

The Healing Peace of Jesus

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

ISAIAH 42:3

Isaiah and Matthew knew what it means that Jesus is the Prince of Peace. When Matthew described Jesus as fulfilling Isaiah 42:1-4, we see an image of *shalom*, the Hebrew word for *peace*. Unlike our often narrow understanding of peace as simply being “without war,” *shalom* encompasses a broad picture of how God makes everything wrong with the world *right*. This *shalom* of God is a peace that brings order out of chaos and justice in place of injustice.

Isaiah 42 starts by introducing God’s chosen one, “my servant.” This is the first of what some call the Servant Songs; the other songs are found in 49:1-6, 50:4-9, and 52:13-53:12. They tell a story of God’s servant enacting salvation to the ends of the earth (in chapters 42, 49, 50) and saving God’s people through the servant’s own suffering (in 52-53).

Here, in 42:1-4, the servant is the one God holds up and delights in. This



servant brings God joy! God's Spirit is on this servant, so that he can bring justice to the nations. This isn't a message of peace only for Israel, but for the whole world.

One might expect this Spirit-filled servant to be loud and proud about his chosen status with God, but instead he is characterized by his humility. He's not shouting out in the streets, but instead he's caring for those who are hurting. He's someone who can see that a reed is bruised—that a person is feeling trampled—but he won't let them break. He's someone who holds a person who feels like a tiny candle on the verge of going out, and he won't let their light fade. What does it mean to bring peace to those who are barely hanging on? The servant's quest for justice is characterized by gentleness. He sees those experiencing vulnerability; he won't let them fall.

Matthew 12 describes how Jesus fulfills Isaiah's prophecy. It may look at

first like Jesus is fulfilling this prophecy by asking his disciples to keep quiet (v. 16), similar to the quiet of the servant in Isaiah 42. But if we look at the entire chapter, Matthew shows us something different. Jesus, as the servant, cares for those who need healing. In the passages before and after verses 15–21, the emphasis is on how Jesus healed on the Sabbath (vv. 1–14), how Jesus “healed all who were ill” (v. 15), and how he healed a demon-possessed man, bringing him sight and the ability to speak (v. 22).

Jesus' kind of peace meets us in our weakest places, transforming injustice into justice, setting right what has been bruised, and he does this with the gentleness of his loving touch.

Reflect on Isaiah 42:1–4 and Matthew 12:15–21.

Optional: Also read Matthew 12:1–14, 22–37.

How have you experienced the shalom of Jesus that Isaiah and Matthew describe? What other scenes in the Gospels come to mind as examples of Jesus' peace?