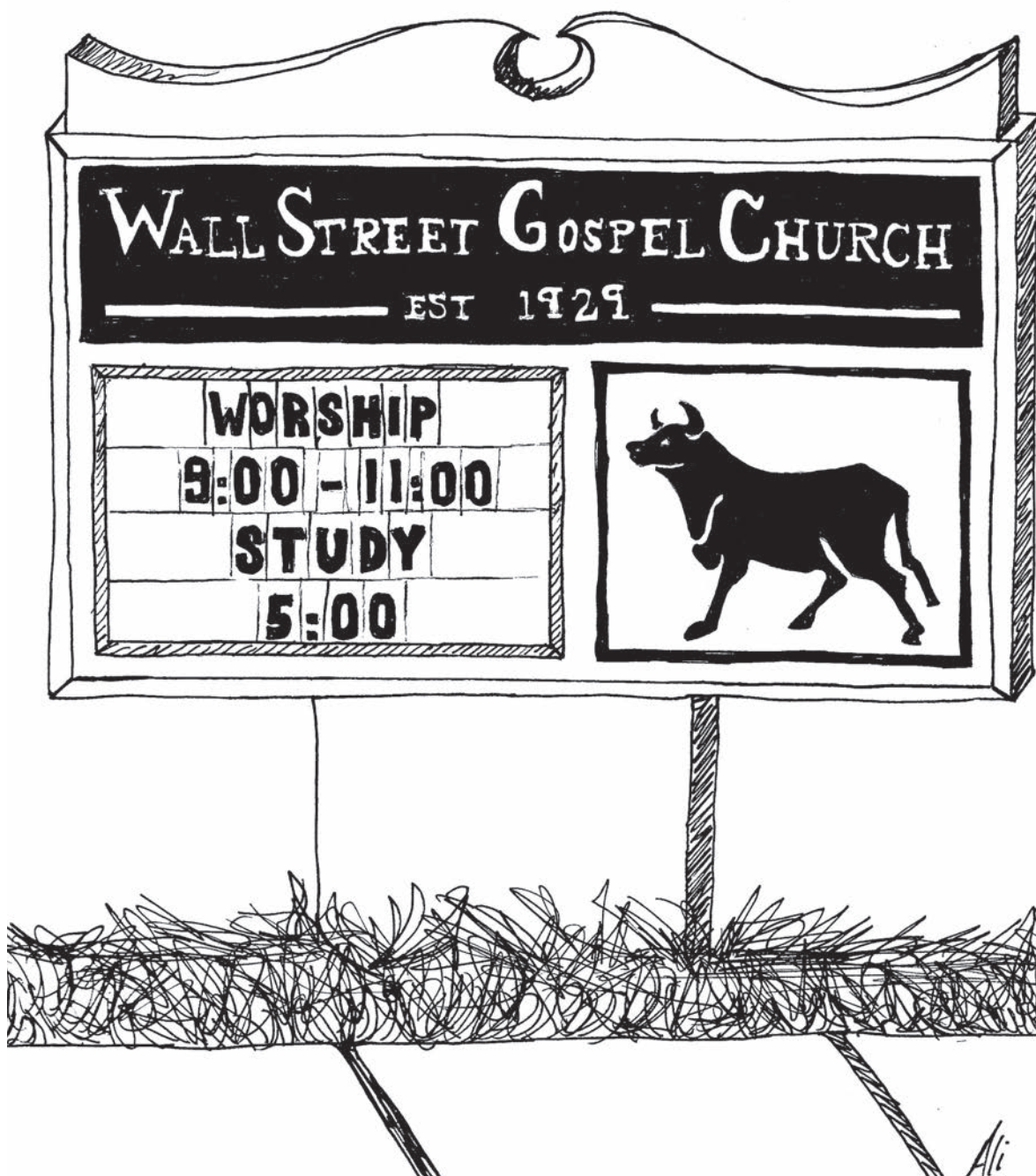




RENEWED HEART MINISTRIES

αwakenings

:::: The Official Newsletter of Renewed Heart Ministries :::: August 2017 ::::



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Featured Presentation

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Renewed Heart Ministries

Follow Herb!



@HerbMontgomery



Herb Montgomery

“For John came to you. The tax collectors responded positively, but the religious authorities rejected him.” (Q 7:29-30)

Companion Texts:

Luke 7:29-30: “(All the people, even the tax collectors, when they heard Jesus’ words, acknowledged that God’s way was right, because they had been baptized by John. But the Pharisees and the experts in the law rejected God’s purpose for themselves, because they had not been baptized by John.)”

Matthew 21:32: “For John came to you to show you the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes did. And even after you saw this, you did not repent and believe him.”

An Appeal to John’s Followers

Let’s step back and look at what’s taken place in Sayings Gospel Q so far. We’ve ended the core of Q’s teaching section. Next was the story of the Centurion that set us up for Jesus’ interaction with John’s disciples. This focus on John’s followers can be further subdivided into four parts:

1. John’s Inquiry Q 7:18-23
2. More than a Prophet (last month) Q 7:24-28
3. For and Against John (this month) Q 7:29-30
4. This Generation and the Children of Wisdom (next month) Q 7:31-35 (see Sayings Gospel Q)

I believe the Q community used this section of the writings to reach out to John’s former followers and welcome them into the Jesus community. These two communities overlapped, and this part of the Sayings Gospel Q attempts to combine the communities into one. In both Judea and Galilee, these followers would have been minorities within the larger Jewish population. It’s not hard to imagine them pressing together to find community and support.

What can we learn today from this week’s saying?

Tax Collectors and Pharisees

Today, we often contrast tax collectors and Pharisees in terms of the Jewish Torah tradition. The Pharisees are presented as strict adherents of Jewish purity codes whereas tax collectors are assumed to have colluded with Rome and lived disregarding the Torah.

But this contrast is a great oversimplification, and fails to challenge the status quo in our own thinking.

There was a cultural contrast between the 1st Century tax collectors and Pharisees. To see it, let’s go to a story that only appears in Luke’s gospel. We’ll come right back to Q, but first consider the story of the rich man and Lazarus that Jesus told in Luke 16:19-21.

The story begins this way: “There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and lived in luxury every day. At his gate was laid a beggar named Lazarus, covered with sores and longing to eat what fell from the rich man’s table. Even the dogs came and licked his sores.”

This introduction includes background references that the first audience would have recognized. J. Jeremias shares that background in his book *Parables*:

“In order to understand the parable in detail and as a whole, it is essential to recognize the first part derives from a well-known folk-material...This is the Egyptian folk-tale of the journey of Osiris, the son of Setme Chamois to the under-world...Alexandrian Jews brought this story to Palestine, where it became very popular as the story of the poor scholar and the rich publican Bar Ma’Jan.” (p. 183)

This story was typical told as an afterlife reversal-of-fortunes tale involving a tax collector and a Torah scholar. The scholar character alluded to the Pharisees. The common way to tell the story contrasted the characters’ regard or disregard of the Torah’s purity codes. Yet Jesus does something more economically subversive than religiously subversive. His version changes the story in a way that the audience couldn’t miss.

Jesus’s version of the story did not emphasize the tax collectors’ disregard

cont’d on page 3

For and Against John

Originally posted online on June 3, 2016

by Herb Montgomery

Quotable Quotes

“You have heard that it was said, ‘Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.’ But I tell you, do not retaliate against an evil person. If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to them the other cheek also. And if anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, hand over your coat as well. If anyone forces you to go one mile, go with them two miles. Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you”

– Jesus;
Matthew 5:38-42

for the Pharisees' interpretation of Torah but instead contrasted those who were wealthy and those who were poor. An economic contrast made no distinction between wealthy Pharisees and wealthy tax collectors. The immediate context of the story in Luke is Luke 16:14: "The Pharisees, who loved money, heard all this and were sneering at Jesus."

Remember that even the Pharisees of the school of Hillel, who practiced a much more progressive spirituality than the school of Shammai, nonetheless practiced and taught Hillel's *Prozbul* in the area of economics. (We explored what the *Prozbul* meant in *Renouncing One's Rights* at: <https://renewedheartministries.com/Esights/02-19-2016>.)

Jesus was a Jew, and not opposed to Judaism. When we understand how much the teachings of Jesus and the teachings of Hillel's Pharisaical school agreed, we begin to see that what brought Jesus into conflict with the religious elite of his day wasn't so much his religious teachings as much as his economic teachings. The Luke story shows that Jesus faced rejection from the Jewish elite, not the Jewish people themselves, and not for religious reasons but for economic ones. This is a very human dynamic between calls for mutual aid and resource-sharing and our universal greed and selfishness.

So back to our saying this week.

I challenge you this week to look at our saying in economic terms. We usually see the tax collectors and the wealthy Pharisees as belonging to two separate camps, but that is not what the narrative describes. In this part of the text, the tax collectors and the wealthy Pharisees both belonged to the same economic class, and they both opposed the poor. They both belonged to the wealthy elite. But at this point in *Sayings Gospel Q*, the writer wants us to know that the tax collectors that religious leaders viewed as "sinners" embraced the teachings of John and Jesus whereas the religious, wealthy elite simply did not. We see this dynamic today among the secular and religious populations in America. There are exceptions to what I am about to say. Yet I see large numbers of secular people who in social and economic matters embrace the teachings of Jesus while large swathes of religiously conservative people who show ignorance

of or even disregard for Jesus's social and economic teachings. Religiously they worship Jesus, and may have incredibly high notions of him. At the same time they are passive about following what Jesus taught about the social and economic matters that are still relevant today. In the teachings of Jesus that we're looking at this week, we learn that the tax collectors and the wealthy Pharisees were the same in economic terms, and so the tax collectors cease being just "sinners" who Jesus ate with. Though the religious elite called them sinners, Jesus described the tax collectors as the people who actually responded to him and followed his economic teachings.

What does this mean for us today? Responding to Jesus may not seem very religious, and it might not gain us the approval of the religious elite. The tax collectors in Jesus's day didn't respond to him by becoming more faithful to the purity codes. But their lives did radically change in economic terms as they joined the followers of Jesus in indiscriminate care for the poor.

This saying might also mean that we find some people outside of the Church universal living lives more in harmony with the teachings of the historical Jesus even as they are in deep disharmony with the religious culture of Christianity. And we might find large numbers of those who proudly carry the title of "Christian" who are further away from following the teachings of the historical Jesus than their more secular human siblings are.

The community of *Sayings Gospel Q* calls us to remember Q 6:46.

Sayings Gospel Q 6:46: "Why do you call me: Master, Master, and do not do what I say?" (Q 6:46)

Luke 6:46, 47: "Why do you call me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say? As for everyone who comes to me and hears my words and puts them into practice, I will show you what they are like."

Matthew 7:21-24: Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and in your name perform many miracles?' Then I will tell them plainly,

'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!' Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock..."

(For more commentary on these passages please see *Not Just Saying Master, Master* at <https://renewedheartministries.com/Esights/04-29-2016> and *Houses Built on Rock or Sand* at <https://renewedheartministries.com/Esights/05-06-2016>)

Again, I want to emphasize that we're not putting Jesus in competition with the Torah. Sayings Gospel Q isn't about Torah observance. It is simply interesting that the people in Jesus's culture who were labeled "sinners" (that is, not observing the Torah) were the ones who embraced John's and Jesus's economic teachings, while those who thought themselves to be very strict about the purity codes of the law did not embrace those teachings. Yet Jesus's teaching was more in harmony with the Torah's economic teachings than Hillel's teachings were. Who really observed the Torah? The people who complied with the Schools of Hillel and the *Prozbul*? Or those who did what Jesus taught?

If this is true, Jesus didn't threaten the religious leaders because he taught a radical new religion (Christianity). Jesus was crucified because his economic teaching was gaining momentum. The Temple Protest narrative in the synoptic gospels was less religious and more about a system of exploitation that the Temple aristocracy had become the center of. Hillel had taught that people could make atonement with deeds of loving kindness rather than animal sacrifice—"I desire love not sacrifice"—and he wasn't crucified for this religious teaching but was instead regarded as one of the most progressive and enlightened rabbis in all Jewish history. So it's important to see that Jesus's rejection was limited to the privileged elite and was not primarily religious but economic.

If today you find yourself resonating with Jesus's socio-political-economic teachings, but out of step with most things Christian or religious, you are not alone. You're in the right story.

Remember what *Sayings Gospel Q* states:

For John came to you. The tax collectors responded positively, but the religious authorities rejected him. (Q 7:29-30).

HeartGroup Application

1. This week, go through the gospels and make a list of all the changes that you see Jesus teaching. Note the chapter and verse references where this teaching is taught.
2. Next, make a separate list of the changes that you've noticed contemporary Christianity expecting people to make when they choose to become a Christian.
3. Sit down with your HeartGroup and discuss what your two lists have in common and where they differ. It's healthy to recognize when the changes we expect a new Jesus follower to make have nothing whatsoever to do with what Jesus of Nazareth actually taught. Some big ticket items to Christians today were never mentioned by Jesus, not even once, and some large elements of Jesus's teachings aren't highly prioritized today. Discuss with your group what you're learning about how to follow the teachings of Jesus more deeply.

Thank you, again, for joining us this month and for journeying with us through this series. I'm so glad you are here.

Keep living in love till the only world that remains is a world where only love reigns.

I love each of you dearly.

See you next month. ■

RHM's 2017 Annual Reading Course Book for August

The Gospel of Jesus: A Historical Search for the Original Good News

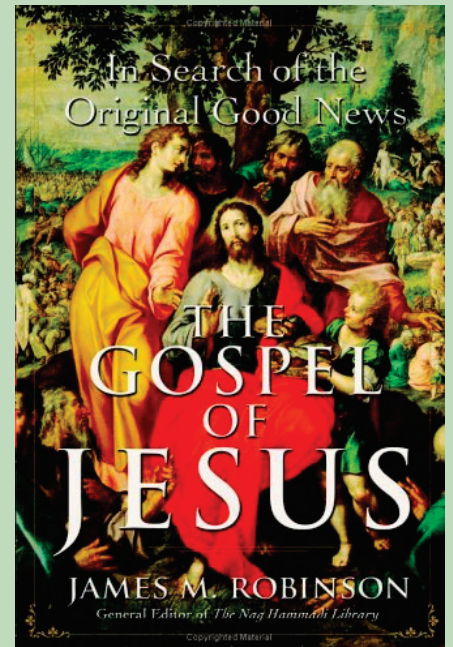
by James M. Robinson

"We all know the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, but what was the gospel of Jesus? That is, what was the original 'good news' the first disciples heard from Jesus? What did Jesus really say that started the dramatic movement in Galilee that grew to become the largest religion in the world?"

Jesus's original gospel has been lost from sight, hidden behind the version preferred by the church. We have put him on a pedestal, rather than walked in his footsteps. In *The Gospel of Jesus*, James M. Robinson, the preeminent expert on the earliest sources of information about Jesus, provides the primary texts in all their unvarnished honesty to get to the true historical message of Jesus -- what Robinson calls 'a brittle, upsetting, comforting, challenging gospel.' *The Gospel of Jesus* draws on a combination of the most ancient and authentic texts to reveal what Jesus really said and to illuminate what he may still have to say to us today.

Drawing on the earliest Gospel, Mark, plus the source for Matthew and Luke, known as 'Q,' as well as from Jewish sources such as the Dead Sea Scrolls and the ancient extra-biblical Gnostic texts discovered at Nag Hammadi, Robinson not only reconstructs the good news Jesus preached and practiced two thousand years ago, but shows how relevant his message still is -- and how we can apply it to our lives today. *The Gospel of Jesus* offers one of the most authentic and stirring accounts ever written of the message preached by the figure whose followers today number more than two billion."

Remember, if you use Amazon.com, please consider using Amazon Smile and selecting Renewed Heart Ministries as your charity to support our work at no additional cost to yourself. You can do so at: smile.amazon.com/ch/20-866354



New episodes every Friday!

***The Jesus For Everyone* podcast**

Where we discuss, each week, the intersection of faith and social justice; what a first-century, Jewish prophet of the poor might offer us today in our work of survival, resistance, liberation, restoration, and transformation.

Find them on iTunes: <https://itunes.apple.com/us/podcast/renewed-heart-ministries/id442036678?ign-mpt=uo%3D4>

or on RHM's website: <https://renewedheartministries.com/Podcasts>





The Last Two Weeks...

Kinship Kampmeeting San Diego, CA



It was such a pleasure to reconnect with so many of you at Kinship Kampmeeting this year in San Diego! This year's theme was Celebrating our Journey. Kinship Kampmeeting is SDA Kinship's annual event. While we were there, my family and I stayed with Daneen Akers and Stephen Eyer of Watchfire Films where we were able to catch a sneak preview of their latest Outspoken installment Camilo. If you have not had a chance to see it yet, I highly recommend it. This one not only tells Camilo's story, but highlights the life and death importance of having and recognizing GSA clubs on Christian university campuses.

Wild Goose Festival Hot Springs, NC



This past weekend I had the blessing of being able to attend this summer's Wild Goose Festival in Hot Springs, NC. I was there with Alicia Johnston, a dear friend of mine. Three of the presenters that I had the opportunity to listen to, and who impacted me the most were: Dr. Robyn Henderson-Espinoza, Rev. Dr. William Barber II, and Rev. Dr. Otis Moss III. Dr. Robyn was a new find for me. Conversations with Robyn between sessions made it overwhelmingly obvious to me how much they have to offer. If these three names are unfamiliar to you, all three would be well worth your making space in your life to give them a listen. They are phenomenal. 500:25:1

A new way to participate in the RHM community



There's still room for you to become one of our 500 people who are helping us launch our new self-hosted, weekend events. If you have not yet heard of our new 500:25:1 project you can find out all about it at <http://bit.ly/RHM500251>.

There you can find out more about why we're launching new weekend events around the country, how you can help to make these events happen, and, best of all, how you can have us come and teach in your area.

Sayings of Jesus: Asheville Coming August 4-5!



We are less than three weeks away from our weekend in Asheville, NC: The Sayings of Jesus; the intersection of faith and social

justice. So many of you have already registered, and we are super excited! For those of you who are in the Asheville area and have not yet registered, the spaces are filling up. This event is free, but seating is limited. We've made it super easy for you to reserve your place for free through Eventbrite. There you can find out more information about the entire event. It's going to be a fantastic weekend together. I hope to see you there!

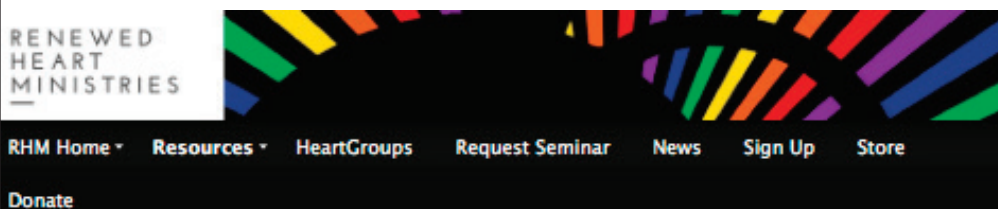


Renewed Heart Ministries Graphics Overhaul

This past month, we updated all of the graphics at renewedheartministries.com.

Check out our website when you have an opportunity, (especially the home page and the audio presentations page, <https://renewedheartministries.com/Audio-Presentations>) and let us know what you think!

We think its a great improvement.



Audio Presentations

List by Title



Author: Herb Montgomery

Appalachian Jesus

2017



Author: Herb Montgomery

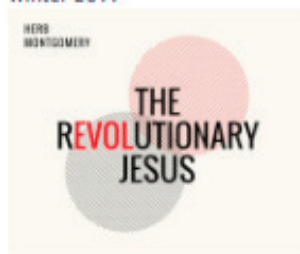
Jesus Through the Eyes of Luke



Author: Herb Montgomery

Spirit Alive

Winter 2017



Author: Herb Montgomery

The Revolutionary Jesus



Author: Herb Montgomery

Glendale City Church 2016

Fall 2016



Author: Herb Montgomery

The Jesus Dialogue - 2015

Schedule

SEPTEMBER 1-3, 2017

AWC

Phoenix, AZ, USA

480.878.8565

SEPTEMBER 8-9, 2017

Good News Fellowship
of Toronto

Toronto, Ontario Canada

416.960.9457

SEPTEMBER 29-30, 2017

Montana Men's Summit

Missoula, MT, USA

406.240.7267

OCTOBER 13 - 15, 2017

Garden Grove Church

Garden Grove, CA, USA

269.277.1226

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Thanks in advance!

Every little bit helps!

Sign Up for RHM's Free Resources!

If you are unfamiliar with Renewed Heart Ministries we are a not-for-profit group passionate about centering a set of values and ethics in the experiences of those on the undersides and margins of our societies, informed by the sayings and teachings of the historical, Jewish Jesus of Nazareth.

In addition to our educational events in various locations, we offer many other resources. These include materials on our website, daily inspirational quotations (eQuotes) and/or weekly articles (eSights) received via email, and a newsletter mailed monthly to your door. You can follow us on Facebook and Twitter. You can also sign up for our news emails to be notified each time something new is available and to be notified of events happening in your area. And much, much more.

There are so many ways to take advantage of Renewed Heart Ministries' resources. If you have not signed up to take advantage



of these, we invite you to do so at the link below. And they are all free!

renewedheartministries.com/Contact-forms?form=EmailSignUp

If you'd like to find out more about Renewed Heart Ministries, visit: <https://renewedheartministries.com/Who-is-RHM>

And for all those supporting our work, thank you. Without you we could not continue our participation in the work of shaping our world into a safe, just, compassionate home for us all. We are in this together, and together we are making a difference.

Monthly Budget Goal:
\$15,834.00

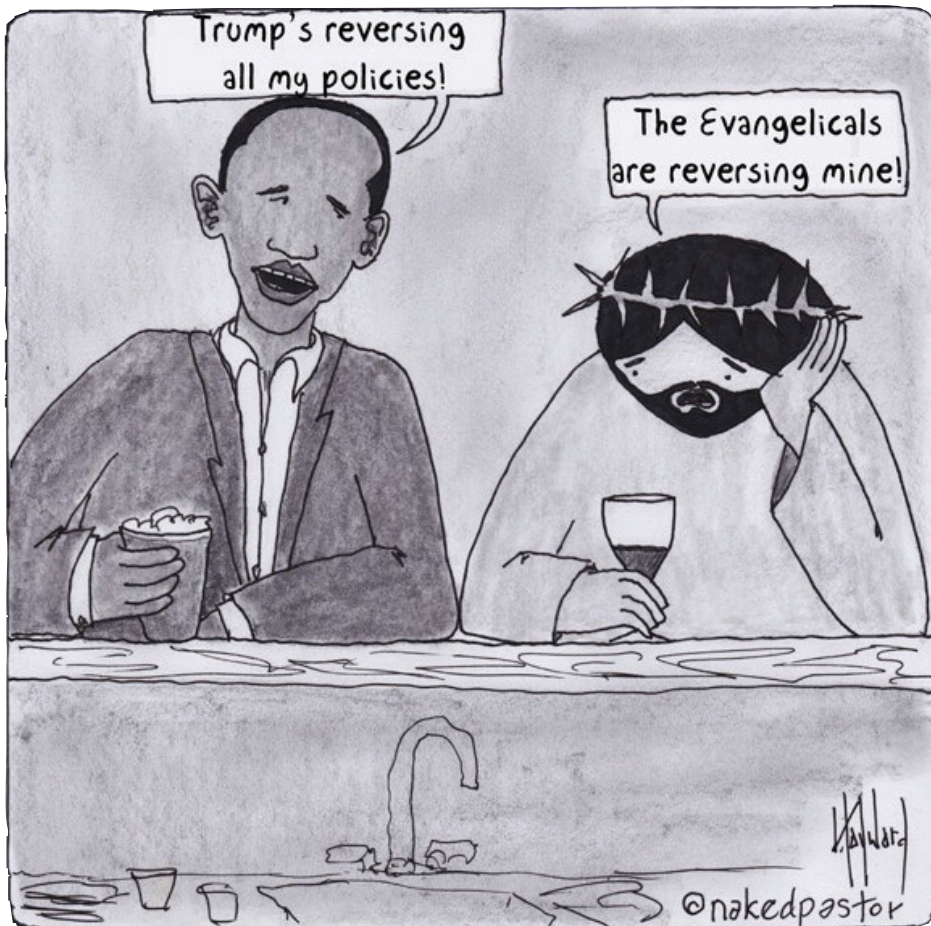
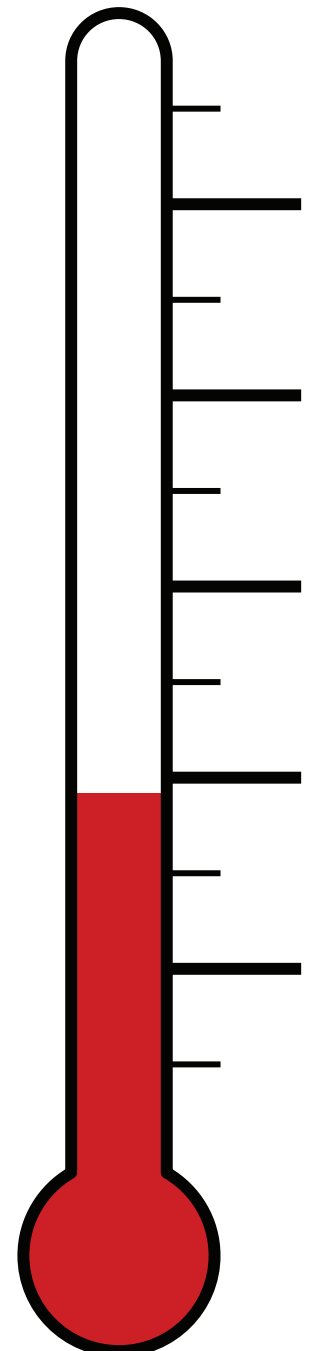
June's Contributions:
\$9,705.04

YTD Budget: \$95,004.00

YTD Received: \$54,940.51

GOAL: \$190,000

2017 Annual Budget



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

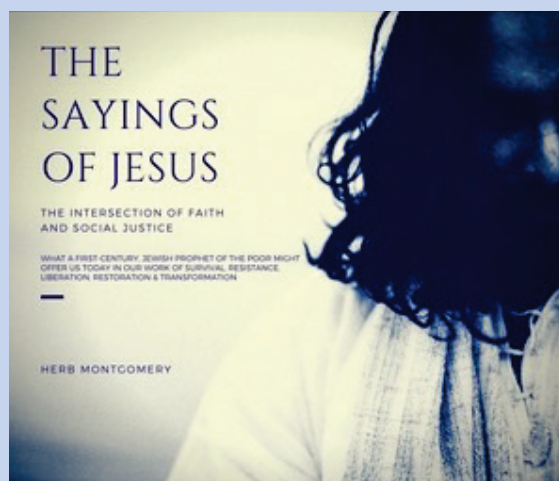
Featured Presentation

As many of you know, this month we launched our new 500:25:1 events with our first weekend series *The Sayings of Jesus: The Intersection of Faith and Social Justice*. Throughout this series we consider what Jesus offers us today in our work of survival, resistance, liberation, restoration and transformation. It's our joy this month to feature the first presentation of this

new series. As you listen, may your hope will be renewed and may you be inspired to action as you follow the teachings of Jesus more deeply. Together we are engaging the work of love shaping our world into is a safe, just, compassionate home for us all.

Jesus From the Edges

by Herb Montgomery.



“If theology does not side with the oppressed it cannot speak for Yahweh who is the God of the oppressed.”

JAMES H. CONE
GOD OF THE OPPRESSED

