



αwakenings

:::: The Official Newsletter of Renewed Heart Ministries :::: October 2016 ::::



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Renewed Heart Ministries

Follow Herb!



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Herb Montgomery

"If you love those loving you, what reward do you have? Do not even tax collectors do the same? And if you lend to those from whom you hope to receive, what reward do you have? Do not even the Gentiles, do the same?"

(Q 6:32, 34)

Luke 6:32: "If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners love those who love them."

Luke 6:34: "And if you lend to those from whom you expect repayment, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, expecting to be repaid in full."

Matthew 5:46-47: "If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? And if you greet only your own people, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that?"

Gospel of Thomas 95: "Jesus says, 'If you have money, do not lend it out at interest. Rather, give it to the one from whom you will not get it back'"

Our saying this week builds on the sayings we've discussed over the last three weeks: Loving Your Enemies, Renouncing One's Rights, and The Golden Rule.

This week's saying addresses those in Jesus's audience who might have accepted his teaching on the Golden Rule, but only for those who would do the same for them.

These audience members would have reduced the Golden Rule to reciprocity: an exchange between equals for one's own advancement and benefit. For them, the Golden Rule could have been co-opted to mean only "getting ahead" and not a way to make the world a safer, more compassionate world for us all.

James Robinson, in his book *The Gospel of Jesus*, describes what this limited interpretation could have looked like in the Roman patronage system and can look in our political systems today:

"In the Roman Empire, [self-interest] was called the patronage system and was even codified in the Latin expression *Do ut des*, 'I give so that

you give"; in the animal world, it is "I scratch your back so you scratch mine." In modern politics, it is called euphemistically "special interests." Lobbyists get elected officials to vote for the legislation that favors the firms whose "generous" campaign gifts made it possible for the officials to get elected in the first place. This is how elections are "bought": our firm treated you well in your last election campaign, so you treat our firm well in the way you vote, and our firm will treat you equally well in your next election campaign... Self-serving favoritism does not deserve the term "love," for love shows itself to be real by being directed toward persons who have nothing they can do for us by way of return. So Jesus called for love to go far beyond one's kinsfolk, neighbors, peer group, patron, and campaign contributors. As a result, his new love commandment is much less known, not to speak of being much less practiced."

This quality of reciprocity is quite different from the ethic we are considering this week. *The Sayings Gospel Q* teaching is about loving those who cannot offer us anything in return. There is no quid pro quo here.

As we'll see in the weeks to come, Jesus uses the Golden Rule to inspire a domino-effect in those who receive love to then turn and practice that love in their relations with others. The Golden Rule wasn't designed to establish private relationships of mutual benefit between two individuals, but to produce a whole new world where everyone treats everyone as they'd like to be treated even when there's nothing gained in return. Love was to be reciprocated, but more importantly, love was to be shared with other people.

This distinction is foundational to the rest of Jesus's teachings in *Sayings Gospel Q*. The Golden Rule is not merely or exclusively between a loving person and a loved person. It's between the loved person and another person in need of love, as well. The person who receives this kind of impartial love is called upon to reciprocate by indiscriminately loving a

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Impartial Love

by Herb Montgomery

Quotable Quotes

"When Jesus came preaching, it was to proclaim the end of things as they are and the breaking in of things that are to be: the status quo is not to be criticized; it is to be destroyed."

— Peter J. Gomes
The Scandalous Gospel of Jesus

third person, and through their love, what Jesus calls "God's reign" transforms the world and enlarges continuously from each person to the next.

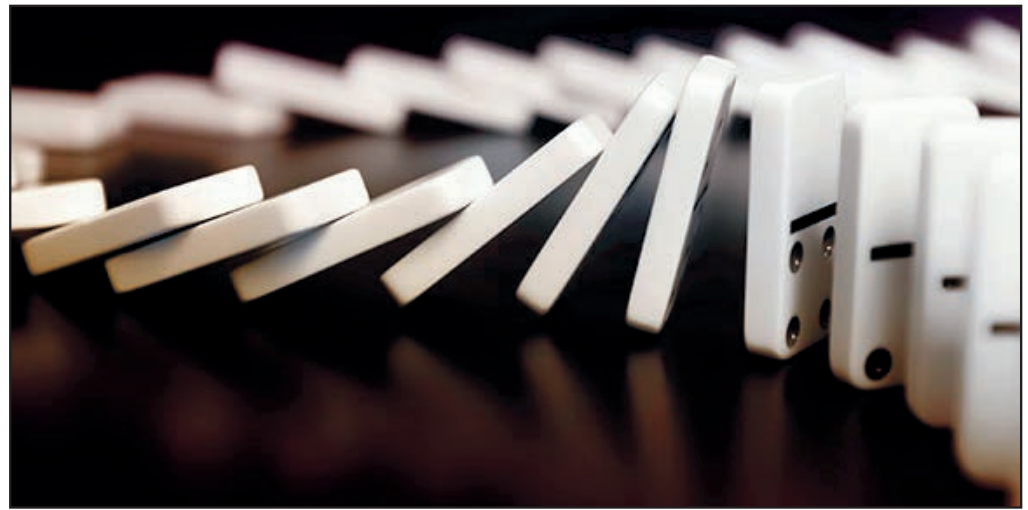
In Sayings Gospel Q, the reign or kingdom of God begins with love even when we have nothing to gain.

Jewish Pride; Jewish Power

I need to say a word about the comparisons in this week's texts and the text references to Gentiles, tax collectors, sinners, and pagans. As we covered last week, when these texts were written, the school of Shammai dominated both the Pharisees and the Sanhedrin. In an effort to strengthen Jewish identity and culture, the School of the Shammai drew a sharp line between Jews and Gentiles, and prohibited the people from crossing that line.

But it's in the soil of human disconnectedness that the weeds of supremacy and superiority take root. It doesn't matter whether a group is in the dominant position within a society, as the Romans were, or forced into a subordinate position, as the Jews were. Supremacist beliefs for those at the top of domination systems justify and protect their position of privilege, power and control, whereas supremacist beliefs for those at the bottom are, as Howard Thurman taught, a useful fiction that oppressed people use to survive domination. (For a discussion on techniques of survival used historically by oppressed peoples that end up being self-destructive in the long term, please see Thurman's excellent volume *Jesus and the Disinherited*.)

In this 1st Century context, Hillel taught that every person bore the image of the Divine, and worshipping God was revealed in how one treated another regardless of whether they were Jew or Gentile. But Shammai sharply distinguished between Jew and Gentile—we could call it "Jewish pride" or "Jewish Power"—and his school framed it as a matter of Jewish survival while the Jewish self was being denied by Roman oppression. In our time, James H. Cone in his book *Black Theology and Black Power*, within the context of his own experience, rightly rejects defining Black Power as an effort to "assert their right to dominance over others because of



a belief in black superiority...Black Power is an affirmation of the humanity of blacks in spite of white racism." (*Black Theology and Black Power*, p. 14-16, emphasis added.) The same could be said regarding LGBTQ Pride as a necessary expression of affirming the humanity of those whose humanity has been denied by the dominant sector of society. Protesting Jewish subjugation in the context of the Jesus story could very easily be seen as a Jewish Lives Matter movement within early first century Palestine.

Jesus does not condemn the School of Shammai's survival technique in our saying this week. His Jewish listeners did not need to have their self further denied: their oppressors were already doing that. They needed their self affirmed and liberated from oppression. While supremacy anywhere in society opposes egalitarianism, feelings of supremacy in the hearts of oppressors are of a markedly different quality than claims of superiority oppressed people might make. Jesus does push back on his audience's claim to be superior while using the oppressor's ethics. When they loved only those who loved them, Jesus said, their morality was no greater than their oppressors' morality. For Jesus, failing to love people who might never give anything in return negated any claim to moral superiority. If the "Jewish Pride" and "Jewish Power" movements of his day would enter into the new human society they were seeking to establish, it would not be through more disconnectedness, but through endeavoring to embrace humanity's interconnectedness and interdependence. In other words, in response to a "Jewish Lives Matter" statement, Jesus as a fellow Jew is

not disregarding their daily struggle to survive by responding, "No, All Lives Matter." To the contrary, he is saying, "Yes, Jewish lives DO matter! And if our liberation is going to made a reality, we must live by set of ethical teachings greater than those presently adhered to by our oppressors!" The teaching we are looking at this week asks us to live from the truth of interconnectedness by taking care of those from whom we will never receive anything in return.

The Prozbul

We have spoken about Hillel's prozbul enough over the last few weeks that I won't detail it this week. Where Jesus mirrors the school of Hillel in their broader interpretation of Torah, Jesus pushes them even further on economics.

Jesus's economics, in harmony with the Deuteronomic code (Deuteronomy 15:9), called the wealthy elite to lend even if the sabbatical year was approaching and to expect their loans not to be repaid.

To lend knowing that all debts would be cancelled in the Sabbatical year and your money would never repaid was a pathway toward wealth redistribution and a way to eliminate poverty among the Jewish people (see Deuteronomy 15:4). Today, some fear "socialism" or "communism" yet wealth redistribution from the wealthy to the poor was central to Jesus's economic teachings in *Sayings Gospel Q*. He taught his followers to lend even if they would never get their capital back.

In *Sayings Gospel Q*, we are called to love indiscriminately and impartially. Jesus

The Last Two Weekends

Stanley Adventist Church
Stanley, VA, USA
August 13, 2016

Hartsdayle Adventist Church
Hartsdayle, NY, USA
August 20, 2016

I sit here this morning thinking about the people I've had the pleasure of meeting over the last two weekends. The settings could not have been more opposite. One group lives in the country, rural Virginia, nestled in the Shenandoah Valley. The other lives in a suburb much further north of New York City. But what both groups have in common is their overwhelmingly positive responses to what I shared with them.

With both groups we endeavored to recapture and possibly reclaim the sayings and teachings attributed to Jesus of Nazareth from within the context of his own first century cultural, social, political and religious settings. And after locating those settings within their own contexts (to the best of our knowledge) we then sought to imagine together their application in our societies today. Some of the values we explored in each location were:

- Nonviolent Resistance and Self-Affirmation
- Inclusivity- specifically when factors of race, gender, sexuality and religion are involved.
- Communicative Ethics where those in positions of power and control of resources allow themselves to listen to the experience of those subjugated within such systems.
- Mutual-Aid as means of Survival, Resistance, Liberation and Reconstruction



- Jesus' call of Wealth Redistribution to the Wealthy
- Jesus' choice for life and his refusal to let go of life even when threatened with death from the elite within the status quo of his own time.

If you've been tracking with our *Jesus For Everyone* podcast this year, much of what we covered the last two weekends has been explored in much more depth there.

Again, the responses by both groups were overwhelmingly positive, especially when the relevance of Jesus' teachings are realized with our own contemporary context. Too often the Jesus story has been read from (and used by) the wrong 'locations' in our societies. Gustavo Gutierrez correctly hints at this when he states:

"Black, Hispanic, and Amerindian theologies in the United States, theologies arising in the complex contexts of Africa, Asia, and the South Pacific, and the especially fruitful thinking of those who have adopted the feminist perspective—all these have meant that for the first time in many centuries theology is being done outside the customary European and North American centers. The result in the so-called First World has been a new kind of dialogue between traditional thinking and new thinking." (*Theology of Liberation*, Kindle Location 136)

The Jesus we see in the gospel of Luke

is not only a very earth-focused Jesus (as opposed to a focus on achieving access to a post-mortem heaven), it is a Jesus whose earth focus is primarily aimed at the excluded, the subjugated, the marginalized, and the disinherited of the earth. As James H. Cone has so famously and aptly stated, "The God we see in Jesus is a God of the oppressed." Jesus offered meaningful wisdom toward survival, resistance, liberation and reconstruction. In short, it was a way to heal our world, or "salvation."

I will possibly be back in Virginia this coming winter for a more extended time with the group there.

The presentations from New York (*The Sayings of Jesus*) can be found on our website. I'll be looking forward to your feedback from those, as well.

I want to thank both groups for their invitation and warm hospitality toward me. Meeting each of you was a genuine pleasure. And for each of you who support the work of RHM, thank you. We could not continue to exist, nor do the positive work we do, which we feel, like you, is so desperately needed both within Christianity, and along side the larger, human community today.

Wherever this finds you today, keep living in love, till the only world that remains is a world where only love reigns.

Impartial Love cont'd from page 3

calls us to love in a way that mimics a God who “raises the sun on bad and good and rains on the just and unjust” (*Sayings Gospel Q* 6:27-28, 35 c-d). Any partiality perpetuates the disconnectedness that pervades our planet.

The answer is to see that we are all interconnected and to love based on that, even if there is no immediate return on our relational investment. The goal is what Jesus called “the reign of God” where people, rather than dominating one another, learn to take care of and provide for one another.

So for all those in whom this week’s saying resonates as true:

“If you love those loving you, what reward do you have? Do not even tax collectors do the same? And if you lend to those from whom you hope to receive, what reward do you have? Do not even the Gentiles, do the same?” (*Sayings Gospel Q* 6:32, 34) ■

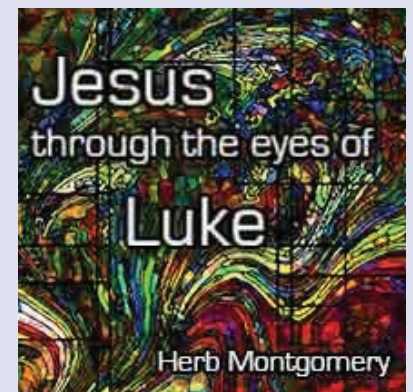


“Without a moral or spiritual **awakening**, we will remain forever trapped in political games fueled by fear, greed and the hunger for power.”

Michelle Alexander; *Something Much Greater At Stake*,
September 18, 2016

Image from sankofa.org

www.renewedheartministries.com



New two-part series on RHM's website

Jesus Through the Eyes of Luke

Part 1: *The Sayings of Jesus: Jesus Through the Eyes of Luke*

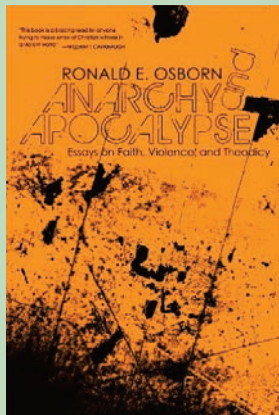
Part 2: *He's Not Here*

<http://renewedheartministries.com/presentation/Jesus-Through-the-Eyes-of-Luke>

RHM's 2016 Annual Reading Course Book for October

Anarchy and Apocalypse: Essays on Faith, Violence, and Theodicy

by Ronald E. Osborn



In this wide-ranging collection of essays Osborn explores the politically subversive and nonviolent anarchist dimensions of Christian discipleship in response to dilemmas of power,

suffering and war. Essays engage texts and thinkers from Homer's *Iliad*, the Hebrew Bible, and the New Testament to portraits of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Noam Chomsky, William Lloyd Garrison, Reinhold Niebuhr, and Elie Wiesel. This book also analyzes the Allied bombing of civilians in World War II, the peculiar contribution of the Seventh-day Adventist apocalyptic imagination to Christian social ethics, President Obama's Nobel Prize acceptance speech, and the role of deceptive language in the Vietnam War. From these and diverse angles, Osborn builds the case for a more prophetic witness in the face of the violence of the "principalities and powers" in the modern world. This book will serve as an indispensable primer in the political theology of the Adventist tradition, as well as a significant contribution to radical Christian thought and Christian anarchism in biblical, historical, and literary perspectives.

"This book is a bracing read for anyone trying to make sense of Christian witness in a violent world. Osborn ranges both widely and deeply, connecting insights from theology, history, literature, and

political science in startling and inventive ways. He shows how violence creates its own momentum, and offers a wide range of resources for countering that momentum. Anyone interested in living creatively in a destructive world will benefit from this book. It is the kind of book that has the power to transform lives." (William T. Cavanaugh, author of *The Myth of Religious Violence*)

"Rich in subject matter and argument. There is a stringency in Osborn's thinking that is prophetic and liberating." (Patrick Jordan, *Commonweal Magazine*)

"This collection of provocative essays on theological and political ethics, with special attention paid to pacifism, warfare, and violence, crackles with energy. Osborn offers a trenchant critique of the industrial-military complex in the USA. What his dialogue partners have in common is the simple truth that war is madness. Once the logic of warfare is unleashed, perhaps even for good reasons, it breaks the bounds of all attempts to curtail, channel, and control it, a fact that calls into question even the noble tradition of 'Just War.'" (*Religious Studies Review*)

Schedule

OCTOBER 15 - 22, 2016

Edmonds Adventist Church
Edmonds, WA, USA
425.771.5302

OCTOBER 28 - 29, 2016

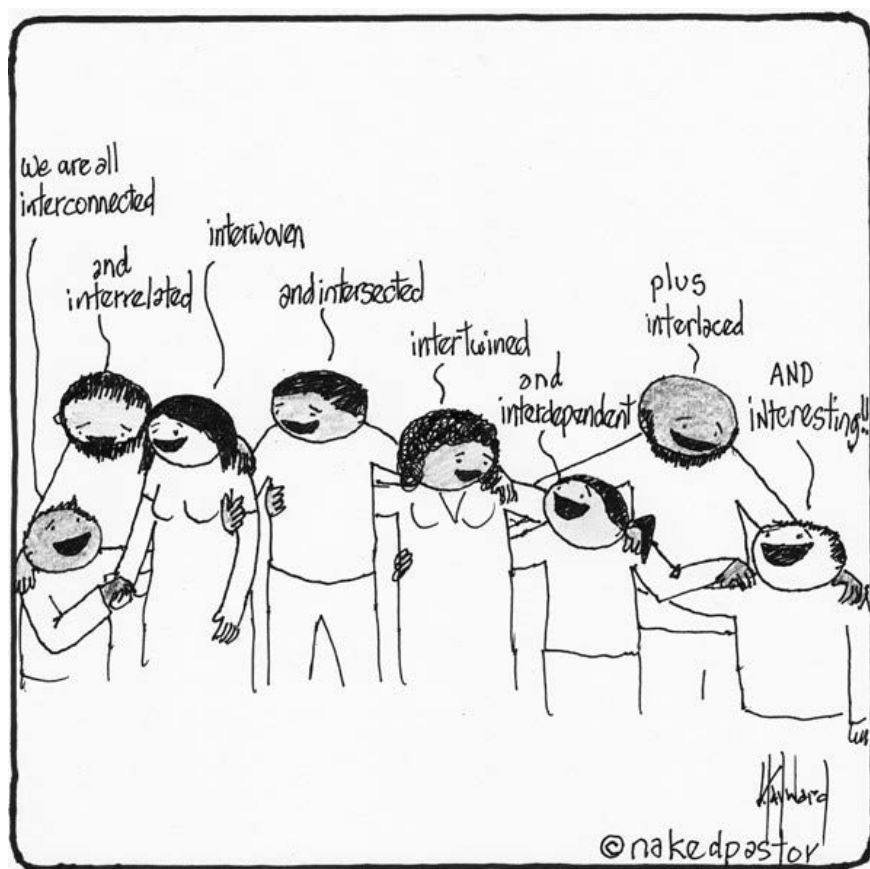
Glendale City Church
Glendale, CA, USA
818.244.7241

NOVEMBER 11 - 12, 2016

Benicia, CA
Benicia, CA, USA
925.323.6471

DECEMBER 3, 2016

Asheville, NC
Location to be announced.





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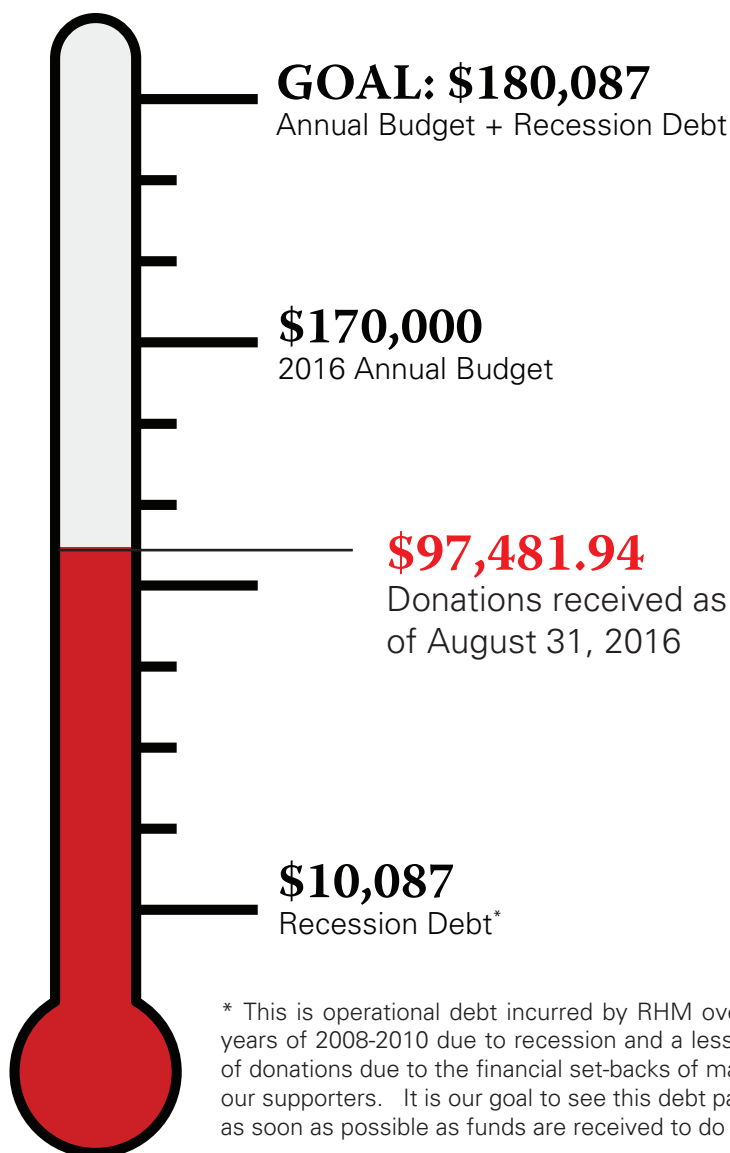
Testimonies

I love you and what you are doing! Thank you for speaking up. My whole perspective has changed over the last 5-6 years and I'm thankful that God brought you into my life at Redwood in 2006. **- KB**

There are times in the ministry of Jesus that His total audience was one. This week, I believe I am that one. Thank you for letting the love of Jesus shine through you. **- Note received from an attendee at a recent event.**

Your three part series The Teachings of Jesus, 2014 [renewedheartministries.com/Esights/07-07-2014] touched my heart. There are not many out there who are saying what you are, and I just wanted to say that I appreciate your ministry. I'm teary eyed at the moment, and it's making it hard to write this. I will be sharing this with our fellowship group over the next several weeks. Our group consists of homeless men and women living out on the streets. I know the women are going to appreciate hearing this just as I have. God Bless!. **- K**

Annual Budget as of August 31, 2016: \$113,333
Annual Contributions received as of August 31, 2016: \$97,481.94
August's Contributions: \$10,252.40



Renewed Heart Ministries is a not-for-profit group that is passionate about rediscovering, following and helping others rediscover the teachings and sayings of the historical Jesus of Nazareth. We believe these teachings have an intrinsic value in informing the work of nonviolently confronting, liberating and transforming our world into a safe, more just, more compassionate home for us all.

Everything we do here at Renewed Heart Ministries is for free. Even the many educational events that we do in various venues. If you'd like to support our work you can make a one-time gift or become one of our monthly contributors by going to RenewedHeartMinistries.com and clicking the donate tab at the top right.

Or you can mail contributions to:
Renewed Heart Ministries
P.O. Box 1211
Lewisburg, WV 24901

Also, please sign up for our free resources and remember, every little bit helps.

Anything we receive over and above our annual budget we happily give away to other not-for-profits who are making both systemic and personal differences, significant differences, in lives of those not presently benefited but the status quo.

And to those already supporting the work of Renewed Heart Ministries, your generous support makes it possible for us to exist and to continue being a presence for positive change in our world. So with all of our hearts, "Thank You."

Together we are making a difference, till the only world that remains is a world where only Love reigns.



RENEWED HEART MINISTRIES

Featured Presentation

Last month, we featured our first presentation from our new series taking a look at Jesus' sayings from the perspective of the gospel of Luke. The Jesus we see in Luke is not only a very earth-focused Jesus (as opposed to a focus on achieving access to a post-mortem heaven), it is a Jesus whose earth focus is primarily aimed at the excluded, the subjugated, marginalized, and disinherited of the earth. As James H. Cone has so famously and aptly stated, the God we see in Jesus is a God of the oppressed. Jesus offered meaningful wisdom toward survival, resistance, liberation and reconstruction. In short, it was a way to heal our world, or "salvation."



This month we are featuring the second of these presentations:

He's Not Here

by Herb Montgomery



New Mobile Device Resizing for RHM's Website

This week I want to personally thank my dear friend Keith Wyland for his work on RHM's website! As a result of the gift of his skills, the version of our website accessed by you through your mobile devices is now significantly improved and re-designed, making it much more responsive and mobile-friendly. These changes will make the content on our site much easier to access on phones and tablets as it resizes RHM's website to fit the screen of your device.

Responsive web design is the approach we have taken. You'll still be on the same website (with the same content) that you access through your computer, yet depending on the device you are using, our site will contract down or expand up to meet the width of your screen. This will make our site much easier to navigate.

This is a very appreciated part of our ongoing efforts this year to make the content we produce at Renewed Heart Ministries much more accessible across the many devices we all use daily.

Thank you, Keith!

And to each of you, happy browsing!

