**"A Bruised Reed He Shall Not Break, and a Smoldering Wick He Shall Not Quench"**

*Isaiah 42:3*

Life often posts ongoing challenges to our ability and willingness to live it fully. Think of the paralysis of analysis. Most things are complicated, but the KISS principle (Keep It Simple, Stupid) can help us find the straightforward answer we've been searching too hard for. Simplicity also carries its challenges like binary thinking: good or bad, black or white, right or wrong, all or nothing. Often our expectations are shaped by our tendency to overuse binary thinking and the simple solutions it offers us.

We humans are a mixture of strength and weakness, of wisdom and foolishness, of hope and despair. The thought that life is solely a process of growth and development which only gives you outcomes better than the last suggests that we are not really meant to be a complicated mix of contrasting characteristics.

Wisdom seems to lie in accepting who we are and learning how to become more fully ourselves, knowing that this acceptance then leads to real human growth. Growth, for example, can come from wise choices and willful and faithful commitment to the good, as well as from learning from our mistakes, accepting what we cannot do or become, and building from our vulnerability. Sadness can deepen my heart and character if I allow it, even with its pain. Deep love and deep grief are absolute partners If I choose to love, I will have to bear its costs.

I like the Biblical image of the bruised reed and smoldering wick. I learn that what is bruised smoldering and broken in me, which will not be made whole, can be accepted and then experienced as God’s way to fullness. It is a way to really understand the truth of salvation, and with it, our human need for one another, our quest for complementarity, the grace given when the good of another embraces our weakness and calls forth from us our best.

How can that which is not full in us lead us to understand what is not full in another and choose to compassionately accompany that other offering faithful love and care? It is risky business no doubt. But it is the only way to really and fully live: with one another. Our humanity requires an acceptance of our strengths and weaknesses, and knowing that what we label as strength will carry with it cost, and weakness will bring benefit.

So what will you be when you grow up? One who embraces salvation and thus is fully alive; at the same time strong, whole, broken, weak, needing one another to compliment and complete, made more together. A complex truth I think, a powerful truth I am sure.

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