

TRANSCRIPT

An Undeceptions podcast.

INTERVIEW BEGINS

John Dickson:

Do you still have bad pictures in your mind or sounds that you find hard to get rid of?

Akram Khaieo:

Yeah. I think that sound of that person that was shot by a sniper on the middle of the street, it will... I think it will remain for a long time. It's the sound and the feeling of shame, just sitting there not being able to help him.

JOHN DICKSON EDITORIAL

Akram Khaieo was in his mid 20s when the first pro of the Arab Spring began at the end of 2010. He and his family lived in an Assyrian village, just outside the city of Al Hasakah in the Northeast corner of Syria. The protests emerging in Tunisia and Egypt at the time felt far away. But as you just heard, they ended up coming way too close.

Akram Khaieo:

When the protest started earlier and the... I think it was back in 12, something like that. So that's when you are like, "This is still far away from us and probably will end up soon." Then it start getting closer and closer and closer, with more people raising against the regime.

JOHN DICKSON EDITORIAL

The pro-democracy protests of the Arab Spring brought the already simmering discontent in Syria to a head. And by the end of 2011, Syrians found themselves in a civil war across multiple lines.

Akram Khaieo:

And then I think at some point when the government itself start withdrawing from our area, like the police station, all of that, so it'll be more protected. So at that stage, a lot of us start leaving to the city.

JOHN DICKSON EDITORIAL

Akram's family fled to a nearby city. As the civil war drew on, Islamic State or ISIS attempted to capture Al Hasakah. As we'll soon hear, and as you can probably already imagine, it didn't end well. We're going to be talking about refugees in this episode, and I'm fearful that there's no way to talk about this without sounding political, even though I am really not political. I'm your classic swinging voter, if you must know. But of course not talking about this issue is also, in a sense, a political act. In my own country the political line on refugees has been pretty much bipartisan. Both major Australian parties have been accused of "a

competition on cruelty" for over a decade. Australia's track record on welcoming refugees, regardless of which party is in power, hasn't been great.

There have been highlights, of course. Akram's family is among them. But given the scale of the problem, the highlights seem like a flickering candle in a storm. Well, our guests today have an agenda. I need to be open about that. They're expert in policy and theology and a living, breathing, Syrian refugee. They emphatically want us to welcome the stranger. So there's some undeceiving to do here for me as much as for you, for folks inside the church, as much as for those outside. Christianity is clear. Providing refuge for the downtrodden foreigner isn't politics. It reflects one of the most basic ideas of the faith. That God is merciful to the needy outsider.

I'm John Dickson, and this is Undeceptions.

Undeceptions is brought to you pretty appropriately today by Zondervan's new book and video course *Confronting Injustice Without Compromising the Truth*, by Thaddeus J. Williams. Each episode at Undeceptions, we explore some aspect of life, faith, science, history, culture, or ethics that's either much misunderstood or mostly forgotten. With the help of people who know what they're talking about we'll be trying to undecieve ourselves and let the truth out.

INTERVIEW CONTINUES

Akram Khaieo:

It become more difficult with electricity, water, things getting expensive, even to get for bread, it was like miracle, to be honest. You will get there and stand in lines for hours, and it was very expensive. And if you get some, it wouldn't even be worth eating, but what you're going to do like this with what you have?

JOHN DICKSON EDITORIAL

That's Akram again, telling us a little more about what life was like in Al Hasakah as ISIS closed in.

Akram Khaieo:

And at some stage ISIS was surrounding the city and it was like today they're going to enter the city, tomorrow they're going to enter it. So it was like this continuous stress that we left. It was so much pressure that some people were like, "When's it going to end?"

JOHN DICKSON EDITORIAL

In February 2015, Islamic State attacked the Assyrian villages along the Khabur river. They kidnapped more than 200 Assyrian Christians and held them hostage, demanding that the Assyrian church pay for their release.

Akram Khaieo:

Like 5:00 AM in the morning, they just attacked them, took all the people as hostages, more than 200 people. They stayed there for like a year with them. They asked our church to pay for money. But the church at that time was also struggling. They don't have enough money to do it. So sadly they decided to take the life of three peoples. One of them was my cousin, and they film it and they post it on Facebook as a proof, "If you don't pay us money, we will do the rest further."

JOHN DICKSON EDITORIAL

Akram's family fled again, making it this time to Qamishli, a town about 90 kilometers further north. It's a city with an airport, and they desperately tried to get a flight to Damascus, Syria's capital in the south. Traveling so far by road was seriously dangerous. Flying was really the only option. After two months they managed to get a flight to Damascus, but it wasn't with Qantas.

Akram Khaieo:

And finally, when we get the ticket, it wasn't a normal airplane. It was one of the military one. So basically from the inside, it's all empty and everyone just being packed there.

John Dickson:

From Damascus, Akram's family were able to get a car ride across the border to Beirut in Lebanon. So you lived in Lebanon for how long?

Akram:

Almost two years.

JOHN DICKSON EDITORIAL

In 2015, there were six million people living in Lebanon, and one in four of them was a Syrian refugee just like Akram.

INTERVIEW BEGINS WITH LUKE AND MARK GLANVILLE

Luke Glanville:

So the UN's refugee agency, UNHCR, says that as of the end of 2020, there were 82 million people forcibly displaced around the world. Forcibly displaced from their homes, from their communities.

JOHN DICKSON EDITORIAL

That's Luke Glanville, associate professor in the department of international relations at the Australian National University, the country's top ranked university. He's about to throw a whole bunch of stats at me because I asked him to. But before he does that, let me say that he's going to be joined in this episode by his brother Mark Glanville, who is associate professor of pastoral theology at Regent College in Vancouver, a wonderful institution. Hello to all my friends there. Together, Mark and Luke have

written a book titled *Refuge Reimagined*, which puzzles out what they believe should be the Christian response to people on the move. We'll hear from Mark in a minute, but back to Luke.

Luke Glanville:

Around 50 million or so of those are what is called internally displaced, meaning they remain within their countries of origin, but they've had to flee their homes and communities. There's 26 million of the 82 million are classed as refugees, meaning they fled their country of origin and do not yet have a durable solution to their displacement. A further 4 million are asylum seekers, meaning they haven't yet been classified as refugees. They're displaced and in need of a home too. And there's a further 4 million of that 82 million that are currently classified as Venezuelans displaced abroad, I think because UNHCR hasn't decided how to classify these vulnerable displaced people yet.

JOHN DICKSON EDITORIAL

A quick terminology brush up. An asylum seeker is a person looking for the protection of a country other than their own country of origin, because of fear of persecution or because they've experienced violence or human rights violations. It's a bureaucratic term, really. You aren't an official refugee unless you've applied for asylum as an asylum seeker, and that application has been approved. National asylum systems are in place to determine who qualifies for international protection. Of course, during a refugee crisis like the one the world witnessed in 2015, when hundreds of thousands of people fled war and persecution, making dangerous trips across the Mediterranean and flocking into Europe, asylum systems often can't process claims fast enough. A refugee is a person who asked for protection and their claim was accepted. That doesn't necessarily mean that there's a place for them to go. It only means that someone with a rubber stamp has said that their claim for protection is legitimate.

Luke Glanville:

So last year during COVID, the global community resettled only 34,000 of those displaced refugees and other displaced people. Usually, in previous years, the number has been around somewhere between 100,000 and 200,000. But even then, it's typically less than 1% of the global refugee population. And in the meantime, the vast bulk of responsibility for caring for, for providing assistance to and safety to refugees falls on poorer developing states in developing regions of the world.

JOHN DICKSON TAPE FROM JORDAN

Hey, John Dickson here. Hi Micah and friends. I'm in the Zaatari refugee camp in Jordan, right near the Syrian border. In fact, just over that way is the Syrian border. And this is one of the main camps for Syrian refugees from the terrible crisis that has emerged over the last several years.

JOHN DICKSON EDITORIAL

In January 2019, I got to visit some United Nations refugee camps, both on Jordan's and Lebanon's borders with Syria. The trip was sponsored by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and organized by the aid agency Save the Children and the Australian government.

JOHN DICKSON TAPE FROM JORDAN

This started as a little camp with a few thousand people and they just set up three districts and no one expected the crisis to go on so long and for it to be so devastating. And now there are 12 districts all around this place, and it's grown up to the point where there are now 80,000 refugees here in the camp. People that have literally fled for their lives, who can't go back to Syria, at least not right now. People talk about the fighting sort of calming down, but actually the politics make it impossible for the vast majority of these people to go back to Syria.

JOHN DICKSON EDITORIAL

It was a privilege to see the amazing work being done by eight aid agencies, many of whom are Christian aid agencies, by the way, to support refugees while they wait for something, anything to happen. Providing humanitarian assistance for refugees in these camps is obviously extremely important, but it doesn't solve the problem of where they'll go. Almost no one I met living or working in these camps, whether they're in Jordan or the other tent city I visited in Lebanon's Beqaa valley, ever expected these refugees to be able to return to Syria. Almost three years on, Syria is still an extremely dangerous place. These so-called temporary camps are getting more and more permanent. But living in tent cities can't be a solution. Mark and Luke Glanville wrote *refuge reimaged* to try and answer the question so what next? What is the Christian response to the people still languishing there in those camps?

Mark Glanville:

We wanted to explore refugee welcome in the context in the terms of scripture itself.

JOHN DICKSON EDITORIAL

That's Mark Glanville now, the biblical scholar of the pair.

Mark Glanville:

So human rights of course is really a modern Western construct, a liberal kind of construct. Other recent motives are hospitality. They're all great concepts and we certainly affirm them. We wanted to speak in terms of the way that the biblical authors were thinking and experiencing life. So as an Old Testament scholar, myself, this is something I really wrestled with. I've done a lot of study and written books on the law in the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Bible. And this is very ancient law which is a part of God's word. And just trying to work out... I mean, some of the laws are quite well known. One well known law might be leave the gleanings of the field, or the Sabbath law, to give the stranger, the refugee rest, even as you take rest. And I was just wrestling as a scholar, what did this mean to them, to these authors.

JOHN DICKSON EDITORIAL

The biblical concept of gleaning is first found in Leviticus 19. "When you reap the harvest of your land, it says, do not reap the very edges of your field or gather the gleanings of your harvest. Do not go over your vineyard a second time, or pick up the grapes that have fallen. Leave them for the poor and the foreigner. I am the Lord, your God." The purpose of the law was to feed the poor, the orphans, the

widows, and the foreigners. It was like an ancient safety net or food bank, and everyone one had to participate.

Mark Glanville:

And the penny sort of dropped when I started to read cultural anthropology of the Mediterranean area, which is where ancient Israel and first century people of God were, the audience that the Bible was written to, and started to realize that these were communal cultures, very different from my Australian or now Canadian and Western culture, which is highly individualistic. And they negotiated their lives in terms of belonging. Who do I belong to? I belong to my family. I belong to my clan. Maybe I belong to a bigger people group than that as well. And the crisis that the Bible often addresses is a crisis of belonging. We might see it... The Bible might say leave the gleanings of the field, and we tend to think that's social justice. But it wasn't. It was a crisis of protection and a crisis of belonging. So the Bible in both testaments, we argue and we think, was calling on God's people, and perhaps in a sense by extension calling on all of humanity, to enfold vulnerable people who are seeking a home as family, as kin.

JOHN DICKSON EDITORIAL

That word kin is really important to the Glanvilles' whole approach. It's an Anglo-Saxon term originally that basically means family. So kinship is that sense of belonging to or commitment to that we experience in healthy families. And it's a really important concept in the Bible.

Mark Glanville:

It's significant for the biblical authors that were all descended of Adam in the Old Testament, and then in turn, after the flood, descended of Noah. So there is this sense, I think, of the familial belonging of all people, but there's a stronger theme, again, in the Old Testament. It's not just the family of humanity, it's God's kinship in particular with vulnerable people, which is quite an important theme in the Old Testament.

PRODUCER KALEY READING

For the Lord your God is God of Gods and Lord of Lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who shows no partiality and accepts no bribes. He defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow and loves the foreigner residing among you, giving them food and clothing. And you are to love those who are foreigners, for you yourselves were foreigners in Egypt. Deuteronomy chapter 10, verses 17 to 20.

Mark Glanville:

So for example, if you go to Deuteronomy chapter 10, which we do in our book, and it says that Yahweh loves the stranger... Yahweh's the ancient Old Testament name for God, loves the stranger. And that word love... In the West, we see the word love, and we often think of emotions, but as we show in our book, it's a word for covenant solidarity. It does have an emotive component, but that's secondary. First that word love means covenant, and it means kinship.

JOHN DICKSON EDITORIAL

Covenant is the Bible's fancy word for the agreement God has made with his chosen people. And the glue that holds the agreement or covenant together is this word love, *ahava* in Hebrew, which has the sense of family loyalty and devotion rather than warm fuzzy feelings. God is said to *ahava* his covenant people, and the covenant people are, as the first and greatest commandment, to *ahava* the Lord our God.

Mark Glanville:

It's absolutely fascinating, actually, John, because this word love comes from these ancient treaties that were highly militarized treaties between Neo-Assyrian or Babylonian kings and lesser kings. And here the biblical authors use that trope of covenant, this steadfast loyalty that was demanded of kings for Yahweh. And it says Yahweh loves a stranger. Yahweh makes a covenant commitment and a kinship bond with the stranger. And then what's brilliant about Deuteronomy 10 verse 18, it says, Yahweh loves a stranger. Verse 19 of Deuteronomy 10, it says, therefore, you God's people, are to love the stranger. In other words, God makes a covenant commitment with the refugee and then commands on the basis of the divine covenant, God's people also to make this covenant commitment with the refugee. And that's kinship and covenant. So John, there is this familial kind of identity of the whole human race for sure, throughout scripture, but a more prominent theme, again, is that Yahweh, your God, always tilts towards the margins.

JOHN DICKSON EDITORIAL

Okay. That's the Old Testament on love for the vulnerable outsider. What about the New Testament?

Mark Glanville:

I mean, a beautiful connection between both testaments is Jesus' fellowship meals, which we show in our book really mirrors the Old Testament fellowship meals. I love how Jesus had the reputation not just of being friends with all the wrong people, but of eating with all the wrong people. And I say wrong there in inverted commas, because they were the right people in terms of the kingdom of God. And Jesus was enfolding all the right people in the kingdom of God, those who are on the margins of first century Jewish society. Whether they be tax collectors or whether they be people who are infirmed, or whether they be people who are prostitutes or sinners by some other category. There is a movement in both testaments of the bringing the weakest to the center of the community.

JOHN DICKSON EDITORIAL

Belonging, kinship, it's everywhere in the Bible. And of course it all sounds wonderful, but perhaps a little bit idealistic. I'd love to welcome a refugee to my house for dinner. Sure. But I can't possibly welcome thousands for dinner. The actual size of the refugee problem feels so enormous that it's hard to see a way to overcome it. Short of getting rid of borders altogether and saying, "Come on in. Everyone is welcome." Is that what Mark and Luke and others are advocating? The rubber has to hit the road somewhere. Is there anything like a practical approach to the refugee problem? That's where we go after the break.

SPONSOR BREAK: ZONDERVAN

This episode of Undeceptions is sponsored by Zondervan's new video course based on Thaddeus Williams' book, *Confronting Injustice Without Compromising Truth*. I spoke with Thaddeus very briefly about this just a few weeks ago.

John Dickson:

What is your book about?

Thaddeus Williams:

It is about how the Bible calls us to justice. That's a command we need to take seriously because it is a divine command, not a divine suggestion. But the Bible also calls us in Jeremiah 7 to truly execute justice, which presupposes there are false or phony ways to execute justice. So what's the difference between the two, because the call to justice is all the rage these days. So how do we discern between biblical justice and its counterfeits?

John Dickson:

I want to ask you what you hope readers will take away from your book.

Thaddeus Williams:

I hope that they would see that, while yes, there have been a lot of sad chapters in Christian history where Christians... I think complicit is too soft term. There were times that people claiming to follow Jesus were not merely complicit but actually perpetrators of injustice. And for them to have a resource in their hands that says, "Yes, that happened, and yes, it is utterly incompatible with the message and mission of Jesus..." So maybe I should give these Christians a fair hearing, because there is this other side of the coin where people bearing the name of Christ actually did make the world a better place.

Thaddeus Williams:

One of the reasons I wrote the book is I kept seeing some of my students, some of my friends who were getting drawn into a certain ideology that marketed itself as social justice, where I saw them replace the fruit of the spirit, love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, self control, I saw all that fruits slowly turn into suspicion and rage and self righteousness and quickness to take offense. And when I look at the scriptures, 1 Corinthians 13, the famous wedding passage, one of the marks of love is it's not easily offended. That's one just basic diagnostic or barometer litmus test to tell the difference. If we're easily offended and chronically triggered, there's a good chance of what we're calling justice isn't what the Bible means by justice.

John Dickson:

It's an important project, and I really hope my listeners will race out and grab the book. Thanks so much, mate.

Thaddeus Williams:

Absolutely. Thanks for having me, brother.

JOHN DICKSON EDITORIAL

You can grab the book *Confronting Injustice Without Compromising Truth* by Thaddeus J Williams at Amazon right now. And you can find more details about the video course by going to zondervan.com. There are over three million people living in slavery in Pakistan. The practice of bonded slavery is widespread. When families borrow money from their employer to pay for essentials, often in times of crisis, and then they spend years, sometimes decades paying it off by working as a slave. Brick kilns are the primary place you'll find these indebted families in Pakistan, caked in mud and working for his little as \$4 a day. 70% of the bonded laborers in Pakistan are children.

SPONSOR AD: ANGLICAN AID

Anglican Aid is trying to break this cycle of poverty in Pakistan, helping families who have spent generations in bonded labor to break free. This Christmas they have partnered with Miracle School Ministries in Lahore, the capital of Pakistan's Punjab province, to offer free quality education to 800 children enslaved in the local brick kiln. Miracle has set up a sewing facility to provide alternative employment for women in particular, increasing how much they can earn and teaching a marketable skill that might see their families get out of the brick kilns for good. This Christmas, please consider these guys I trust, Anglican Aid, as they continue to work to establish long term assistance for women and their families. Just go to anglicanaid.org.au, anglicanaid.org.au to give today.

EPISODE CONTINUES

PRESIDENT TRUMP TAPE

My fellow Americans, tonight I am speaking to you because there is a growing humanitarian and security crisis at our Southern border. Every day, customs and border patrol agents encounter thousands of illegal immigrants trying to enter our country. We are out of space to hold them and we have no way to promptly return them back home to their country.

JOHN DICKSON EDITORIAL

That's then US president Donald Trump speaking in an official address to the nation in January 2019, while calling on the US Congress to fund his plan to build a border wall between the US and Mexico, to stem the tide of illegal immigrants making their way across the border.

PRESIDENT TRUMP TAPE CONTINUES

Some have suggested a barrier is immoral. Then why do wealthy politicians build walls, fences, and gates around their homes? They don't build walls because they hate the people on the outside, but because they love the people on the inside.

JOHN DICKSON EDITORIAL

President Trump goes on to say that the truly immoral thing is to do nothing thing to stop the flow of illegal immigrants crossing the border. Why? Well, because...

PRESIDENT TRUMP TAPE CONTINUES

Over the years thousands of Americans have been brutally killed by those who illegally entered our country, and thousands more lives will be lost if we don't act right now.

JOHN DICKSON EDITORIAL

This particular claim, that thousands of Americans have been killed by illegal immigrants, turned out to be an exaggeration, but the sentiment is a popular one. Nations are responsible for protecting their own people against the predations of foreigners. I put all this to Luke Glanville, our global politics expert. Okay, Luke, strap your seatbelt in. Does any of this lovely kinship mumbo jumbo apply at the national level? I mean, it's one thing for a Christian household to go, "Yeah, I'd like to welcome a refugee." But is it really the responsibility of a nation state like the US or Australia?

Luke Glanville:

I think absolutely. So so much of the call to welcome a stranger that Mark has been talking about that we find the Old Testament is addressed to Israel, the nation. And we find in these passages and elsewhere, God laying out his desire and design for political community, and it's a desire and design that is a beautiful vision of community and communal life that requires doing justice and caring for the widow, the orphan, the poor, and also the stranger. And it's given to Israel as a model for humanity. I think the reasons that are commonly given by many people, including thoughtful Christian scholars, for why it doesn't apply to nations today are typically quite spurious, really.

They appeal to notions of state sovereignty or citizenship, or the new responsibilities and demands of governments, the need to prioritize the care everyone's own people as if this somehow dilutes or marginalizes the biblical call to welcome stranger. So many of these concepts that they appeal to, when you look at them in historical terms, really, if anything, amplifies the call to care for the stranger, because they are typically concepts such as notions of state sovereignty, notions of citizenship that historically developed in horrifically unjust, racist ways that involved the exclusion of and oftentimes the extermination of undesirable peoples.

JOHN DICKSON EDITORIAL

In February 2018, Capitol Ministries, a group that runs Bible studies for US politicians, published an influential study titled *What the Bible Says About Illegal Immigration*. The studies were widely used, including by members of president Trump's own cabinet Bible study group. In one section, the study reads, and I'm quoting from page nine, "For a government to be pleasing to God and receive his blessing, it has no option but to protect its citizenry from illegal immigration, per Romans 13. It must always protect its borders and punish those who enter illegally. Any governmental response that is less than this violates God's clearly revealed intention for government, and invites chaos as we now are seeing on our Southern borders."

Luke Glanville:

So this is an influential Bible study, and the Bible study group asked the director of Capital Ministries to write studies on immigration, studies on the wall. What does the Bible have to say about the wall? And at the heart of the Bible studies that were produced on these topics was always Romans 13, and a blatant misreading and misrepresentation of what Romans 13 says. I see it so often, particularly by American Christians, who just take for granted that Romans 13 has things to tell us about immigration, about the need to prioritize the care of one's own citizens over the care of foreigners. Romans 13 says nothing like that.

JOHN DICKSON EDITORIAL

We've spoken about Romans 13 before in this season. In episode 55, Just War. There's a link in the show notes. Here's producer Kaley reading the first two verses of that controversial chapter.

PRODUCER KALEY READING

"Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. Consequently, whoever rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted. And those who do so will bring judgment on themselves." Romans 13, 1 to 2.

Luke Glanville:

It talks about doing justice and it talks about respecting and honoring those in authority. But nowhere does it say that governments are put in place to prioritize the care of citizens over non-citizens. Indeed concepts of citizenship weren't even available to Paul writing Romans 13.

JOHN DICKSON EDITORIAL

You might be thinking, "But what about Roman citizenship? That concept was certainly available to Paul." Yeah, but that kind of citizenship was nothing like our own. You could be a Roman born and raised and not be a citizen because your family was once made up of slaves or you didn't belong to the right class. Roman citizenship was like a civic honor more than a reference to nationality.

UK HOME SECRETARY TAPE

And the point that the honorable gentleman is making, he claims that everybody coming to the UK are genuine asylum seekers. They are not, mister speaker, and the evidence shows up. And even the authorities in France say that 70% of people crossing the Channel and entering France, and Northern France in particular, are single men, and they're economic migrants.

JOHN DICKSON EDITORIAL

Just last month, October 2021, the UK's home secretary Priti Patel, claimed that 70% of asylum seekers crossing the English Channel are economic migrants. Only 30% are real refugees. But refugee agencies point out that the statistics suggest it's roughly the other way around. A full two thirds of those who cross the Channel are subsequently found to be genuine refugee. As we were putting this episode

together, news broke that at least 27 people had died when the dinghy they were traveling in capsized in the English channel, the worst ever disaster involving migrants in the channel.

According to the BBC, over 24,000 people have attempted the dangerous journey from France to Britain in the year to September 2021, with people smugglers selling seats on blow up boats for upwards of 3000 pounds. Asylum seekers to the UK have risen to the highest level in 20 years, with 37,562 applications also in the year to September. The UK has granted protection to 13,210 people in that same time period. Anyway, it's a common fear that many of the people trying to enter our countries from somewhere else aren't really fleeing for their lives, they just want better lives. And that's not totally fair on us. I put that to Luke.

Luke Glanville:

We find it useful in the book to think with the parable of the good Samaritan. Often Christians who are seeking more generosity from their governments, from their states, call out their governments as failing to act like the good Samaritan, failing to be sufficiently generous, risk taking, cost accepting for the sake of the vulnerable. And I think that's important. But in addition to that, I think it's worth talking about and seeing how our Western states so often also act like the priest and the Levite, quite intentionally crossing to the other side of the road to avoid an encounter with the vulnerable people. So Australia, the US, Canada, many Western states spend billions of dollars each every year containing displaced people in the Global South, so keeping them far away from us, deterring them from making their way to us, and detaining those who manage to make journeys all the way to us, detaining them indefinitely, so as to deter anyone else from attempting the same journey.

But more than that, I think it's really important, and this gets to the economic issue too, it's important to see how in really crucial ways we act like the robber in the parable, in that we are complicit in historical and ongoing policies and activities that contribute to the generation of crises that contribute to the displacement. Not only the displacement of refugees via persecution and wars and conflict, but the displacement of people who are forced to move because of the entrenched economic inequalities that we in the West are in a large way responsible for creating and sustaining through to the present day that creates a need for people to move, often towards us, to seek a dignified life.

Mark Glanville:

I think in Old Testament times-

JOHN DICKSON EDITORIAL

That's Mark Glanville.

Mark Glanville:

Some people who were on the move who are fleeing famine and then others... Many were fleeing war because the land of ancient Israel was a thoroughfare for the giant armies, the nexus between the great empires of Neo-Assyria and Egypt. The responsibility is toward the vulnerable person seeking a home, which of course is hand in hand with the responsibility toward or the fatherless and the widow. And interestingly in the Old Testament, the stranger is much more prominent, which is just fascinating.

Because in ancient Near Eastern texts, that sound like the Old Testament texts, the fatherless and the widow constantly appear, the stranger barely ever. Never in quite the same way that they do in the Bible. But the Bible is using this ancient Near Eastern trope, father, orphan, and the widow, and then remarkably adds the stranger. So I'm certain that displacement, forced displacement was the pressing social issue that many of the Old Testament texts address.

PRESIDENT TRUMP TAPE

We have a country where to assimilate, you have to speak English. We have to have assimilation to have a country. We have to have assimilation. I'm not the first one to say this, Dana. We've had many people over the years, for many, many years saying the same thing. This is a country where we speak English, not Spanish.

JOHN DICKSON EDITORIAL

That's president Trump again, speaking at the Republican presidential candidates debate in 2015. He expresses a feeling a lot of people have. Refugees won't even learn our language.

Mark Glanville:

Okay, sure. My church has birthed Kinbrace, which is a welcome, housing, and advocacy for refugee claimants here in Canada, and they really want to learn our language. They wish they were speaking our language now. It's so hard to assimilate into Canadian in Australian culture. Just give us time. Refugees are remarkably resilient people. That's how they got here.

PETER DUTTON, AUSTRALIAN POLITICIAN TAPE

Well, for many people, they won't be numerate or literate in their own language, let alone English. These people would be taking Australian jobs, there's no question about that.

JOHN DICKSON EDITORIAL

That's the Australian Liberal Party politician Peter Dutton. The Liberal Party, by the way, is the rough equivalent of the Republican Party in the US. Anyway, Mr. Dutton was the Minister for Immigration for a few years. He raises another strong objection. It's already pretty crowded here. Letting in more people is just going to put pressure on employment and housing.

Luke Glanville:

It really isn't very crowded here. If we have a bit of perspective, we see that, as we've been saying, those in the developing world take in so many more millions of refugees than we in the West do, and the economic argument is absolutely spurious. Again and again in Australia, Europe, and America, studies find that refugees bring net economic benefits.

Mark Glanville:

In Jordan there's two tiers of schooling. Morning is for Jordanian children, and afternoon is for Syrian refugee children. What a beautiful way to adjust the cultural landscape to include newcomers.

AUSTRALIAN PRIME MINISTER KEVIN RUDD TAPE

Today we are announcing a new resettlement arrangement between Australia and Papa New Guinea. From now on any asylum seeker who arrives in Australia by boat will have no chance of being settled in Australia as refugees.

JOHN DICKSON EDITORIAL

That's Kevin Rudd, the Labour Party prime minister of Australia in 2013. Labour is the equivalent of the US Democratic Party. He's announcing a new policy. If you are a refugee who comes to Australia by boat, you'll never be allowed to stay, even if you are found to be a genuine refugee. And that's the last objection I wanted to raise with the Glanvilles. Shouldn't refugees come in an orderly way, instead of trying to jump the queue? Do you think there's a proper way for people to seek asylum? I mean, isn't there something to be said for the view that we shouldn't be encouraging the people smugglers to put people on boats in harsh conditions where they become more vulnerable, so we should be really harsh against those who are coming to Australia, for example, by boat?

Luke Glanville:

I think we have been led to think in terms of, and talk in terms of good refugees and bad refugees. The good refugees are those refugees who wait patiently, who give up their agency, who wait in refugee camps and urban centers far from us, waiting to be rescued by white saviors. We're always happy to be the rescuer. We find that gives us all sorts of warm feelings inside at the individual level and the national level. The bad refugees are those refugees who have the temerity to exercise some agency and seek their own safety and to move towards us. We hate that.

We hate it when refugees are willing to take matters into their own hands, and if necessary, and it is usually necessary or often necessary to pay people smugglers only because we make it so hard for them to make their way to us to claim asylum in all kinds of different bordering techniques and practices, legal and material, that cost us billions of dollars and make it more dangerous. I think we like to tell ourselves that it is more humane, and our politicians are always telling us it's more humane to stop the boats. Tony Abbot once said that's the most compassionate thing you can do.

JOHN DICKSON EDITORIAL

That's Tony Abbot, another previous prime minister of Australia.

Luke Glanville:

We always talk about our dominance over vulnerable others in terms of how it's for their benefit and for their protection and for their safety, because they don't know better. We need to care for them by stopping the boats, stopping the people smugglers.

John Dickson:

St. Augustine and Thomas Aquinas, two of the biggest brains of church history by anyone's estimation, said that we need to order our love. So yes, we are to love everyone, but we should really prioritize

loving those who are right in front of us. That's where we should put our activity. Or in the aphorism, charity begins at home. Isn't that right?

Luke Glanville:

It's largely right. I think the question of who is right in front of us. This is often invoked with respect to the parable of the good Samaritan too. I see Christians often saying that, "Well, the good Samaritan cared for the stranger immediately in front of the good Samaritan, but didn't go out of his way to look for vulnerable people." And Aquinas says something similar. But Aquinas also says at certain times you should prioritize the care of the needy, even over the care of your own father. So need is an important consideration.

JOHN DICKSON EDITORIAL

Augustine and Aquinas got a bit of a run in episode 57, Jesus Philosopher. In short Augustine, was probably the greatest theologian of the ancient Western church. The stuff he wrote in the late fourth and early fifth century is still being widely read, and it's still hugely influential among clergy and theologians, whether Catholic or Protestant. Thomas Aquinas, from the 13th century, is mostly read today by Catholics and philosophers of religion, as well as naughty Protestant historian podcasters. But he, too, like Augustine has exerted a massive influence on the theology and ethics of Western Christianity.

Luke Glanville:

And when we think about the present day, we're living in a very different world to the world Augustine lived in and Aquinas lived in, in the sense that we are much more aware of global suffering and vulnerabilities, and much more capable of responding to global suffering and global vulnerabilities. So there's a sense in which vulnerable Syrian refugees right now are right in front of us too. Vulnerable Rohingya refugees are right in front of us. We're aware of their suffering. We can't pretend we're not. And we have enormous capacity in the West to care for so much larger numbers of refugees and other vulnerable peoples around the world than we presently do.

John Dickson:

Do you think there should be any such thing as border security? I mean, take this either Mark or Luke, but I mean you take it from the biblical perspective, is there any such thing as securing your borders?

Luke Glanville:

Even if the idea of the sovereign state has an older history going back 500 years or so, the idea that sovereign states have this inherent right to control their borders, the idea that sovereign states have linear territorial borders is more recent. I think certainly there is just grounds for weaker, poorer states to take measures to secure themselves against predatory outsiders, be they individuals, corporations, other states who seek to enter their territories in order to extract their resources or take advantage of their relative weakness or poverty.

Luke Glanville:

But I just want to say that we in the West aren't those kinds of states presently, and we don't have the same kind of need, and therefore we don't have the same kind of justification for strictly controlling the movement of people across our borders. Obviously there are exceptions. Things like COVID create needs for a certain degree of monitoring and circumspection in these respects. But the assumptions that we have today, that we as a sovereign state inherently need to and have to and are permitted to control absolutely who comes into our territory in order to secure ourselves against the rest of humanity, it's a deeply troubling assumption that we've taught ourselves.

John Dickson:

But Mark, couldn't someone reply that even in the Bible, Israel did have something like borders. I mean, you have in the book of Numbers and in the Judges, I'm reading the Judges at the moment, there are territories, there are tribal territories, and they know that that their strip of land goes from this town to this town, meets this river here and so on. Couldn't that be used as some kind of justification for strong borders?

Mark Glanville:

Yeah, no doubt in the Old Testament there were certainly people groups and there were certainly territory, and that makes sense of our lives, doesn't it? We belong to a place, we belong to a people. That gives us meaning and direction and belonging. That's meaningful. And we also see some mobility. We see Ruth, for example, in the book of Ruth, going from ancient Israel, and Naomi going from Israel to Moab, and then Ruth with Naomi coming back to Israel. So there's more mobility than we might imagine if we were to project today. They didn't need a passport sort of thing. But just the same, we need to discern very precisely the biblical ethic of what is a Christian response to vulnerable people? What is the Christian response to vulnerable people seeking a home? And on that, the Bible is relentless.

GERMAN CHANCELLOR ANGELA MERKEL TAPE

There is no tolerance towards those who question the dignity of people. The world sees Germany as a land of hope, an opportunity, and that wasn't always the case.

JOHN DICKSON EDITORIAL

That's German chancellor Angela Merkel, who after 16 years leading Germany is stepping down this month. Merkel was addressing a press conference in August, 2015, as Europe was trying to cope with hundreds of thousands of refugees flooding the region, the majority fleeing war and persecution in Syria, Afghanistan, and Iraq. Many European countries closed their borders and boosted border security. Merkel refused to do the same. She kept Germany's doors open. And by the end of 2015, a million refugees had arrived. The New York Times called it a sudden act of moral heroism that would define her legacy. Others in Europe were less enthusiastic, and Merkel had to defend her move to her own people and to the wider European community.

GERMAN CHANCELLOR ANGELA MERKEL TAPE

Universal civil rights so far have been closely linked with Europe and its history. It was one of the founding motives of the European union. If Europe fails on the question of refugees, this close connection with universal civil rights will be destroyed and it won't be the Europe we want.

John Dickson:

Angela Merkel famously opened Germany's borders to over one million refugees following the Syrian crisis. And she was heavily criticized for this, and still is. So is that the kind of crazy thing you guys are advocating?

Luke Glanville:

Yeah, I think that's a wonderful model. I think Merkel took several missed steps after that, so it's by no means a perfect example. But at the same time, it's a wonderful model and a beautiful model in the sense that, as Merkel herself put it, this is a moment, this is an action that we can take as a nation that brings enormous pleasure to us and pride to us. It's an action that in some small way makes some small reparations for the grievous harms that we've done to vulnerable people in previous generations. And we saw in that moment the real celebration and joy that the German people felt in doing justice, in doing good with and alongside vulnerable people, doing it together in community. It was a real moment. And often the criticism is that politicians just can't afford to do that because look at the backlash that Germany saw. Well, Merkel survived, didn't she? And she's stepping down this week-

John Dickson:

Still as the most popular politician in a generation.

Luke Glanville:

Yeah, and if it costs her some political capital to make this move, what better way than to spend one's capital in doing justice and in loving the stranger?

TAPE: REFUGEE CHILDREN IN LEBANON YELLING

JOHN DICKSON EDITORIAL

I will never forget this. Walking through the tent city in the Beqaa valley on Lebanon's border with Syria. School was just out and the kids were following me everywhere. G'day. Yes. I even taught them to say g'day. The aid agencies in this place do an amazing job with what they've got, but the pathways to the future are limited, practically non-existent. And it struck me that some of the kids cheering in that video you just heard are about to finish school, but there's no higher education for them. There's no employment. There's just more waiting. And there are more than 300,000 refugees waiting in the Beqaa valley alone. So I asked Luke and Mark to tell me whether they reckoned the refugee problem might be just too big to solve. And they said it really comes down to policy and will.

Luke Glanville:

So one immediate change that we recommend in the book is that all states presently involved in resettling refugees up their intake tenfold tomorrow. UNHCR each year tells us that they provide a number of people in urgent need of resettlement. So refugees, as I was saying before, 26 or so million refugee at the moment in the world, and each year UNHCR identifies somewhere between one and two million people that they say are in urgent need of, or even emergency need of resettlement. And each year, those states, such as Australia, Canada, the US, these three states particularly lead the way in resettlement. Collectively the world states that resettle refugees resettle less than 10% of those who UNHCR say are in urgent need of resettlement, let alone the rest of those 26 million odd refugees who are in need of a home.

John Dickson:

So in Australia, it's something like 13,000 a year. Is that roughly the refugee intake?

Luke Glanville:

Yeah, it's usually somewhere between 10 and 20,000. And we saw it looks like it can be possible. So by the end of the Trump era, Trump had drawn down the US's resettlement ceiling, as it's called to below 20,000 per year. And one of Biden's promises, which he has just affirmed in the last couple of weeks, was to up it to 125,000 refugees per year. And that's a good thing. And I think, as we say in the book, that's what states should do right now and then continue to work hard to take the opportunity to welcome more and more refugees into the future.

JOHN DICKSON EDITORIAL

Tenfold sounds ridiculous. What would that mean? Let's take Australia, as an example, perhaps you can do the maths for your own country. Over the five years up to 2019, before the pandemic changed everything, Australia took in an average of 10,000 refugees per year. That's roughly 5% of our net intake of permanent migrants, just under 200,000 a year. Personally, I'd be happy to increase that overall number of 200,000, but let's just say we don't. Let's say we increase the refugee intake by tenfold to 100,000 a year, and then take the same amount of skilled and family migrants. 100,000, we haven't increased our overall immigration at all, but we have played our part in solving one of the world's greatest crises. I'd vote for it in a flash, but I'm sure someone would tell me there's something I've overlooked.

Mark Glanville:

I would say to the church it's not enough just to say it, but we have to get into mutually transforming relationships with newcomers. Sometimes I think, John, a lot of our fear comes because we live fairly homogenous lives. That is to say, if we're Christians or people of another religion, we might worship on a Sunday or another day with people who are just rather similar to us, might look like us and have similar lives to us. So we have little exposure sometimes to people who perhaps have come for a different country of origin or have a different life experience. I think that is a big part of the fear. I think it's a tremendous opportunity for the church to model a different way and actually to be transformed and deepened in the biblical story as we do.

JOHN DICKSON EDITORIAL

Mark's church in Canada, Grandview Calvary Baptist Church, is a great example of the church modeling a different way. In 1998, it launched Kinbrace, a refugee housing and support center, which operates six houses where refugee claimants live for three or more months as they make their refugee claims, get to know Canada, and search for a permanent home. The community helps 30 to 40 refugee claimants every year. We'll put links to their work in the show notes. Now I know that's a drop in the ocean compared to all the stats we've heard in this episode, but the ripple effect is far, far greater.

Mark Glanville:

And now in these two houses, they're able to house 30 or 40 newcomers and support them through the refugee claim. And my family, my nuclear family, my wife and my kids and I were able to join Kinbrace community meals each Tuesday night, when it's not COVID, and we're able to eat together. And that is just an incredible thing, not just for Erin and I, but for our children as well, as they form relationships with newcomers from all around the world and we're just human together.

INTERVIEW WITH AKRAM

John Dickson:

And what were your hopes when you were there. Before the war, what did you hope to do?

Akram Khaieo:

I think it was just like anyone here in Australia, having the house, finding the job, settling down, it was very normal. Just similar to what we're having right now. Even now, when I look at how normal life it is right now when I compare it to before the war, it was the same situation. But it's crazy how things can change so fast.

JOHN DICKSON EDITORIAL

That's Akram again. Every time I actually speak to a refugee, I realize anew that they are real people, normal people. Before the war in Syria, Akram taught English and was studying to be a lawyer. His dreams were similar to my own children's dreams, but instead of living in the Northern suburbs of Sydney, Akram lived in an Assyrian village on the Khabur river in Northern Syria. There was war there, which meant he couldn't stay there anymore. Akram's dreams are still fairly basic. He wants a house, family, job and he's working towards them here in Australia. In September 2015 Australia decided to allow a one off intake of 12,000 Syrian refugees into our country. That bumped up our previous averages considerably Akram and his family were among those allowed to settle here.

Akram Khaieo:

I think people should be given the opportunity to live a better life. And of course I agree, a lot of people have the fear more outsiders will come here and that might change the Australian way of lives. And that's completely understandable. But if you don't give that people that chance, you will never know. And it's

the same with Australian, arriving here to Australia, it was also looking for a better life. So I think the Syrian people deserve that because back in Syria, they are really hard worker, when they come to education, when they come to working, and they enjoy life in general. So I think they deserve to live that, even if it is another country.

5 MINUTE JESUS

JOHN DICKSON EDITORIAL

Let's press pause. I've got a five minute Jesus for you. In my public speaking career, I've been interrupted just three times. Once in the Manning Bar at Sydney University, during my band days. I was trying to introduce a song about God's love, and people in the front row threw beer cans at me. One hit me right in the head, so I went on with the song straight away. The other was in a country pub where a woman interrupted my talk on God's love by yelling out, "How can you speak of God's love when he takes people from our lives?" That led to a very interesting conversation. But the third time was in a lovely Anglican church in Sydney at the traditional early morning service. You've got to imagine this wise, prayerful, orderly congregation singing hymns and saying the ancient liturgy.

I was giving a simple exposition of the Old Testament book of Isaiah chapter 58, part of which says, "Provide the poor wanderer with shelter." I said, and I'm quoting my actual sermon notes that I dialed up here, "Did you notice the reference to refugees in verse seven, 'Provide the poor wanderer with shelter?' I don't really mind what side of politics you are on or what you think the practical solution is. But I will say that a Christian must not care more about border security than about asylum seekers." No sooner had I got out words "asylum seekers," than a well spoken gentleman yelled out from the pews, "They're not asylum seekers, they're illegal boat arrivals." I didn't respond. I just paused and repeated my line. "A Christian must not care more about border security than about asylum seekers." And sure enough, he yelled out the same thing. "They're illegal boat arrivals."

I moved on. And it just so happens that my very next lines went on to quote the oldest part of the Anglican prayer book, what's called the litany. A series of short prayers to God for help. The bit I quoted goes like this. "Defend and provide for the widowed and the fatherless, the refugees and the homeless, and all who are desolate and oppressed. Hear us good Lord." My interlocutor in the pew stayed quiet. Anglicans don't like to contradict the prayer book. Anyway, the experience showed me just how political the topic of refugees can be. It can even inspire a traditional Anglican to yell out in the church service. Even though it's a clear topic of consistent teaching in the Bible, some people struggle to hear anything about this theme without thinking of it as a partisan ploy.

The same thing happens when you make the point that Jesus himself was, for a time, a refugee. The famous Christmas story in Matthew chapter 2 says that king Herod killed the infants of Bethlehem in an effort to hunt down the newborn messiah. And Joseph and Mary, his parents, flee with the baby Jesus to Egypt, 500 kilometers away. Now the point can be overplayed for sure, but the overreaction is just as real. I read an article just the other day titled Jesus Was Not a Refugee. The author opens with these words. "It has become routine at this time of year, Christmas, for activists, social justice warriors, religious leftists, and others to seek to politicize the Christmas story. And one key way to do this is to make the claim that Jesus was a refugee asylum seeker in another country."

The author goes on to say there is no way Jesus can be considered a refugee. He's got two main reasons. One, Jesus never left the Roman empire, so he pretty much just moved around in one sovereign territory. And two, he was only there temporarily, so that's not really refugee status. According to Matthew chapter 2, after Herod died, Joseph was urged in a dream to return to the holy land. They went up to Galilee rather than Judea. This reads to me like a pretty motivated retelling. There's no way you can think of Jerusalem, and Alexandria down in Egypt, which is where Jesus probably went, as basically the same country just because they're both subjugated to Rome. That's not really how the empire worked.

I think we can safely say that if a king like Herod has no jurisdiction in Egyptian Alexandria, and he certainly didn't, then Alexandria is, to all intents and purposes, an entirely different country. And the reference to this being temporary changes nothing. The thing that allowed the holy family to return to the holy land was that the threat had passed with the death of king Herod. Imagine Herod had survived and continued his grudge against the messiah's family. You can be sure that this family would've settled down in Egypt.

And that's the thing. The families I met in the camps in Jordan and Lebanon simply can't return. Their villages have been destroyed or overtaken by rival factions. My friend Akram might not have ISIS to contend with anymore, but Syria is still in disarray. President Bashar al-Assad is no less brutal against perceived traitors. And Akram knows that his extended family's homes and belongings have all been acquired now by others. Five years later, Akram and his family are still in Egypt, you could say, with the holy family, and angry Herod still rules. Refuge is exactly what we have to offer them.

You can press play now.

INTERVIEW CONTINUES

John Dickson:

It's almost Christmas. So I want you to tell me, what do you remember of Christmas before the war in your village?

Akram:

My father is big on this, especially when it comes to decoration. I remember outside the house we used to have those big trees. They were huge, and he would still have good lines on them. It was too much. I mean, in general we celebrated Christmas in a big way. If it was going to the church at that day or like visiting, especially in our village, because everyone know each other. The young guys will be visiting every house to say merry Christmas to them. They went into the house, eat the food and drink and all of that. And then we will start doing that for our cousins.

John Dickson:

Presents? Is presents a part of Christmas?

Akram:

No, actually, we don't focus on that Part.

John Dickson:

Just feasting.

Akram:

Yeah, just feasting.

John Dickson:

Well the baby Jesus was a refugee for a little while, wasn't he?

Akram:

Yeah, in Egypt.

John Dickson:

Yeah, he had to flee king Herod. So do you feel a closeness to Jesus because of that Christmas experience?

Akram:

Of course we can't compare ourselves to our Lord.

John Dickson:

No, indeed.

Akram:

Jesus, of course has been through a lot of tragedy in his life. I will find it likely to be more closer to the human experience that we have in here rather than... And especially when he will enter the Bethlehem not riding a white horse with a sword, you know what I'm saying? It just sounds like how close he was to us.

John Dickson:

Humble.

Akram:

Yeah, exactly.

EPISODE END

JOHN DICKSON EDITORIAL

We're coming to the end of the season soon, and I just want to say that I am enjoying this gig more and more. And our little team is having more and more crazy ideas about themes to tackle and ways to enhance your listening experience. And I've loved checking out some of your reviews and ratings over at

Apple Podcasts. It is so encouraging. And some of you have dropped us some great suggestions. Watch this space. But I want to say thank you. We also ran a little competition earlier this season. Congratulations, therefore, to Emily Henderson, who won our Zondervan book pack, and Christabel Sineque, I hope I'm pronouncing that correctly. Simon Burrell, Ruth Davies, Rachel Griffin, and Joshua Vadi. I hope you like your Undeceptions t-shirt and Bullies and Saints.

I also want to thank those of you who have been regular or even one off sponsors of this show by clicking the donate button at undeceptions.com. I've said before that it costs us about \$3,000 to make each episode, and some weeks, because of you, we cover those costs. So let me say a heartfelt, thank you. Don't forget to go to undeceptions.com and pick up your Undeceptions t-shirt in the store. And just until Christmas, we have a gift idea. We've got hard back copies of my new Bullies and Saints: An Honest Look at the Good and Evil of Christian History. I've signed them, which may reduce the worthiness of the book. And I've even scribbled in some ancient Greek in each copy. Something for your nerdy friend at Christmas. Just head to undeceptions.com and click the store.

Next episode, well, it's the last of the season and a pretty appropriate end. When was the last time someone asked you how you are going and you didn't say "busy?" And they said, "Hmm." It seems like our lives are crammed with every conceivable activity, and we've forgotten how to rest. So that's what we're looking at. The science and history of rest. See ya.

CREDITA

Undeceptions is hosted by me, John Dickson, produced by Kaley Payne, and directed by Mark Hadley. Editing by Richard Hamwi. Special thanks to our series sponsors Zondervan for making this undeception possible. Undeceptions is the flagship podcast of undeceptions.com. Letting the truth out.

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