic depression,
2. Recurring fears & anxiety,
3. Deep-seated resentment & bitterness,
4. Relationships that frequently break,
5. Lack of meaningful friendships>loneliness,
6. Inability to pray or really trust God,
7. Various burdens of guilt,
8. Inability to forgive others or oneself,
9. A sense of worthlessness and hopelessness.

B. Some of the Consequences

1. We either bury these experiences and hope they go away, OR
2. We let them bother us constantly.

Rev. Wise continues: “Forgotten but significant experiences of yesterday can seep down deeply within the caverns of our minds. Although hidden from view, these buried fears and anxieties are still very much alive within us. When an event is traumatic enough, the results are blasted into our very soul. Often etched in acid, the scars metastasize to every contemporary moment, shriveling and debilitating our happiness and sense of well-being.

Often, hurting people, feel they can ignore these areas of internal pain and the consequences will vanish in time. Unfortunately, the splinters of devastating events that are so deeply lodged in the soul don’t dissolve. New experiences may cover these old wounds like a new layer of skin, leaving only a seemingly thin scar. Yet behind these scars, raw sores remain unhealed.”

3. Suddenly, a completely unrelated experience will trigger a flash back in time and we hurt all over again. We wonder WHY?

“These infections linger far down inside like embedded bomb shrapnel from a forgotten war. Then unseen poison keeps spilling over into relationships, doubts, and

personal anxieties. These apparently long forgotten injuries have an incredible ability to forever contaminate the present moment.” (Robert Wise)

C. Some of the Misconceptions

1. The ministry of inner healing is not a gimmick for every emotional ache one has!
2. Also, inner healing is not a magician’s cape to be spread over hurts so that instant change will follow.

II. DETERMINING THE NATURE OF INNER HEALING:

Cf. Isaiah 43:1f, “Remember not the former things, neither consider the things of old. Behold, I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth; do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert.” (Isaiah 43:18-19)

A. Our Wounds Must Be Recognized

Illustration: The human brain is the most magnificent bit of miniaturization in the universe. Though it weighs only 3 lbs., it contains some 10 billion nerve cells, each of which has some 25,000 possible interconnections with other nerve cells. To build an electric computer large enough to have that range of choice would require an area equal to the entire surface of the earth! (Margaret McNamara)

1. How is it possible for the Holy Spirit to ferret out the source(s) of pain and heal them?
2. BECAUSE GOD IS THE LORD OF TIME.
3. 1 day=1,000 years//1,000 years is as a day. (See *2 Peter 3:8*)

“The Holy Spirit has the singular capacity to go to the very center of our thoughts and feelings, inner healing can help everyone regardless of the complexity of their problems.” (Robert Wise)

B. God's Fervent Desire to Bring Us Out of the Gloom of Mourning and Grief

Illustration: Charles Dickens, in his *A Tale of Two Cities*, has a character named Dr. Manette. The doctor had been in prison for 20 years prior to the French Revolution, which freed him. In prison he learned the trade of cobbler and in the gloom of a cell spent his days tapping shoes. Finally, the day came when he was offered his liberty and let out into the sunlight, but freedom terrified him. He had been too long in the shadows of a cell and strangely enough had grown in his soul to love it. Accordingly, a servant was given the duty of locking him at night in an attic room about the size of his old cell, and there through the latticework he could be seen in a twilight gloom, tapping out shoes. (N. Peale, *The New Art of Living*, 1971.)

1. There maybe someone in this sanctuary this morning who has not experienced the freedom of new life in Christ. Open your heart to Him. Ask Him to reveal Himself to you in an unmistakable way.
2. Perhaps you are fearful of many things, so you lock yourself in to a unique kind of gloom and tap out your brand of "emotional shoes."
3. Come out into Christ's sunlight and let His love flood into your soul this day!!

Martin Luther says, "He does not cast away, nor crush, nor condemn the wounded in conscience, ...the weak in faith and practice, but (Jesus) watches over bruised people, and affectionately cherishes them."

Application: For many millions of people this Fall, your thoughts and feelings are bruised and raw!! The memories of some of you here and those watching online are like splinters that painfully ache and fester. If this describes you today, it's time to actively seek inner healing of your memories.

Remember the little girl who was lost in a confusing and frightening maze? When her father discovered that she had slipped away, he saw her trying to find her way out of the maze and beginning to cry in fear. She became increasingly confused by all the possible paths, until she heard her father call out, "Don't cry, darling. Put your hands out and reach all around. You'll find the door. Just follow my voice."

How do you do this? 1) Diligently seek the Lord for inner healing with all your heart. (*Jeremiah 29:13*) 2) Ask Him to give you wisdom to find a trusted friend to confide in. 3) If necessary, actively investigate perhaps with a pastor the professional services of a therapist, preferably a Christian one.

Isaiah foretells of ONE who will NEVER discard or ignore a bruised reed or a smoldering wick. Indeed, this great prophet also declares “and with His stripes we are healed.”

*In the morning You hear my voice, O Lord...
In the morning I prepare a sacrifice, for You...
And watch...and wait...for you to speak to my heart.
Maggie Bruehl
Highland, CA*

Questions for Discussion & Reflection:

1. When you think of all the healing miracles Jesus performed, which come to your mind?
2. Interestingly, Jesus quotes *Isaiah 42:3* concerning a "bruised reed and a smoldering wick." What do you suppose he means?
3. Considering that human beings are Mind, Body and Spirit, in what area do you need the most healing today?
4. How do the 2 metaphors of a bruised reed and smoldering wick apply to Jesus' healing ministry?
5. How does one know if a person is in need of inner healing?
6. What is your experience with people's intrusive or debilitating memories?
7. How can a congregation and or church leadership develop a ministry of inner healing?