



Exposed!

The cultural and Biblical times in Jerusalem were not pleasant. Some of the practices, by today's standards, were outright criminal, even homicidal. That was especially true if you were female, who were considered something less than chattel, or were born with a handicap, or were born into a family that already had too many children.

There was a practice of "unnatural selection" common in the Greco-Roman world. By Roman law, a father was required to raise all healthy male children, but only the firstborn female. All others, not falling in those two categories, were "disposable". In Jerusalem, the law was carried out through a practice called "exposure". Those babies, often alive, were left to die in the elements on the dung heap, outside the gates, in the Gehenna Valley, south of the city.

It is into this environment, that Jesus, speaking to a crowd that included Pharisees, instructed his disciples to allow the little children to come to him "*For the Kingdom of Heaven belongs to those who are like these children.*" This was only one of many issues that generated animosity toward Jesus and his followers.

Exposure! That was as awful as it sounds. The grief that followed that practice must have been palpable. Yet here was Jesus introducing a new idea, compassion. The value of human life was lifted above the dung heap, and given dignity. It took a long time, over centuries, for this concept to become common practice. For Jesus to declare that we come to him as children, gave birth to so many loving ideas that we hold dear today.

You get the impression, if you looked closely, that Jesus could be a very irritating person to be around for the Pharisees. It wasn't just the acceptance of children that

drew the ire of the teachers of the Law. He did not like commerce in the temple and did something about it! He didn't hesitate to call a spade a spade, except he said "You snakes! You brood of vipers! How will you escape being condemned to hell?" When He saw something evil, he did not waste words on diplomacy.

But, He reached out to widows, lepers, the blind, children, cripples, and he paid little attention to restrictions on the Sabbath. His compassion trumped Jewish law and he healed where healing was needed. He was not affable and he was sensitive to suffering.

Jesus' message was clear. The culture and the times were not pleasant, but our Lord was laying out the model ... go and do likewise. Love as I love. Do as I do. Change the personal world around you. For to such is the Kingdom of God. Amen.

.....

This essay was the Meditation in Stan Escott's [Watchword](#) for May 13, 2021. The content of Watchwords is written from inspiration born of Scripture, devotional readings and reflection. Each post is meant to encourage and give you a sense of peace in these troubled times. To explore Watchwords or sign up for the mailings, visit bosworth30.com/watchwords/.