

“Not Like Me: The Untouchables”

By Eric Bryant

Mosaic (Peppermint-Filled Pinatas series)

Show “The Untouchables Promo”

Who do you overlook? Who is an untouchable to you?

In India, an untouchable is someone from the lowest caste. Albert Das from high caste changed his name to Das which means “servant.”

One of the most unique “xenos” turned “oikos” relationships for me involved Jason. After watching *ER* at our friends’ house (back when George Clooney was still operating on the small screen), I stopped to fill our car with gas about 11:30 p.m. on our way home. Since this pre-dated paying at the pump (and the outrageous prices), I walked inside to pay the thin white guy with multiple earrings and scraggly hair who was working the night shift. Making superficial conversation, I asked him how he managed to pass the time working the night shift. He responded with, “I’ve been reading through the Bible.”

Caught a bit off guard, I asked where he had been reading. “I started in Genesis and now I am reading in First Cron-thans.” Mispronouncing the letter to the Corinthians should have been my clue that he was new to the Scriptures. Intrigued and impressed that he had read so much, I asked him what he thought of his reading so far. He answered, “Well, there sure are a lot of f***ing Israelite names.”

Once again, I was a bit stunned and now almost certain this was new to him. I then asked him where he had gotten his Bible, hoping a friend of his was helping him understand what he was reading as well as helping him know more about a relationship with Jesus. “I stole it from my friend’s dad.” His answer finally confirmed my suspicions, he didn’t normally read the Bible.

After introducing myself, I invited him to continue our conversation later that week when he was off-duty. I promised him that I would bring him a Bible, one which was an easier version to read since he had been working his way through the King James Version. As we sat together a week or so later, I asked Jason if he believed in God. I will never forget his answer: “I never did, but now I know he is real because he is speaking to me through the Bible.”

Jason, a stranger who worked at a gas station, soon became my friend. We talked a lot over the next several months. He was living with his girlfriend who was pregnant with his child. His wife with whom he had a daughter was now living with another guy, and she was pregnant with the other guy’s baby. Honestly, I didn’t know how to help him. Should he divorce his wife to marry his girlfriend or make things right with his wife? In the end, neither woman wanted him. They weren’t interested in this new Jason.

Whenever I think of my experience meeting Jason as a stranger and then seeing the transformation in his life, I cannot help but think of the verse which reads: “Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by this some have entertained angels without knowing it” (Hebrews 13:2). Granted he would have been a fallen angel, but even still, meeting him and being a small part of his life remains one of the most mystical and special experiences of my life.

Luke 5:17-19 Jesus healing sick, lepers, blind. Word was traveling that Jesus was special. Murmurs could be heard of people wondering aloud if Jesus was the Messiah.

Men carried friend on a mat. I wonder who carried you to Jesus? If you are in this room and have discovered a relationship with God, who prayed, served, loved, and connected you? We discover God through the lives of other people.

Friends' viewpoint. Who are you carrying? Who needs to be carried to Jesus? Do you believe He can even help them? Do you even have friends who are broken or hurting, people who need Jesus?

To what lengths are you willing to go to help them meet Jesus? Takes energy (carrying him on a mat, sweat), persistence (didn't give up with first or even the second obstacle), and proactive (initiated the idea, asked for forgiveness later rather than waiting for permission). Do you have that same sense of desperation to help those you love find healing?

Immigrants in Spain, Egyptians "We all need somebody to lean on."

Lk. 5:20 Sins forgiven. Disappointment. All that work for this?!? Only seeing the temporary. Failed to see their circumstances from God's perspective. We want out of our current situation even if it means mortgaging the future.

Greatest miracle! God offers us the opportunity to experience and even develop healthy relationships. All those healed and even raised from the dead died!

John 17:3 Now this is eternal life, that they may know you and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. Our relationship with God changes everything. We can now experience healthy relationships in every area of our lives. Are all of your relationships healthy?

Luke 5:21-26 Religious leaders concern for power > concern for hurting, influence > mercy, Being right > sharing love.

Read the Scriptures through the eyes of the religious leaders. If you have influence over anyone's life in ministry or with your family, consider the warnings throughout Scripture that Jesus gave to the religious leaders.

When we are judgemental and pious, we stop seeing with God's eyes. God feels compassion, concern, mercy, love, and so much more.

We need to proactively pick up mats and bring people to Jesus even if it causes us to break a sweat, even if it takes great endurance.

For a long time, I had always thought of Jesus and even Christianity as a more rural movement. Yet Jesus spent a great deal of time in Galilee which was one of the most densely populated regions in all of the Roman Empire (200,000 people within a 15 mile by 25 mile radius, Conn and Ortiz). Jesus wept for the city (Luke 19:41). The Way spread through Paul's urban church planting strategy in the cities of the Roman world.

In our world, half of the urban populations of Africa, Asia, and Latin America live in slums. By 2010, 10% of the world's population will be children living in the urban slums on these three continents. Right now, there are 1 billion urban poor in the world (Urban Ministry by Conn and Ortiz). In the United States, there are 40 million unchurched urban poor which is more than the entire population of every country in

Africa except one and every country in Central America except Mexico (Keith Phillips from World Impact). Jesus' heart for the city (Lk 19:41), Stats = ½ urban pops. of Africa, Asia, and Latin Am in slums; by 2010 10% of world's pop will be children in these slums; 1 billion urban poor in the world; 40 million urban poor in US; Alhambra S.D. with 25,000 students (52% Asian, 40% Latino, 5% Anglo and 67% below poverty level);

I have realized that not only have I failed at times to see the tremendous needs around us in our city, I have failed to champion or even get involved with those who are already doing significant things for others. So many people in our community exert a great deal of effort which goes unnoticed. A large number of people work among those in desperate need as teachers, counselors, nurses, attorneys, tutors, or doctors. Others have started businesses or ongoing service opportunities while a large number of people and small groups volunteer a great deal of time with ministries such as Illuminate, the Neo Underground Railroad, the International Justice Mission, the downtown missions, and local schools. I want to do all I can to encourage those already serving while influencing those around me to engage in meeting the physical and spiritual and emotional and social needs of those who are being overlooked.

Micah "justice"

Nightwatch, Serve LA, Awaken Humanity Projects and Trips

possible to end extreme poverty by 2025 (Sachs)

We would be amazed with the amount of progress we can make if we began to serve those we deem untouchable. Just as slavery and colonialism have ended we can be a part of ending poverty. In *The End of Poverty*, Jeffrey D. Sachs writes, "Our generation is heir to two and a half centuries of economic progress. We can realistically envision a world without extreme poverty by the year 2025 because technological progress enables us to meet basic human needs on a global scale and to achieve a margin above basic needs unprecedented in history... Let the future say of our generation that we sent forth mighty currents of hope, and that we worked together to heal the world."

Later within the Levitical laws, God's grace to the stranger seems quite remarkable. "When a stranger resides with you in your land, you shall not do him wrong. The stranger who resides with you shall be to you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt; I am the LORD your God" (Leviticus 19:33-34).

God established Levitical cities and cities of refuge as places for the stranger to find justice and mercy. "Speak to the Israelites and say to them: 'When you cross the Jordan into Canaan, select some towns to be your cities of refuge, to which a person who has killed someone accidentally may flee. They will be places of refuge from the avenger, so that a person accused of murder may not die before he stands trial before the assembly.... These six towns will be a place of refuge for Israelites, aliens and any other people living among them, so that anyone who has killed another accidentally can flee there' (Numbers 35:10-15). Furthermore, the accused "is to stay in that city until he has stood trial before the assembly and until the death of the high priest who is serving at that time. Then he may go back to his own home in the town from which he fled" (Joshua

20:6). Strangers accused of murder were not only welcome to live in these cities, they also had the freedom to return back to their homes once they were found innocent and enough time had passed.

Even in ancient times when “human rights” were never considered, God introduced a process which allowed even the most despicable of people a chance to be seen as “innocent until proven guilty.” A stranger accused of murder, the person we would least likely desire to show mercy or kindness, God provides refuge. These cities of refuge along with all cities of the Levites offered compassion, justice, and mercy – even to the stranger.

When seeking God about the possibility of continuing their fasting tradition, God decided He wanted something else from them. “This is what the LORD Almighty says: 'Administer true justice; show mercy and compassion to one another. Do not oppress the widow or the fatherless, the alien or the poor. In your hearts do not think evil of each other'" (Zechariah 7:9-10). Unfortunately, the people refused which led to an ironic turn of events, soon they were dispersed and seen as strangers in a strange land (Zech. 7:11-14).

Homeless shelter meeting single mom on a spiritual quest.

Some of us have overlooked those in poverty. For others of us, we may disregard children, senior citizens, innovators, the abused, the abusers, the victims, the imprisoned, those who are physically-challenged, mentally-challenged, or those who are overweight.

So many needs. So much injustice. If we all did something about one thing, we can make a world of difference in our world.

Adoption situation – 500,000 kids in foster care in the U.S., 2 million kids in orphanages in China and Russia alone, 60 million girls missing in Asia abortion and infanticide
Doug’s adoption

Unreached people groups – 11,372 people groups, 6,526 unreached
People from our church living overseas to care and show God’s love to those in need

Children, Those in poverty, Unreached people groups, Influencers, Entertainment industry

Brazil Ok sign, “Della”

Unlikely friends – LaMaz, homeless shelter, airplane, Debbie’s work, neighbors, Mosaic

Conversation with a new friend at Zankou
“What does it mean to become a Christian?”
Lose life serving, meeting needs of others
Known by love.