

“A dimly burning wick”

Scriptures for today: [Isaiah 42:1-9](#), [Psalm 36:5-11](#)

In ancient Israel, success, prosperity, and health were seen as marks of God's favor, and the lack of these was believed to come from failure to please God. If God rewards the righteous, then the unrewarded must be unrighteous, correct? We may not use exactly this backwards reasoning, but I do catch myself coming close. The concept of “survival of the fittest” from biology has been freely applied to economics; inefficient businesses should fail in competition against better ones. This has nothing to do with morality, it's just the natural outcome of things, right? This logic creeps into sociology. If certain people, or groups of people aren't successful, maybe it's their fault. Helping them will just enable their dysfunction.

The prophet Isaiah foresees the messiah operating under a different principle. “... a bruised reed he will not break, and a dimly burning wick he will not quench; he will faithfully bring forth justice.” Justice and fairness are not furthered by the strong overcoming the weak. God's call to righteousness involves things like opening the eyes of those who can't see, and releasing those who are confined. It's not stingily leaving people who struggle to just figure it out for themselves. Instead, it is removing barriers that prevent people from functioning.

The passage from Psalms shows God operating in this way towards us. God saves us (animals too!), God gives us refuge, invites us to feast on abundance and drink from the “river of delights”. Not just us, but all people, even the unrighteous! God is not only generous, but extravagantly so.

