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One Century in the Service
of our Lord Jesus Christ

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News of His

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Guided by His Word,
Serving in His Love

Chosen to Display God's Tenderness

¹Here is my servant, whom I uphold,
my chosen one in whom I delight;
I will put my Spirit on him
and he will bring justice to the nations.

²He will not shout or cry out,
or raise his voice in the streets.

³A bruised reed he will not break,
and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out.

- Isaiah 42:1-3a

Clearly, these words about God's "*chosen one*" were looking ahead to the Christ. In fact, the Greek term "Christ" means "chosen one." An anointed envoy from God was coming to set things right in a broken world.

The Jewish nation often imagined this coming Christ through the filter of their own resentment over the Roman occupation of their land. There would be some "getting even" when He arrived. But, the "*chosen one*" was not described in such vengeful and vindictive tones by Isaiah. On the contrary, He would come in tenderness to rescue His people. The world didn't need an avenger. We needed a Savior Who would treat our weaknesses with a tender hand. Jesus never said an unkind word to any soul that came to Him for mercy.

On one occasion, a woman that had been bleeding chronically for years reached out simply to touch the hem of His garment. She hoped this would prove adequate to heal her. In my book, such an act smacks of superstition. I'm afraid that it may have been difficult for me to resist telling her as much:

"Lady, don't you realize the danger of putting your faith in things like clothing! That's the mindset that distracts from real faith and replaces it with a fascination for artifacts; like alleged pieces of the cross, the Shroud of Turin or some holy grail."

I am sure I could have straightened out her thinking, but fortunately, Jesus was not as hyper-rational as I tend to be at times. He didn't lecture her for putting her faith in an article of clothing. He saw her need. He saw her desperation. He saw her faith. He made her whole.

A smoldering candlewick and a bruised reed are each metaphors for a person who is weak. Reeds were used for weaving mats and baskets. A bruised reed is probably one that had been bent, thereby losing its rigidity at that precise point. A rigid, unbruised reed had no market value to speak of, but a bent reed was utterly useless. To break it may refer to the tendency to snap something in half before we discard it. A smoldering candlewick was one that had just about burned out.

The people these metaphors represent are the weakest in any society. Such a person is easily kicked when he is down or, at least, ignored and discarded. But Jesus, the Friend of sinners, could never be so callous. The least of these means everything to Him. Our world is filled with people in need that we don't even see. Our hearts are agitated by people who suffer in the midst of fantastic disasters such as New Orleans, 9/11 or the Virginia Tech massacre. Chaos is thrust upon people like ourselves who are not accustomed to it, and our hearts are moved. But, what about those for whom chaos is the norm? Our inner cities are filled with them. Our rescue missions are filled with them. The third world is filled with them.

Looking away is tantamount to destroying a bruised reed, and we look away all the time, for it is often the only way we know to deal with such disturbing images. Our "*chosen one*" never looks away. No one is discarded. In loving kindness, Jesus put us back together. Now, He expects those of us He has rescued to no longer look on any person as disposable, like a bruised reed or a smoldering wick. With patience, tenderness and mercy, Jesus builds His kingdom through those who are embracing that same patience, tenderness and mercy.



Karl's Korner