



God Honors Outcasts (Do You?)

Ever since Eden, outcasts abound. India's untouchables, Romania's Gypsies, Silicon Valley's homeless, and (though this may surprise you) Bethlehem's shepherds. Those "on the inside" devalue outcasts, see them as "less than," judge them, sometimes fear them, and are likely to cross the street to avoid them. God never crosses the street to avoid anyone. God honors outcasts; He draws near. We rarely imitate Him. But some people do.

A Christian friend of mine has traveled repeatedly to India to meet with their "Untouchables." Their culture avoids interacting with them and shrinks back from touching them (not officially of course, but definitely in practice). My friend does not. Instead she does the unthinkable – she hugs them.

She doesn't speak their language very well, but she speaks touch eloquently. She's speaking love ... and the untouchables are astounded at what she communicates. They've never felt honored. But she honors them with her touch, and some begin to hope that the God of this woman knows them better than does their culture. She (and her God) find them touchable. And they get their first heady taste of dignity.

Centuries earlier another group of outcasts gathered on a hillside (Luke 2:8-12). We sentimentally picture valued shepherds keeping watch by night, but we've got it wrong. In biblical times [shepherds were outcasts](#). The painter Rossetti depicted it like it *really* was. His shepherds wore tattered rags as, in the presence of heavenly splendor, they worshiped a tiny King. Most people kept their distance from shepherds. But not God's angels. ([Look at the angel touching the shepherd's hand.](#)) God's angels drew near. And so did God. He spoke love through His angels, invited grimy shepherds to see His newborn Son, and gave these outcasts their first heady taste of dignity.

We have our outcasts as well. Who? The person we cross the street to avoid. The relative whose arrival we dread. The co-worker we never invite to sit with us at lunch. The person standing outside when we "don't hear" the doorbell. People whose lifestyle or manners or religion or race or personality makes us uncomfortable. Those around whom we're coldly polite. Those people. To us they're outcasts ... but not to God. God doesn't keep his distance. God draws near.

We each have our outcasts. God has none.

Honor all, God tells us. (1 Peter 2:17) That includes India's untouchables, unclean shepherds, and those we judge and avoid. But God has no outcasts. He came to earth because He loved the *world* – that means everyone. (John 3:16) God honors outcasts. So must we.

A Few Questions

How about you? From whom do you keep your heart distant?

Whom might you gift with honor this Christmas season?

To whom might you speak love?

To whom might you give a heady taste of dignity?

How might you do it?

God Honors Outcasts

© Lynne Fox, 2015

biblegrapes.com

Read All Posts in the Advent Series

[Mary Took the Risk](#) | [The Father Said Goodbye](#) | [Before Jesus Filled Mary's Womb](#) |
[Joseph's Love Took Courage](#) | [God Honors Outcasts \(Do You?\)](#) | [Who Gets the Gifts?](#)