



RENEWED HEART MINISTRIES

αwakenings

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



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Herb Montgomery

“Do not pass judgment, so you are not judged. For with what judgment you pass judgment, you will be judged. And with the measurement you use to measure out, it will be measured out to you.”

(Q 6:37-38)

Luke 6:37: “Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven. Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.”

Matthew 7:1: “Do not judge, or you too will be judged. For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.”

The saying we are looking this month teaches against judging (krino).

The verb translated as “judge” in this saying has a rather broad meaning, so the only way we can only narrow it is by looking at its textual context. Over the past few months, we have seen the Jesus of the *Sayings Gospel Q* emphasizing the Golden Rule and our interconnectedness. In this context, then, we can define krino as “to separate” or “to make a distinction between.” (*Mounce's Greek Dictionary*) It can be positive or negative. At its heart, though, is to separate another from one's self. It means to discriminate.

Discrimination is perfectly acceptable when we have two things to choose from: we should strive to discern which choices are harmful and which are compassionate. But discrimination toward choices is not the same thing as discrimination toward people. It is judgment or discrimination toward people that is opposed in this month's saying.

It's also helpful to consider this week's saying through the lens of our social dynamics. Too often I hear those at the top of social pyramids say, “Don't judge me! Jesus said not to judge.” They are using this saying as a way to avoid accountability for their actions. At the same time, those at the bottom of certain pyramids are judged by those at the top

continually.

As I said in the dialogue film *Enough Room At The Table*, we're not talking about creating communities where there is no mutual accountability among community members. Instead, we're opposing the kind of judgment that would distinguish and separate us from one another. We are affirming communities where we see ourselves as interconnected with each other, and where we can be accountable to one another. Let me tell you a story that will help make this clear.

I'm in community with two friends that self-identify as belonging to the LGBTQ community. Both are people of color. One identifies as gender-nonconforming, and she prefers the pronouns she and they. The other as a cisgender man, though he is involved in activism for the rights of transgender people. Never have I encountered such accountability as I have from being in relationship with these two. They have continually called me to analyze my blind spots as a white, cisgender, straight male. Being in community with them has never meant that “anything goes” and they do not allow me to live unconsciously when it comes to my position in our society's social pyramid. Each of us is deeply committed to an expression of strict ethics rooted in compassion, interconnectedness, and the golden rule. Each of us is dedicated to a Shared Table world view, and, just like them, I am called to come to that table in a posture of humility and learn about other people's experiences in our world.

I wouldn't for a moment ever say that these friends have ever judged me. Yes, they have called me on the carpet for my ignorance at times, and there have been times when these moments were even painful to my misplaced ego. But their feedback has always been in the spirit of connectedness. My friends make it clear that we are in this together.

The community that Jesus is teaching about in this month's saying is not a community where we throw out all values, as some today wrongly imagine a judgment-free community would. The community Jesus points to, and the community I have experienced with my friends and others, is a community where

cont'd on page 3

Not Judging

Originally Posted Online on March 18, 2016

by Herb Montgomery

Quotable Quotes

“Judgement is the forbidden objectivization of the other person which destroys single-minded love.”

– Dietrich Bonhoeffer
The Cost of Discipleship

Not Judging cont'd from page 2

I have allowed my own values to be informed by members of the community that my previous values had harmed. There's a world of difference between throwing out all values, and holding strictly to a new set of values that come from embracing our interconnectedness with each other rather than judging and separating from each other. In this community, there is no us-versus-them. There is only us.

This kind of community centers the voices of oppressed and marginalized people. This is not a community that holds on to domination or subjugation in any form. Religious communities characterized by heterosexism, racism, or sexism sometimes claim to be simply trying to hold to account those who don't align with their values, and disciplining those others "out of love." So it is very difficult to get these communities to see that what they are really engaging in is not love, but discrimination. They claim to be, in love, pointing out the self-destructive "sin" of others. But they fail to see that by disconnecting (krino) themselves from those they claim to love, they risk developing a false feeling of moral superiority, and they also risk failing to listen. Listening is a way to allow our values to be shaped by other people, and is essential for people accustomed to harming other people.

By contrast, it is acceptable to for those receiving this type of unjust or prejudicial treatment to respond to would-be judges with Jesus's teaching "Do not judge." For those at the bottom of a social pyramid, even one claiming the authority of the Bible, asking for an end to discriminatory judgment is survival. They aren't crying out for a community without boundaries; rather, they are desperately longing for a community characterized by a posture of listening and not one of judgment, a community that embraces the interconnectedness of humanity rather than sharply drawn lines between kinds

of people.

Remember, like the sayings last week, this saying of Jesus was written during a time when the rabbinical school of Shammai was dominant. The school of Shammai drew sharp lines between Jew and Gentile, but didn't stop there. It never does. Before long, lines were also drawn between what we might call today "fundamentalist" Jews and Jewish people who were more all-embracing.

In his book, *Laying Down The Sword: Why We Can't Ignore the Bible's Violent Verses*, Philip Jenkins shows how the conquest narratives of Canaan have fueled and justified Christianity's violence through history. Jenkins then looks at today's headlines in Palestine. I believe what we see happening today illustrates the trajectory Jesus challenged in his own social context.

Jenkins writes: "Jewish extremists do not confine their campaigns to attacking Arabs and Muslims. As Rabbi Lamm observed, in trying to show the moral and intellectual perils of the Amalek doctrine, the concept is infinitely expandable... Next would come the turn of religious Jews whose faith is not quite what the strictest Orthodox think it should be. Actually, in terms of their condemnations, rather than of actual violence, that is a fair description of how some extremists have escalated the biblical commands. As the ultra-Orthodox have grown, so they have become ever more strident in denouncing mainstream or secular Jews who, they believe, fall short of the theocratic standards that are demanded of the new Israel."

The entire book is really worth your reading. It is an excellent critique of Bible-based segregation, what we would call "judging" others, and the violence that results from both. In Sayings Gospel Q, Jesus stands in the spirit of Hillel against this human tendency and teaches instead "do not judge." Do not engage in the game of "us and them." Ultimately, there

is no "them." There is no "other." There is only "us." And our future depends on seeing and embracing this reality.

For the same measures that we use for others will be used for us. We will reap the intrinsic results of what we sow. Jesus lays the choice before us: the way of discrimination, segregation, extirpation, and global annihilation, or the way of compassion, interrelation, integration, cooperation, restoration, and peace. The way of judgment will not stop at your own doorstep. The law of reciprocity will work either for or against all of us.

We have the power to set in motion the kind of world we would like to live in. Choosing to live in harmony with the type of world we desire is choosing to take the first step toward it.

As Jesus says: "Do not pass judgment, so you are not judged. For with what judgment you pass judgment, you will be judged. And with the measurement you use to measure out, it will be measured out to you." (Q 6:37-38)

HeartGroup Application

This week,

1. List the changes you would like to see in your world.
2. List the values associated with those changes as well as discussing both of your lists (changes and values) with your HeartGroup to help you with any of your potential blind spots within both lists.
3. Choose to put at least one of those values into practice this week.
Do not judge.
Do not look at others as separate from yourself. Embrace our interconnectedness with each other, and keep living in love; till the only world that remains is a world where only love reigns.

I love each of you dearly.

Oh, and Merry Christmas! ■



BLACK LIVES MATTER

#BlackLivesMatter Renewed Heart Ministries and the Lewisburg Interfaith Fellowship

**Lewisburg, WV
October 8, 2016**

"When Black people get free, everybody gets free." – Alicia Garza

In October, we at Renewed Heart Ministries had the immense privilege of partnering with Lewisburg Interfaith Fellowship to bring Dr. Keisha McKenzie to Lewisburg to speak to those in our area regarding the history of #BlackLivesMatter, the platform of the Movement for Black Lives and its engagement in social injustice. Some of the highlights of Keisha's presentation were when she shared personally about her own participation in a candlelight vigil and her witness of public grieving being coldly met with a show of compassionless, military, national force. I was also asked to share my experience as I participated alongside my thirteen-year-old daughter in the rallies and marches in Baltimore in the wake of the murder of Freddie Gray (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Death_of_Freddie_Gray). The portion of Dr. McKenzie's presentation which resonated deeply was when she addressed the Christian faith, specifically key elements of our faith practices that demand solidarity, resistance, and transformation as imperative responses to injustice.

One of the most moving moments of the evening, though, was when the presentation was opened for questions and we witnessed the exchange between

Joan Browning and Dr. McKenzie. Joan is a freelance writer and lecturer living here in Greenbrier County. Joan was a participant in the Paine College Steering Committee demonstrations in Augusta, Georgia, in April 1961, and in the Atlanta Student Movement sit-ins in Atlanta in 1961-63, and was one of nine Albany Freedom Riders on the last freedom ride. (You can find out more about Joan here: crmvet.org/vet/browning.htm) Dr. McKenzie was speaking as an eyewitness for the Movement for Black Lives today (<https://policy.m4bl.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/20160726-m4bl-Vision-Booklet-V3.pdf>). Browning spoke as an eyewitness of its predecessor—the Civil Rights Movement of the 20th century. And we were the blessed recipients to witness them both sharing in the same room.

Afterward I had the honor of meeting some new folks from our community and listening to them tell their experiences here locally, as well.

I wish each of you reading this could have been there. McKenzie did write of her experience with us on her blog (mackenzian.com/blog/2016/10/08/freedom-wva/).

Thank you Keisha for sharing with us. Thank you Joan for sharing, as well. And thank you Rev. Nina Emmerling and Lewisburg Interfaith Fellowship for inviting us here at Renewed Heart Ministries to partner with you for this event.

The future will be as bright as we choose for it to be. We have before us both the capacity and an overwhelming opportunity for transformative work; to make our world a just, safe and compassionate home for us all.

Schedule

FEBRUARY 10 - 12, 2017

Spirit Alive
Oshawa, Ontario, Alberta
Canada
905.571.658

FEBRUARY 17 - 18, 2017

Stanley SDA Church
Stanley, VA, USA
540.333.4458

MARCH 3, 2017

Harvey Adventist Church
Harvey, ND USA
701.580.1676



Jesus For Everyone Weekly Podcast

You can access our weekly podcast by three different methods:

1. Listen directly by going to Renewed Heart Ministries' podcast page: renewedheartministries.com/Podcasts
2. Access it through iTunes by going to: <http://apple.co/1rYmBQ9>
3. Or access it through your favorite RSS reader by pointing your reader to: renewedheartministries.com/podcasts/podcast.xml

New episodes every Friday.

A Weekend at Glendale City Church

Glendale, CA
October 28-29, 2016

If I had to name one church that I've visited over the years that stands head and shoulders above the rest in providing a safe space for the vulnerable and marginalized within our society, it would be the Glendale City Church in Glendale, CA.

I've been to this church before, and this year they invited me back again. What made this year's visit special is that the weekend was combined with a screening film *Enough Room at the Table*. *Enough Room at the Table* is the follow up film to the documentary *Seventh Gay Adventist*. (If you have not seen the follow up film yet you can do so here: enoughroomfilm.com) Friday evening after the screening, Daneen Akers, Stephen Evers, Pablo Ariza, Rhonda Dinwiddie, and myself fielded comments, questions, and response from the audience. It was a special time for all present.



The next morning I gave two presentations *The Healing of Our World* and *Jesus Interrupted*. Both of these presentations are treatments of new material and will be available on our website soon. The first presentation was our featured presentation last month and can be listened to on our website.

The afternoon Daneen Akers and I co-facilitated a discussion titled *Women,*

Mother God, and Jesus. This also was a special time of sharing. Daneen shared her story of her first awakenings to sense how under-represented she was in the Imago Dei through the liturgy and religious language of her own tradition. I also shared my journey toward more inclusive language in referencing the sacred and the divine. We both pointed out some of the areas

within the Christian religious tradition and theology that are problematic specifically for women. We affirmed the areas of the Christian religion which affirm women, recognizing that much more work in this area is needed. As we centered our discussion in the experiences of women, we grappled with Rosemary Reuther's question of whether a male Jesus has anything to offer women in their work toward survival, resistance and liberation. The remainder of the time was spent opening up the space for others in the room to share their stories. You can access this time of sharing here: <http://glendalecitychurch.org/?sermon=herb-montgomery-daneen-akers-women-mother-god-and-jesus-300am-afternoon-seminar>.

I want to thank the Glendale City Church, and specifically pastor Todd Leonard, for inviting me back this year. I also want to thank the Glendale City Church community at large for creating and intentionally holding open safe spaces, such as we experienced this weekend, within the Adventist tradition where questions and discussions of this nature can take place. I'm sure this is needed in other traditions. Adventism is one of the traditions where it is absolutely imperative. Thank you.

I'm looking forward to next year already!



"To put it boldly, **compassion** for Jesus was **political**. He directly and repeatedly **challenged** the dominant sociopolitical paradigm of his social world and advocated instead what might be called a **politics of compassion**."

—Marcus J. Borg; Meeting Jesus Again for the First Time

www.renewedheartministries.com



A Reflective Week in Edmonds Washington

Edmonds, WA

October 15-22, 2016



"The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." (Luke 4:18-19)

Peter Gomes, in his insightful volume, *The Scandalous Gospel of Jesus* reminds us: "We can understand a reluctance to focus too much on the content of Jesus' preaching, largely because it is easier to talk about him than it is to talk about what he talked about" (p. 18).

I was invited to Edmonds WA, not to take about Jesus, but to talk about the things that, to the best of our knowledge, Jesus talked about. The topics included our need to structure our discussions on theology, ethics and politics in a way that centers the experiences of those on the undersides and margins of our society. We looked at Jesus' new hope as, in its simplest form, people taking responsibility to take care of people. In a world where many of us are tempted to solve the problems of our future for ourselves at the expense of others around us, we imagined what a world where each of us thrives interdependently together might look like. We discussed the economic teachings of Jesus and considered those as our point of departure, spring-boarding to lesser understood, unjust, oppressive, hierarchal arrangements in our societies, as well. We contrasted looking at Jesus's teachings through the lens of unilateral, hero worship versus as a demonstration of the power of community, embracing our natural dependence on each other. We closed the week contemplating the

RHM's 2016 Annual Reading Course Book for December

The First Christmas: What the Gospels Really Teach About Jesus's Birth

by Marcus J. Borg and John Dominic Crossan

"Who could argue with the message the authors draw from the Bible's Christmas stories? Light in the darkest time of the year, hope in a period of creeping despair—these are powerful and universal themes that can give everyone a stake in Christmas" —*USA Today*.

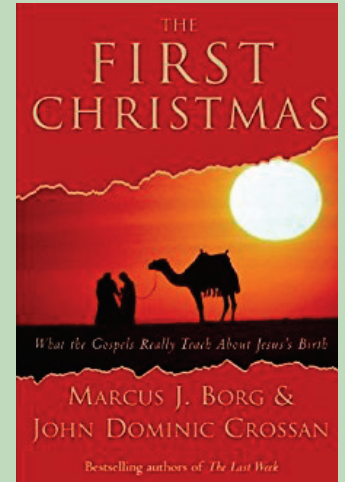
In *The First Christmas* Marcus J. Borg and John Dominic Crossan—top Jesus scholars and authors of *The Last Week*—help us see the real Christmas story buried in the familiar Bible accounts. Basing their interpretations on the two nativity narratives in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, Borg and Crossan focus on the literal story—the inner truth rather than the historical facts—to offer a clear and uplifting message of hope and peace. With *The First Christmas* readers get a fresh, deep, and new understanding of the nativity story, enabling us to better appreciate the powerful message of the Gospels.

From the Back Cover:

In *The First Christmas*, two of today's top Jesus scholars, Marcus J. Borg and John Dominic Crossan, join forces to show how history has biased our reading of the nativity story as it appears in the gospels of Matthew and Luke. As they did for Easter in their previous book, *The Last Week*, here they explore the beginning of the life of Christ, peeling away the sentimentalism that has built up over the last two thousand years around this most well known of all stories to reveal the truth of what the gospels actually say. Borg and Crossan help us to see this well-known narrative afresh by answering the question, "What do these stories mean?" in the context of both the first century and the twenty-first century. They successfully show that the Christmas story, read in its original context, is far richer and more challenging than people imagine.

https://smile.amazon.com/First-Christmas-Gospels-Really-Jesus-ebook/dp/B000WPXTJ2/ref=tmm_kin_swatch_0?encoding=UTF8&qid=1480534320&sr=8-2

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differences how one interprets Jesus' violent, unjust death make. Rather than looking at Jesus' execution as being the means whereby a "salvation" was accomplished, we considered the possibility that Jesus' death could be interpreted as an interruption to Jesus' salvation work, an interruption overcome, undone and reversed through the resurrection event. And the primitive Jesus community as a community who sought to continue this work through survival, resistance, liberation, restoration

and transformation, as well. Over all, we spent this week exploring Jesus' teachings from the intentional perspective of asking whether these teachings can inform our healing work today in the twenty first century as we seek to liberate our communities from the sicknesses of racism, sexism, classism, heterosexism, ageism, ableism and more.

*The seven presentations I gave were:
The Gospel of Jesus*

cont'd on page 7

Edmonds, WA cont'd from page 6

A Preferential Option
People Taking Care of People
More Than Forgiveness
The Beloved Community & Mutual Dependence
Salvation Interrupted
The Healing of Our World

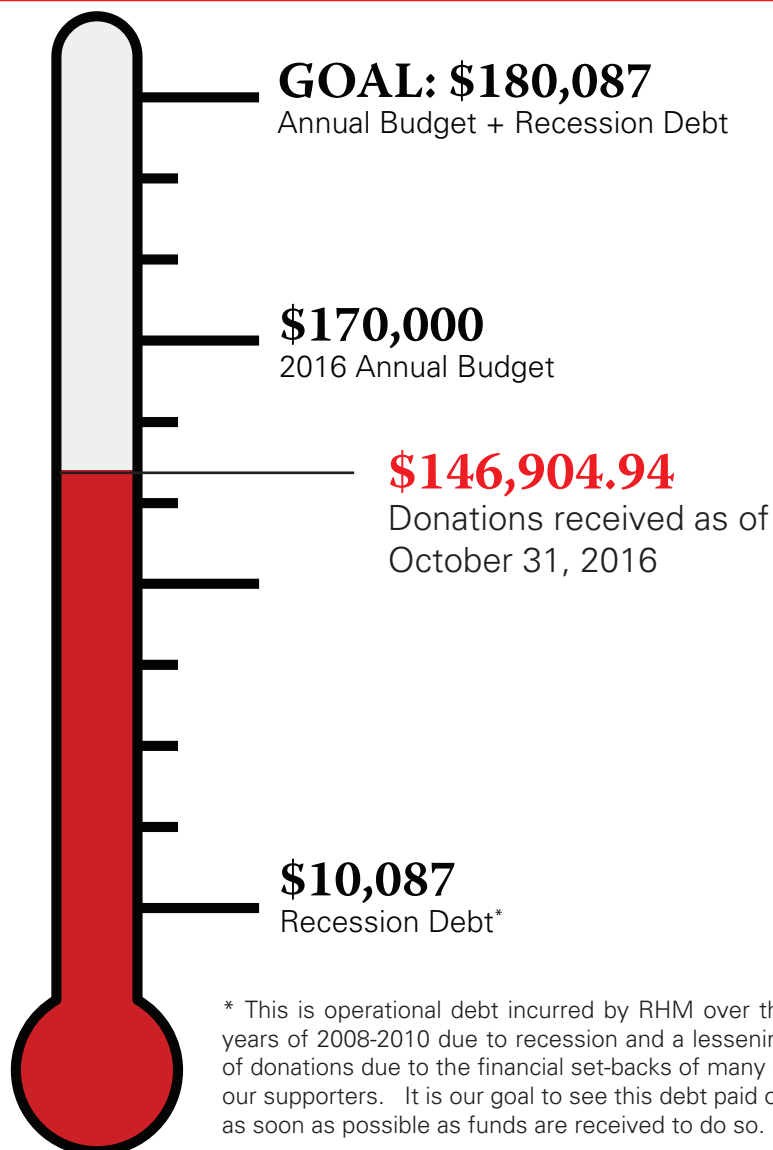
I'm told the presentations were recorded, and if they turn out we will be posting them shortly on our website under the series title The Gospel of Jesus.

The feedback I received throughout the week was very positive. There was a lot of valuable sharing of ideas back and forth each evening in the discussion time in the final portion of our sessions. Looking back on our week together, the congregation there at Edmonds has left me with a lot of hope for the future.

Thank you to the Edmonds Adventist Church for the invitation to come and spend a week with you. Your hospitality and kindness were overwhelming. Thank you for caring about people—all people, above all else. And thank you for making space in your congregation for discussions like these. Together we can make better choices for our future, working alongside each other transforming our world into a safer, just, and more compassionate home for us all.

Here's to a continued discussion on the things Jesus talked about.

Annual Budget as of October 31, 2016:
Annual Contributions received as of October 31, 2016:
\$146,904.94
October's Contributions:



This holiday season, if you are an Amazon shopper, please remember to use Amazon Smile and select Renewed Heart Ministries as your charity to support our work at no additional cost to yourself. Thank you in advance, and remember, every little bit helps.

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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.



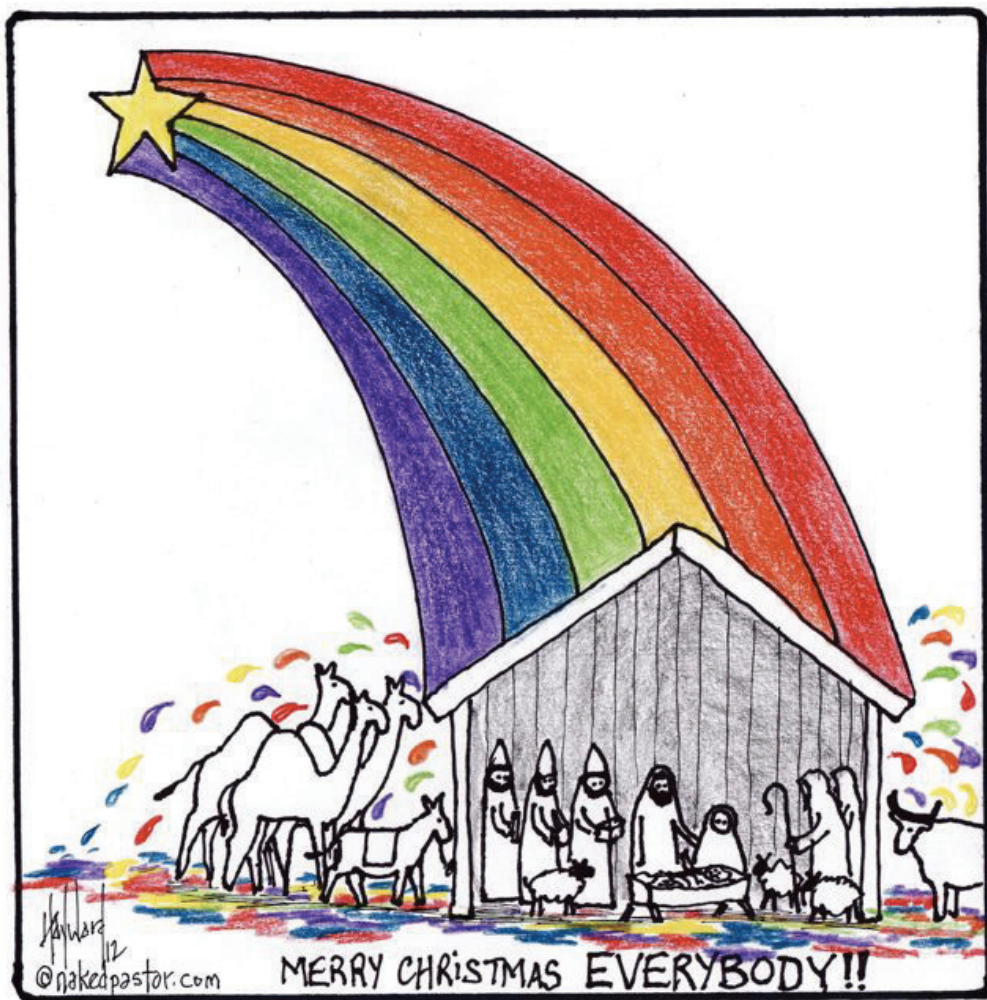
RENEWED HEART MINISTRIES

Featured Presentation

Jesus Interrupted

by Herb Montgomery

This month we want to feature a presentation Herb gave in October of this year titled *Jesus Interrupted*. This was the second talk Herb gave in his weekend at the Glendale City Church. In this treatment of closing events of the Jesus narrative, Herb asks whether in Matthew, Mark and Luke Jesus' death was the climax of Jesus saving work, or was Jesus' execution an interruption to Jesus saving ministry that was overcome and reversed through the resurrection event. If you have ever struggled with the myth of redemptive suffering, our hope is that this month your heart will be renewed and inspired to follow Jesus in holding on to life, even when threatened to let go.



Merry Christmas
from all of us
here at RHM!

