

## TOUCHING THE UNTOUCHABLES

Leprosy was the AIDS of the ancient world. At the time it was incurable. It began as a white patchy infection that turned into an ulcerated sore. Leprosy ate at person's flesh and caused physical deformities. Lepers of ancient times lost ears and noses - fingers and toes. A leper's feet eventually turned into nubs. One of the side-effects was the inability to feel pain. Since leprosy numbed the nerves a leper could burn a hand and not know what happened. Among the poor, rats would nibble at a leper's feet while he slept - unaware of the attack.

Medical missionary Paul Brand does corrective plastic surgery on lepers. As a post-op procedure he sends the patient home with a *cat* - to chase away the rats.

Perhaps though, the worst side-effect of the disease was the psychological and emotional pain it caused. Lepers were quarantined. If a healthy person came near, it was the leper's duty to shout, "*Unclean, unclean*", and warn the person away. Yet in verse 2, a leper violates all boundaries and comes to worship Jesus.

When he declares his faith, Jesus touches the man, and makes him whole. Verse 2, "Jesus put out His hand and touched him." The Greek word translated "touched" means "*gripped*". It was a deliberate embrace - maybe even a hug.

Jesus didn't have to touch the leper to heal him - but the love Jesus showed him by doing so *healed the man emotionally*, before it *healed him physically*. The holiness of Jesus doesn't keep Him from touching the *unclean and out-cast*.

When Jesus enters Capernaum he's met by a battle-hardened sergeant, a Roman centurion. This soldier is fond of a servant who's become paralyzed.

A centurion captained 100 men. He was a middle-manager. He knew the chain of command - how to *give orders* and *take orders*. And He knew Jesus' place in the hierarchy. Jesus was God, and He could command even disease to flee.

Understand also, next to lepers, Roman centurions were the most hated men in Israel. They represented the foreign occupation. This centurion felt unworthy to invite Jesus into his home... but he trusted in Jesus' mercy to heal his servant.

Most Jews would've had "*no time for sergeants*", but Jesus loved this man and marveled at his faith. He healed the servant with just a word, but first said a word about the Roman. Verse 10, "I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel."

Already Jesus heals a leper and a Gentile - once *with a touch to show His love*, and once *without a touch to show His power*.

Jesus is alleviating human suffering, but more importantly, He's challenging false notions about God.

And if this wasn't enough, in chapter 9 Jesus eats with the tax-collectors and sinners. The Jews of Jesus' day considered a tax collector the scum of the earth. Worse than a leper, or a centurion - he was a turncoat Jew working for the Romans.

That's why his critics question why Jesus would reach out to a traitor.

He sums up His determination to touch the untouchables in 9:12-13, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick... I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance."

### Devotion Box - A Challenge To Would-be Disciples

In 8:18-22 Jesus challenges a couple of would-be disciples. They both want to follow Jesus, but He marches to a different drummer than the beat of this world. His kingdom is not about *getting ahead*, and *settling down*.

Foxes and birds have permanent homes, but Jesus is just passing through. Even a funeral is no excuse for settling down when Jesus is on the move.

In Matthew 8:15 Jesus heals Peter's mother-in-law, "He touched her hand, and the fever left her. *And she arose and served them.*"

Notice, the work of God prompts her to work for God.

When you taste of Jesus' mercy you'll want to serve Him.

### Devotion Box - Serving Jesus

### Devotion Box - Moving Out The Mourners

In Matthew 9:23, when Jesus arrives at the ruler's house he found people weeping and wailing. Rich families would hire professional mourners to grieve for their dead loved one.

When Jesus told them the girl was sleeping, verse 24 says "they laughed Him to scorn". But Jesus gets the last laugh. He kicks out the mourners and raises the dead. If you want a miracle, first get rid of the mourners - even if the mourner is you. Stop belly-aching; Jesus doesn't like to work in an atmosphere of negativity. *Jesus moves in when the mourners move out.*

# Bible Scan - Matthew 8-13

## JESUS - MASTER OF EVERY SITUATION

The Sea of Galilee is notorious for its sudden storms. A cold front swoops in from the north and hits the warm air over the lake and presto... the *Perfect Storm*.

Of course, Jesus isn't in a panic. In fact, He's sound asleep. In verse 25 the disciples are *shook up*, so they *wake up* Jesus, "Lord, save us! We are perishing!" Jesus rebukes the disciples for their "little faith" - then in verse 26, He rebukes the wind and waves.

It's interesting, a "rebuke" is something you do to a demon. Apparently, when Jesus calmed the storm, He thwarted a satanic attack.

On the other shore Jesus confronts demons again - 2 crazed demoniacs. It's interesting what the demons ask in verse 31, "If You cast us out, permit us to go away into the herd of swine." Demons don't want to be disembodied spirits. They immediately look for a body to inhabit... even if they have to *hog a pig*.

Guys, both the Holy Spirit and evil spirits desire to embody humans. The Holy Spirit wants to *conform* us into the image of Jesus. Evil spirits want to *deform* us.

When the demons enter the pigs they go *hog wild*. They run off the cliff, and drown. *It's the case of the deviled ham*. Where the demons went afterwards I don't know - but I'm

sure the swine all went to *hog heaven*.

In chapter 9 Jesus crosses back to Capernaum... So far He's proven His mastery over disease, demons, and nature. Even a perfect storm is no match for Jesus. Now He confronts our greatest enemy... sin.

The other Gospels tell us a crowd forced the lame man's friends to let him down through the roof - but his friends were also *let down*. They hoped he'd be healed, instead Jesus says, "be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven you."

This upset the Jews, but for a different reason. *Only God could forgive sin*, yet that was Jesus' point. He is God. He answers, verses 5-6, "For which is easier, to say, 'Your sins are forgiven you,' or to say, 'Arise and walk'? But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins" - then He said to the paralytic, "Arise, take up your bed, and go to your house." And he did!

Jesus is master over disease, demons, nature, sin... *even the hearts of men*. When He invites a greedy tax collector... "Follow me", Matthew is instantly enthralled with Jesus. He leaves all - his business, livelihood, career ... and follows. Jesus even saves IRS agents.

In chapter 10 Jesus sends out 12 disciples, and equips them with power over demons and disease. Notice these men are called "disciples" in verse 1, but "apostles" in verse 2. "Disciple" means "*learner*". While "apostle" means "*one who is sent out*". A Christian should never stop being a learner, but some folks learn and learn, and never do anything with what they've been taught. God wants disciples to become apostles.

Devotion  
Box - Sent  
Out Ones

## THE STARTING TWELVE

The first 12 apostles sent out by Jesus were...

*Peter* the leader... He was bold and eager - always first out of the boat. But he was plagued with foot-in-mouth disease. Peter's motto was... "ready, fire, aim".

*Andrew* was Peter's little brother. He is always bringing someone to Jesus.

*James* and *John* were hot-heads. They're called "sons of thunder".

*Philip* was the inquisitive disciple. He loved to ask questions.

*Nathaniel* was the cynical and skeptical disciple. When he first heard of Jesus he wondered aloud, "how anything good could come out of Nazareth?"

*Matthew* was formerly a tax-collector.

*James* and *Thaddaeus* are mentioned here, but nowhere else in Scripture.

*Simon* was a political zealot bent on drawing the sword to overthrow Rome.

And *Judas Iscariot*... He was ultimately the betrayer.

## A GENTLE MESSIAH

Most Jews had some wrong assumptions about the Messiah. They believed He would wipe out the Gentile nations. In Matthew 12:15-21 Jesus recalls Isaiah's very different picture... Verses 18 and 21 quote Isaiah to say He'll save the Gentiles, not destroy them.

And verse 20 assures us that Jesus doesn't want to wipe out anyone. "A bruised reed He will not break, and smoking flax He will not quench..." Jesus despises "*the killer instinct*".

When a man goes down His goal is not to finish him off. He takes the fallen and props him back up. He takes the few, faint embers left and fans them to full blaze. He nurtures the broken back to health.

## Devotion Box - You Can't Please Everybody

If you tend to be a people-pleaser read carefully Matthew 11:16-19... Not even Jesus Himself was able to please everyone.

John kept to himself. He was into *evangelizing*, not *socializing*. Jesus was the opposite. He mixed with people. He went to parties. He *hung out* in an attempt to *reach out*. But the Jews rejected both Jesus and John. Neither pleased them.

And neither will you please the fickleness of people. Don't waste your time trying. There's only one person you need to please - and that's the Lord Jesus. Hey, you can't be a *man-pleaser* and a *God-pleaser* at the same time.

In Matthew 12:43 Jesus says you can boot a demon from the house, but if the house doesn't get a new inhabitant, the same demon will return with his buddies. His statement was a commentary on the times. As Jesus marched through the countryside He was winning victories over demons and disease - but unless folks were willing to surrender their hearts to Him, those victories would be short-lived.

Getting rid of the demons in our lives is the easy part. Jesus is all-powerful. But surrendering our lives to Jesus, and building a new life around Him - the growth that comes after conversion - is the crucial part that insures lasting victory.

## THE MYSTERIES OF THE KINGDOM

Realize in a single day... Americans buy 200 miles worth of neckties - eat 170 million eggs and 12 million chickens - spend \$125,000 on Elvis Presley tours and memorabilia - and score 110 holes-in-one. Every day 200 Americans become millionaires - and our federal government issues 100 pages of new regulations. *That's a lot for a single day... but not as much as the Jewish theologians tried to cram into a single day.*

The Jews believed in one day God will right all wrongs, wipe out evil, engineer peace, and establish His kingdom on the earth. And in a sense that's true. At the end of the age, God will intervene in human affairs. But in another sense, Jesus has been at work on His kingdom for 2000 years. One author puts it, "God's kingdom will not come in a single day; it will not be left with the morning milk." Jesus is building a spiritual kingdom in the hearts of men.

In verse 11 Jesus speaks of "the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven". The Jews believed the kingdom of God would be an earthly, political kingdom, and it will - but what was a mystery was that first, God planned to establish His kingdom spiritually, hidden in human hearts. Before God's kingdom appears in a tangible, visible form - it first grows gradually, subtly, invisibly, spiritually...

Matthew 13 is a seminal chapter. It consists of 8 parables called "*the kingdom parables*" - and introduces the nature of God's kingdom in the world today.

First, is the parable of the sower. The Jews thought the reign of God would fall like a *hammer, and pound out God's will*, but Jesus says it's like a *seed planted in the heart*. The seed is God's Word, and there's life in the seed - but the growth of God's kingdom in the world also depends on the condition of the soil of our hearts. This means the kingdom can be resisted. Jews thought God's kingdom would steam-roll over man's will, but amazingly, Jesus says it requires our cooperation.

The human heart comes in 4 conditions. There's *hard ground* - here the devil distracts and steals away the seed. Then there's *stoney ground* - it's superficial, and has no depth. The Word fails to take root, and when trials come you stumble. And there's *thorny ground* - the Word gets choked out by the cares of this world.

Guys, is your heart hard ground, or stony ground, or thorny ground...? Or is it *fertile ground* - a heart that's soft and receptive and sincere? It's here that the Word produces fruit - "some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty."

Second, is the parable of the wheat and tares. Both the wheat and weeds grow up side by side until harvest time. The Jewish concept of the kingdom was instant and absolute judgment. But before the kingdom abolishes an evil

world, it grows up in the middle of that world. Kingdom living requires purity and patience.

Third, is the parable of the mustard seed. The kingdom of God begins small and insignificant. No one notices it growing - it develops below the world's radar screen. The world is impressed with flesh and flash. Rarely do the headlines showcase God's kingdom. But one day His kingdom will fill the whole earth.

Fourth, is the parable of the leaven. Yeast influences from the inside out. Earthly kingdoms use laws and legislation to *conform behavior*. God's kingdom relies on God's Spirit and Word to *transform character*. God uses persuasion, not coercion. It's said, "Caesar hoped to reform men by changing institutions and laws; Christ wished to re-make institutions, and lessen laws, by changing men."

The same lesson is taught in the fifth and sixth parables. The treasure in the field, and the pearl on the bottom of the ocean are both hidden from view.

Don't expect this world to notice your value and worth. The esteem that comes from worldly pursuits is transitory. Our true value is measured by what Jesus was paid to obtain us. He bought the whole world, just to retrieve you. He sold all that He had to purchase you and me. We are of infinite value in Christ Jesus.

Seventh, the parable of the dragnet... which has nothing to do with *Joe Friday*. It's a fishing net, and when swept through the water, it catches both edible and inedible fish. The net is like the Kingdom of God. When God works in a wonderful way people will get swept up in the enthusiasm of the movement. Some people come onboard for the wrong reasons - they think it's cool, or they're wanting to impress a girlfriend, or they like the music... they're not hungering after God.

The disciples experienced this firsthand. Judas was one of their own, but ended up a betrayer. God will sort out the catch at the end of the age.

The eighth parable harmonizes Jesus' new insights into the kingdom of God with what the Old Testament taught. Both were right. One day - in a single day - God will establish a political, tangible, dominating kingdom. But today, a spiritual, invisible kingdom is invading the hearts of men... unnoticed by the world. The kingdom is like a homeowner who decorates his house with both new and old furniture. The new ideas Jesus taught, without the old ideas provides a *narrow view* - but the old notions without the new insights yields a *shallow view*.

If you have questions on tonight's study email Pastor Sandy - [sandyadams@calvarychapel.org](mailto:sandyadams@calvarychapel.org)  
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Calvary Chapel Announcements - October 7, 2001 - Ladies Retreat- October 19-20, "It's A Jungle Out There: Choosing The Better Part" ...  
Calvary Connections- Home Fellowships, Check out the Announcement Sheet ... Next Bible Scan - October 14, 2001 - Matthew 14-20

"Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light." - Matthew 11:28-30

Bible  
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Memory  
Verse

## Devotion Box - Come, Yoke, Learn

## WHEN JESUS SENDS YOU OUT

If your heart is heavy, and your spirit tired – listen to Jesus in 11:28-30, "Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls..." Here's the secret to a restful, rather than stressful, life... Jesus calls us to do 3 things... *come to Me - yoke with Me - learn from Me.*

A yoke was a wooden harness that paired the oxen that pulled the plough. Usually, a younger ox was harnessed to an older, stronger ox. The yoke was made in such a way that it distributed more of the weight on the stronger ox. When we submit to Jesus, and walk in His ways, then the load falls on His shoulders. He carries the burdens, and does the work. His yoke is easy.

If you're in a yoke that chokes, then the burden you're carrying didn't come from Him. Jesus says in verse 30, "My yoke is easy and My burden is light."

Jesus sends out apostles with instructions. Here's chapter 10 in 5 words – *pairs, priorities, persecution, protection, passion.*

In verses 2-4 He *pairs 'em up.* The disciples' names are listed in pairs. Jesus sent the disciples out 2 by 2. And this is a good idea for us when we go out.

Verses 5-15 address their *priorities...* Target the Jews, preach the kingdom, work miracles, charge nothing – "Freely received, freely give" – for some ministries today *charging nothing* would be the real miracle. Jesus tells them to travel light, and trust God to send them support through the people to whom they minister. Jesus says in verse 14, "Whoever will not receive you nor hear your words, when you depart from that house or city, shake off the dust from your feet." In other words, don't get bogged down with people who don't want to listen.

In verses 16-26 Jesus warns of *persecution.* The disciples are going out "as sheep in the midst of wolves." They need to be *harmless*, but always *heads up.* Jesus predicts His disciples will be brought to trial before the Gentiles, but don't worry about what you'll say. Verse 19, "it will be given to you in that hour what you should speak; for it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you." When we're put on the spot we can trust the Spirit to come to the rescue.

In verses 27-33 Jesus promises *protec-*

*tion.* And the best protection is knowing *who to fear* and *who not to fear.* Jesus warns us in verse 28, "Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell."

Verse 30 tells us God cares for you to a point where, "the very hairs of your head are all numbered." If you're a woman with black hair you have 110,000 hairs. A blonde has 140,000 hairs. And you lose 100 hairs every day... A man shaves off 1/64<sup>th</sup> of an inch of beard daily. And it adds up... between the ages of 20 and 65 a man will shave 23 feet of beard. Yet God tracks every single hair.

Finally, in verses 32-42, Jesus challenges our *passion...* First, go public with your faith. If you deny Jesus publicly, then He'll deny you.

Second, faith splits families. Is your love for Jesus stronger than family ties?

Third, take up your cross and follow Jesus. It seems every decade has a theme: the 60s, was *find yourself...* the 70s, *improve yourself...* the 80s, *indulge yourself...* the 90s, *excuse yourself...* but Jesus says to every age, *deny yourself.*

"He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it." Here's the old rhyme in reverse – it's "finders weepers, losers keepers."

## Devotion Box - Blocking The Miracles Intended For You

Chapter 13 ends with a homecoming – Jesus returns to Nazareth, and teaches in the synagogue. His peers are impressed, but they know His brothers and sisters. They grew up with Jesus. They're too proud to think that Jesus is anything more than a neighborhood boy. As the old saying goes, "Familiarity breeds contempt."

Verse 58 is a sad verse, "And He did not do many mighty

works there because of their unbelief." They hindered what could've been because of their lack of faith.

When we doubt, we too hinder God's desires for us. Lois Cheney writes, "There was a place where the unbelief was so great that Jesus – Jesus, the Son of God – could not heal and help, and so He left them. Has anyone seen Jesus lately?"