

“Bruised, Battered and Broken-Hearted”
Matthew 12:18–21
Pastor Benny Parks
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This is God’s Word. Matthew 12:18-21 says [18] *“Behold, My servant whom I have chosen, My beloved with whom My soul is well pleased. I will put My Spirit upon Him, and He will proclaim justice to the Gentiles. [19] He will not quarrel or cry aloud, nor will anyone hear His voice in the streets; [20] a bruised reed He will not break, and a smoldering wick He will not quench, until He brings justice to victory; [21] and in His name the Gentiles will hope.”*

This is God's Word. It stands forever.

In my Men of the Covenant study on Fridays, we're studying a little classic great book called The Bruised Reed by Richard Sibbes. He was a Puritan and I hope that in this sermon today that I can bring some of his thoughts and insights from this passage that his book is based upon. His book is incredibly well done and helpful for the Christian, so as we get to this passage, we want to think about the context of it a little bit. This Matthew 12 text is actually a quote from Isaiah 42 and so we have to go back and think about what's going on at the time in Isaiah. At the end of Isaiah 41, Isaiah is talking about idols and how they're worthless and useless. The last verse of Isaiah 41(:29) says [29] *Behold, they are all a delusion; their works are nothing; their metal images are empty wind.*

Then we come to the New Testament passage here in Matthew 12 where Jesus is really making the Pharisees mad. Jesus has picked grain because His disciples were hungry and they ate earlier, and they're mad about that because it happened on the Sabbath. Then at the synagogue, Christ heals a man on the Sabbath, and they're furious. Matthew 12:14 says [14] *But the Pharisees went out and conspired against Him, how to destroy Him.* This is kind of funny because they have no authority to do so, no power to do so.

This reminds me of the passage in John 19:10-11 which says [10] *So Pilate said to Him, “You will not speak to me? Do you not know that I have authority to release You and authority to crucify You?” [11] Jesus answered him, “You would have no authority over Me at all unless it had been given you from above. Therefore he who delivered me over to you has the greater sin.”* Jesus willingly laid down His life at the time that He wanted to do so.

So now we come to the verse right before our text today, Matthew 12:17 which says [17] *This was to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah:* So we get to this great passage that is the fulfillment of the prophecy in Isaiah 42. There are three points I want you to think about in this study – the Lamb’s strength, the sheep's comfort and the world's hope. So let's think first about the Lamb's strength.

Jesus is the Lamb and His strength is seen first in His marvelous relation to His Father. Matthew 12:18 says [18] *“Behold, My servant whom I have chosen, My beloved with whom My soul is well pleased (My soul takes delight). I will put My Spirit upon Him, and He will proclaim justice to the Gentiles.* This is a great, intimate, powerful relationship between the Father and the Son from all eternity. We also see the Trinity here together as He puts His Spirit upon Him – Father, Son and Spirit – and that’s the strength of the Lamb.

Then, we also see His strength and His incredible mission. In Matthew 12:18 when it says He will proclaim justice to the Gentiles, this is the idea of the Gospel of the Kingdom being presented. Justice in a Biblical term here is much broader than just doing right. It's God's

law penetrating all of society – His Kingdom coming in to rule and to reign and it's not just going to be to the Jews, but also to the Gentiles, the whole world. Christ is going to proclaim justice to the Gentiles and as we see this incredible mission that Jesus has, we're reminded of the Kingdom.

Jesus tells Pilate about His Kingdom in John 18:35-36 which says [35] *Pilate answered, "Am I a Jew? Your own nation and the chief priests have delivered You over to me. What have You done?"* [36] *Jesus answered, "My Kingdom is not of this world. If My Kingdom were of this world, My servants would have been fighting, that I might not be delivered over to the Jews. But My Kingdom is not from the world."* He told the Pharisees in Luke 17:21 that His Kingdom was in their midst. It's a Kingdom within you. He is talking about the spiritual Kingdom of Christ ruling and reigning in our hearts for His glory and it's spreading throughout the whole world as people come to know Him.

A companion passage to this we see about Christ's work and His mission is in Isaiah 61. Let's look at what Isaiah later says as we're getting to the conclusion of history, to the consummation of the times and the ages and as Christ is going to do when He comes back. Isaiah 61:1-2 says [1] *The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me to bring good news to the poor; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; [2] to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn.* The Gospel is going to go forward to the poor, needy and brokenhearted, which is us. We have this great mission of Jesus, of what He's going to do, and proclaim the Lamb's strength.

Finally, though, the Lamb's strength is seen in His mildness. Matthew 12:19 says [19] *He will not quarrel or cry aloud, nor will anyone hear His voice in the streets.* He would be totally different than the leaders of the day who would cry, yell out, scream, beat their opponents down by demeaning them and talking louder. That would not be the way of Christ. As a matter of fact, the Lamb would loudly speak without saying a word. There were many times where He was silent before His enemies. So His strength we're seeing here is in His humility, gentleness and mildness. We're reminded where God wants us to look to see Him – Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29). This is His strength.

Now, let's think about the sheep's comfort. Our comfort comes primarily in the Lamb's strength and then we see His promise of what He will do in Matthew 12:20 which says [20] *a bruised reed He will not break, and a smoldering wick He will not quench, until He brings justice to victory.* Psalm 100:3 says [3] *Know that the LORD, He is God! It is He who made us, and we are His; we are His people, and the sheep of His pasture.* So we have this metaphor of us being like sheep and we need to remember two things; two characteristics about sheep. One is they are weak and that is seen in the fact that they are defenseless and two, they smell really bad; they stink. So the same with God's people, the sheep of His pasture.

In Matthew 12:20 we're called bruised reeds and smoking flax (or smoldering wick), but the same characteristics apply for spiritually we are weak, needy, smell bad and we're worthless in and of ourselves. Literally millions of reeds were everywhere in the marshes in this area so for that reason, they were worthless because if something happened to one, you'd throw it away and get another one. They were also used for different things; to make little flutes to play, or pens to write with, but if they were bent or bruised at all there were many more to choose from. Then the idea of a smoldering wick or a flame that's about to go out on the wick – when that happens and the smoke rises, it stinks. That's the same parallel He is making to people.

In ourselves there's nothing that would attract us to God in and of ourselves for bruised reeds were worthless and they were useless in themselves, but the key is not what's in ourselves, but is what is in Him, in Jesus Christ and He is full of mercy, grace and love to the needy, corrupt, the stinking bruised reeds and smoking flax which is what we are. We are battered and bruised and that's primarily because of our sin – our weaknesses, spiritual duty, our failures to live for God in Christ, the way we should. But it's for the broken hearted and we're broken hearted primarily due to the losses that we experience, i.e. a loss of health, a loss of a loved one, or maybe a friendship that was lost. Therefore, all of those things cause you to be weak, needy and to feel rejected even by Christ Himself.

There's a great story that R.C. Sproul tells about the early days when Chuck Colson was forming Prison Fellowship; a great ministry for prisoners. R.C. Sproul was on his board and Chuck said to R.C., “So we need to come up with a logo that will really represent what we're all about in Prison Fellowship.” R.C. Sproul responded immediately, ‘it should be a bruised reed, because a bruised reed is about weakness and people who feel or are rejected by society and that's not what God does with these prisoners. He does not reject them because He will not break the bruised reed and He will not quench the smoldering weak.’ And there's not a dime's worth of difference between us and those incarcerated prisoners. We are bound in our own sin and the seeds of sin that led them – the most violent, vile and hardened criminal – those same seeds of sin are in us, and it's only by the grace of God that we are where we are today. So, he promises, though, that he will not quench the smoldering wick or break the bruised reed.

Even more comforting, though, of Jesus and His work with us is that He will never, never grow discouraged in His work in our lives. We get this from Isaiah 42:4 which says *[4] He will not grow faint or be discouraged till he has established justice in the earth; and the coastlands wait for his law.* This is about the Messiah, the Lamb. God will never, ever be discouraged about His work in our lives. Now we get discouraged all the time when we fail, when we continue to sin, when we don't live up to how God wants us to, how He's commanded us to. So we get frustrated all the time. We're ready to faint, but Christ never does.

Oftentimes we commit a sin, perhaps it's that same sin that you've been fighting for years that it just so demoralizes you and you begin to think God has to be so demoralized. He has to be so miserable because I've done this again. Yet remember when Jesus climbed upon that cross over 2000 years ago, He knew my failure at that moment, that sin that I've committed over and over again, but went to that cross to forgive me of that sin. Even greater, He chose me in the beloved before the foundation of the world, because there's nothing in me that's attractive to Him or in you that's attractive to Him. He chose us by His own free grace. The amazing thing, is what God says about His Son Jesus, the Lamb in Ephesians 1:4, He has chosen us before the foundation of the world. And according to Matthew 12:18, we are His beloved, in whom He is well pleased, and He takes great delight in this because He's a merciful savior. He will not only not treat us as bruised reeds and smoldering wicks, but He will cherish us as a precious treasure to Him until He brings forth justice unto victory.

Richard Sibbes in his book The Bruised Reed, talks about this and he says, “Are you bruised this morning? Do you feel yourself bruised and battered? Be of good comfort because Christ calls you. He has chosen you. Conceal not your wounds. Open all before Him. Take not Satan's counsel. Go to Christ. Never fear to go to God, for **there is more mercy in Christ than there is sin and us.**” That is one of my favorite quotes in the book. When I was teaching this to the men of the Covenant, I said, ‘You cannot out sin God's grace as His child and you should not try. If you're a child of God, you won't try and because of His mercy to you, though we will

not do it perfectly you will want to follow Him all the days of your life and love Him with your whole heart.' That's important.

Richard Sibbes says, though, in his book that there is actually a good effect of bruising. We're bruised and battered by our own sin and failures which He allows, but sometimes He bruises us. He will not break us, but sometimes He bruises us. Sibbes says the reason He does so is "as believers, as children of God, as sheep, after conversion, we need bruising so that we may feel and know ourselves to be reeds. We're reeds and not oaks. Every reed needs a bruising. The reason this happens is because of the remainder of pride in our nature. We're continually rooting out pride where we are trusting ourselves. We're to trust Him and to be dependent upon Him. So God allows us to be bruised because the remainder of pride in our lives and also so that we will see that we live by mercy by the mercy of Christ."

Isaiah 61:3 is very important in this parallel passage, because here it's talking about the size and work of His mission. He tells us here what He is going to do ultimately with all of us bruised reeds and battered people. Isaiah 61:3 says [3] *to grant to those who mourn in Zion—to give them a beautiful headdress instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the garment of praise instead of a faint spirit; that they may be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that he may be glorified.* This is what Christ is doing right now because we're bruised reeds and not oaks. But make no mistake, for what He is doing is making us to be oaks of righteousness. He sees in us what He's going to make us, not what we are at this moment.

That's why we sing sometimes here in the church, 'wonderful, merciful, Savior, precious Redeemer and Friend. Who would have thought that a Lamb could rescue the souls of men?' A Lamb, indeed for that's what God is doing. That's what He's changing in our lives. He's breaking our pride so that we'll trust Him. This was my problem before I came to Christ as a young boy, as a young teen. I had tons of securities but the way I tried to overcome them is to think I'm better than some people and at least I'm not like the hypocrites in church. Well, my older brother Bobby becomes a Christian, comes home and starts sharing the Gospel with us, with our family. It took many meetings where he was laying the Gospel before me and one time I said to him, 'I don't need to go to church.' He said, "I didn't say you need to go to church. You need Christ." I said, 'There are too many hypocrites in the church.' Those were my excuses.

It reminds me of what John Calvin says in his book *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. In the very first chapter of that book, Calvin says, "The problem with us in our pride is that we keep our eyes focused horizontally (we look at other people) and when we do that, then we find people that we think we're better than so it makes us feel a little better. As long as we keep looking down here, then we actually are filled with pride to the point that we think we're just a little less than God, but the moment that we put our eyes upward and we look at the holiness, the perfection of Jesus Christ, then we see how wretched and despicable we are.' That's what my brother, Bobby had to share with me. He said, "Benny, you're using the wrong standard. You need to look to Jesus Christ and who He is in all of His glorious perfections, His Holiness and His righteous law."

When I began to see that, that was one of the things God did and used to begin to convict me of my sin and my need for Him. So I came to Christ and then years later, as I was on staff here at Briarwood working with the youth, we were teaching the youth about Youth Evangelism Explosion. There was a project where we had the students draw their testimony. So I did that myself also. I'm a terrible artist but I drew my testimony with stick people. So I had one stick man that were taller than all the other little stick men and that taller one was me

pre conversion where I had found people that I thought I was better than, taller than. So it kind of gave me the security that I'm okay before God, but then after my brother began to talk to me and said my standard was wrong, the next part of my testimony, I drew a huge stick man that his legs went up to the top of the page. You couldn't even see him because he was off the page for he was huge. Down at the bottom next to him, I drew a little bitty stick man, that you could not see and that represented me as the big one represented Christ. I had begun to compare myself to Jesus Christ and His Holiness, I realized just how small and despicable I was and how much I needed Christ and He brought me to Himself.

After He convicted me, He converted me. I will be forever grateful to my older brother, who would be patient with his little brother, bringing the Gospel to him. So my "Andrew," that I'll praise till the day I die and then in heaven forever is my big brother for bringing the Gospel to me. Richard Sibbes says that when we experience the mercy of Christ like this, it should fill our own hearts with a spirit of mercy when we receive mercy from the merciful Savior. Sibbes says "The spirit of mercy should move us to show mercy to others. Christ chose those to preach (he doesn't mean just preachers he means all of us). Christ chose those to preach mercy who have most felt mercy." Have you felt the mercy of Christ today? Do you want more mercy? Jesus said in Matthew 5:7, [7] *Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.* Ask God to fill you with His mercy.

Has your heart maybe become hardened towards someone, maybe a fellow believer or a family member, a child, a friend? Maybe you've had broken fellowship in your hearts and just become unmerciful towards them, pray that God would fill you with a heart of mercy and then pray that He would give you the courage to go back and show mercy to that one that has moved and hardened your heart, that you would overlook his/her offenses, and forgive 70 times seven and ask the Lord to sweeten your fellowship once again, because those who have been shown mercy will receive mercy.

Now, let's think about the world's hope. In His name, the Gentiles will hope (Matthew 12:21). When it says in His name, that means everything about Jesus Christ – all of His glorious greatness in His person and in His work. Hope is one of the most important virtues in the Christian life. Hope equals a confident expectation, anticipation and assurance of what God will do. Think about that. It's not doubtful desire about what He probably won't do. Hope is a full assurance. It's believing and trusting that God will do everything He says He's going to do. There's a chapter in Sibbe's book called Believe Christ Not Satan. Trust Him and have hope in Him.

I'm a Star Wars fan. Anybody that knows me knows that I love Star Wars and it's my brother's fault. He's the one that told me to watch it back in the mid seventies. So the first one was in 1977 and it was titled 'A New Hope' and there's a line in that movie where one of the key characters, Princess Leia sends a message to another key character, Obi-Wan Kenobi. She says, "Help me, Obi-Wan, you're our only hope." Now, if you're a really Star Wars fan, you know that even in that movie, Obi-Wan was not their only hope because it was actually Luke Skywalker who was the hero of that movie. But if you've watched all nine movies like I have, then you know that Luke wasn't even the only hope because there was a scavenger lady named Rey and she didn't even have a last name but at the end of the movie, she picked Skywalker. She became Rey Skywalker, and she was the hope for the Jedi and for the world. For us as believers, God throughout history has delivered His people from the bondage of their sin. He had great men to do that. Moses was a great man of God that delivered His people, but he wasn't the ultimate hope. David, the greatest king to ever live, helped deliver God's people but

he wasn't the greatest hope. Jesus Christ is our only hope. He is our hope in life and death. He is God's hope for the world. He's the sure foundation and Sibbe says of Jesus, "He became a curse that we would never be accursed."

We're getting ready to move into Holy Week and think about that great passage in Isaiah 53:5-6 that says *[5] But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed. [6] All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.* Jesus said, 'I'm the only hope I am the way, the truth and the life, no one comes to the Father, but by Me (John 14:6). Acts 4:12 says *[12] And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.* He's our only hope, but what a great hope He is.

There's an interesting line or description of Jesus in Revelation 6 six when talking about His mildness and how He will extend His government throughout in His Kingdom. Revelation 6 talks about the end of time and when those who've rejected Christ will be so terrified by the wrath of the Lord that they will be calling the mountains to fall on them. Revelation 6:15-17 says *[15] Then the kings of the earth and the great ones and the generals and the rich and the powerful, and everyone, slave and free, hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains, [16] calling to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who is seated on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb, [17] for the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?"* They don't want to have to endure the wrath of the Lamb. In this study, we've been talking about the mildness of the Lamb because the way Jesus deals with His children is in great gentleness, but the way He deals with those who reject Him is with great wrath – with them He's not mild, but ferocious and devouring.

There is a great story in C.S. Lewis' book The Chronicles of Narnia; the Silver Chair that illustrates this very well. One of the characters, Jill Pole, wants to go to Narnia, this fictional land where animals talk, but there's a lion there named Aslan, who represents Jesus, and she's heard about this lion but doesn't know everything about him so she's terrified thinking about it. But Jill, through a series of events, goes to sleep and gets into Narnia, and she's in these deep woods and when she wakes up, she's dying of thirst. She hears a stream off in the distance and says, 'I've got to go find that stream. I'm dying of thirst.' But she's terrified about this lion she's heard about. So she's hiding behind trees, going through the woods and then she comes to an open glade and she sees the stream. This rippling water looks and seems so delicious and she wants it so badly because she's dying of thirst. But she doesn't take a step towards the stream because just on this side of it, is a lion with its paws crossed laying in front of the stream. She says, 'If I try to run, the lion will be on me in a moment, but if I go forward, I'll run into his mouth. What am I going to do?'

All of a sudden she hears a small voice that says, "If you're thirsty, you may drink." She looks around. She realizes it's the lion. The lion isn't crying aloud and screaming. The lion says, 'Are you thirsty?' She said, "I'm dying of thirst." He said, 'Then you may drink.' She said, 'Could I? Would you mind going away for a while?' He just looked at her and growled. He says, "go ahead and drink." She said, 'Will you promise not to do anything to me if I come?' He said, "I'll make no promises" because when we come to Jesus we come on His own terms. He does not negotiate with us. She has moved a little closer towards him and she says, 'Do you eat girls?' He says, "I've swallowed up girls and boys, women and men, kings and kingdoms, cities and realms." She thought 'he didn't say like he was angry, sorrowful or anything. He just said it.' She said, "I dare not come then." He said, 'Then you will die of thirst.' She said, "Oh

dear, what am I going to do? I must find another stream.” He said, ‘There is no other stream.’ He is the only way, the truth and the life, only in his dreams. She said she never thought about disbelieving him. She just walked right by him, knelt down and drank. It was the most refreshing water she had ever had – the River of Life and that's Christ.

That's the Lamb who was slain and who is alive forever more and the One that says to you this day if you don't know Him, “Come.” How do you flee from the wrath of the Lamb? Where do you flee? You flee to the very same Lamb of wrath because He holds His loving wrath together to His children, He carries this in His arms. He places as close to His chest, and He loves us.

To those who reject Him, He's a Lamb of wrath. So please don't reject Him. In this study, we've looked three points that are really about Jesus Christ, our only hope. If you don't know Christ, flee to Him today for safety and for being saved. If you do know Him, be an Andrew to someone – bring them to the only Hope of the world. If you feel battered, bruised and brokenhearted, then think about Jesus who was stricken, smitten and afflicted for you. Let's pray.

Prayer;

Father, I pray this day that if there is someone reading this who does not know you, that they would flee to Your arms and say, “Jesus, I come to You as the Lamb of God, please take away my sins. I trust You, I believe You and I'm giving my life to You. Take it and come into my life. Forgive me. Make me the person you want me to be.” And if you know Christ, Father, bring comfort and encouragement to Your people today, because You are a wonderful, merciful Savior. We pray this in Jesus' Name, Amen.