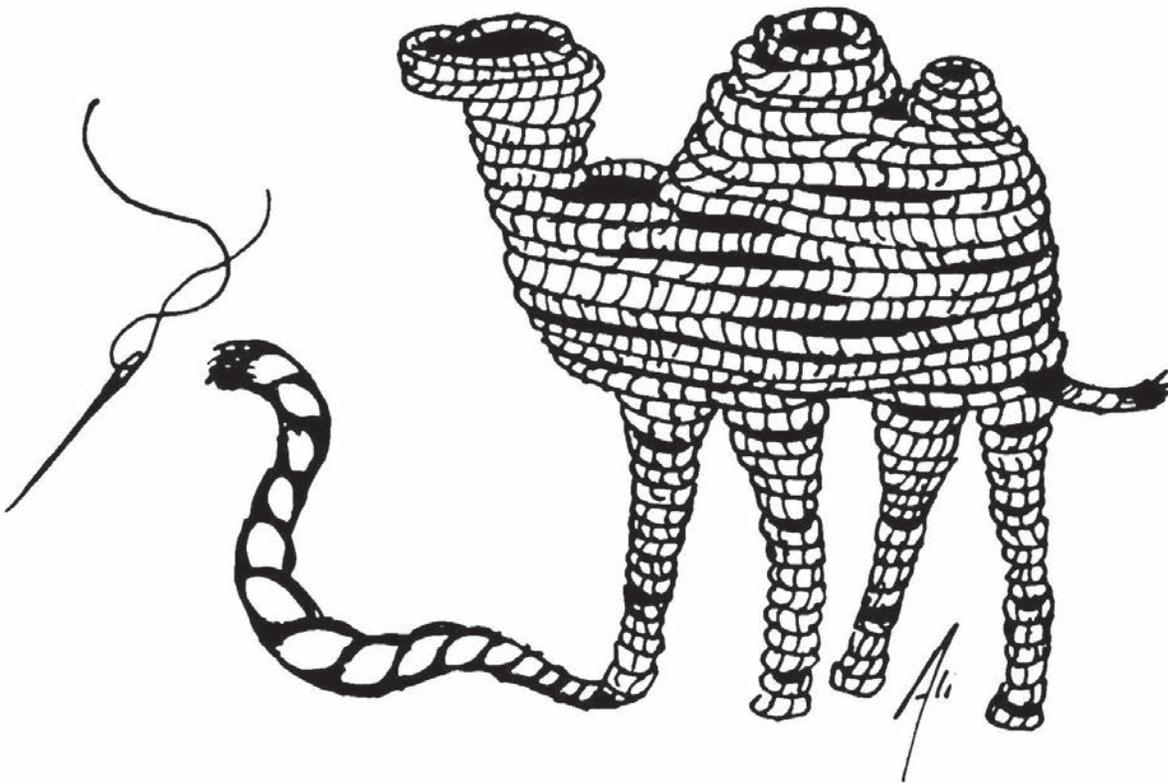




RENEWED HEART MINISTRIES

Awakenings

:::: The Official Newsletter of Renewed Heart Ministries :::: August 2018 ::::



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Herb Montgomery

“The poverty of the poor is not a call to generous relief action, but a demand that we go and build a different social order.”

– Gustavo Gutiérrez;

The Power of the Poor in History

Another World is Possible

(Part 3)

by Herb Montgomery
July 27, 2018

“Jesus looked at him and loved him. ‘One thing you lack,’ he said. ‘Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.’ At this the man’s face fell. He went away sad, because he had great wealth. Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, ‘How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God!’ The disciples were amazed at his words. But Jesus said again, ‘Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God.’” (Mark 10:21-24)



Quotable Quotes

“When you gather your crops and fail to bring in some of the grain that you have cut, do not go back for it; it is to be left for the foreigners, orphans, and widows...When you have gathered your grapes once, do not go back over the vines a second time; the grapes that are left are for the foreigners, orphans and widows. Never forget that you were slaves in Egypt; that is why I have given you this command.”

– Moses;
Deuteronomy 24:19–22

This week we’ll wrap up our series with this section of Mark’s gospel. Jesus is inviting a wealthy inquisitor to join him in practicing Jesus’ preferential option for the poor.

I’m also reminded of a discussion I had years ago with a pastor while I was visiting his church. He confronted me with my concern for the poor, and said that the “rich need the gospel, too.” He felt that plenty of churches in his area practiced charity (not justice, mind you, but charity) for the poor, but he believed he was called to lead his church to minister to the spiritual needs of the wealthy.

As he continued to explain why didn’t focus on poverty, a poverty I believe is created by the current social order, my mind wandered to our passage this week.

Let’s take a closer look at it.

The first thing we see in this passage is Jesus’ love for this man. Jesus doesn’t hate the wealthy. No. Mark’s Jesus loves both the rich and the poor. The system that creates wealth disparity, with concentration of riches on one side of the spectrum and poverty on the other, dehumanizes both the rich and the poor. It dehumanizes both differently, but both ends of the spectrum are dehumanizing. Whereas poverty steals a person’s humanity, wealth can cause people to lose their connection with and become isolated from their own humanity and forget their interconnectedness with the humanity of others.

In this context, Jesus’ love for this rich young man speaks to me. Jesus loves

Front cover artwork by Ali Montgomery.

him and thus seeks to reconnect him with the humanity of “the poor” and thus his own humanity as well. Wealth redistribution is rooted in regaining our humanity no matter which section of the wealth/poverty spectrum you find yourself on.

I agreed with my pastor friend that Jesus loves the rich, too. Because he loves them, he calls them to join him in his service to the poor. Jesus didn’t minister to the wealthy and the poor differently. He practiced a preferential option for the poor and called the wealthy to join him. Jesus didn’t minister to the wealthy by ignoring the poor. Jesus ministered to the rich young man by calling him to “Go, sell everything” he had “and give [it] to the poor.”

Jesus ministered to the rich of his own society by calling them out of a system that created gross wealth disparity and into a system that redistributed wealth, that recognized the humanity of everyone, and that distributed justice to ensure everyone had the means they needed to survive and thrive.

My pastor friend argued that this was only counsel for the young man in the story. Certainly Jesus saw the unique needs of that specific young man. But in Luke and Acts, this was not a unique teaching but one that Jesus gave to his entire audience in mass:

“Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom. *Sell your possessions and give to the poor.* Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will never fail, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” (Luke 12:32-34, emphasis added.)

In Acts, believed to have been written by the same author(s) as Luke, the very first thing followers of Jesus are characterized by is these kinds of actions:

“Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day. They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles.



Photo by Matt Collamer on Unsplash

everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need.” (Acts 2:40-45, emphasis added.)

The entire community practiced this preferential option for the poor to the extent that wealth disparity was replaced with a distributive justice and there were no more poor among them.

“All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of their possessions was their own, but they shared everything they had. With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And God’s grace was so powerfully at work in them all that there were no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned land or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales and put it at the apostles’ feet, and it was distributed to anyone who had need.” (Acts 4:32-35, emphasis added.)

But like the young man in the story above, my pastor friend choose to go a different route.

I have often quoted this passage from James Robinson’s volume, *The Gospel of Jesus: A Historical Search for the Original Good News*:

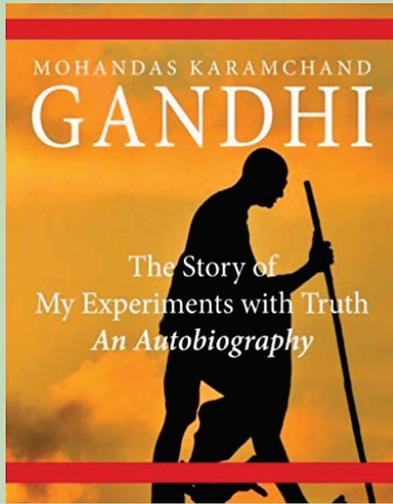
“[Jesus’] basic issue, still basic today, is that most people have solved the human dilemma for themselves at the expense of everyone else, putting them down so as to stay afloat themselves. This vicious, antisocial way of coping with the necessities of life only escalates the dilemma for the rest of society...I am

are cold because I hoard clothing. Our dilemma is that we all hoard supplies in our backpacks and put our trust in our wallets! Such “security” should be replaced by God reigning, which means both what I trust God to do (to activate you to share food with me) and what I hear God telling me to do (to share clothes with you). We should not carry money while bypassing the poor or wear a backpack with extra clothes and food while ignoring the cold and hungry lying in the gutter. This is why the beggars, the hungry, the depressed are fortunate: God, that is, those in whom God rules, those who hearken to God, will care for them. The needy are called upon to trust that God’s reigning is there for them (“Theirs is the kingdom of God”)...Jesus’ message was simple, for he wanted to cut straight through to the point: trust God to look out for you by providing people who will care for you, and listen to him when he calls on you to provide for them.” (Kindle Edition, Location 117)

After the wealthy young man departs, the story shifts to Jesus’ interchange with his disciples.:

“How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God!...Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God.”

The idea that Jerusalem had a very narrow “needle gate” and that merchants had to unload their camels and have their



RHM's 2018 Annual Reading Course Book for August

The Story of My Experiments with Truth *An Autobiography*

by Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi

This is Gandhi's autobiography covering his life from early childhood to approximately 1921. In Gandhi's own words:

"I simply want to tell the story of my numerous experiments with truth, and as my life consists of nothing but those experiments, it is true that the story will take the shape of an autobiography. But I shall not mind, if every page of it speaks only of my experiments... I should certainly like to narrate my experiments in the spiritual field which are known only to myself, and from which I have derived such power as I possess for working in the political field... If I had only to discuss academic principles. I should clearly not attempt an autobiography. But my purpose being to give an account of various practical applications of these principles, I have given the chapters I propose to write the title of *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*. These will of course include experiments with nonviolence, celibacy and other principles of conduct believed to be distinct from truth."

Another World... cont'd from page 3

camels kneel to pass through that gate is fiction made up in the 15th century. We know of no narrow gates in Jerusalem and none named the "needle gate" in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, or Galilee.

On interpreting this passage, I land instead with scholars like Stant Litore who suggest that Jesus said it is easier to thread one of the big ropes used by the fishing community, which many in his audience were from, through the eye of a sewing needle than it is for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. In Aramaic, the words for rope and camel have the same spelling. Aramaic did not use vowels, so these words would have been pronounced differently but written the same way.

In Greek, too, specifically the common Koine Greek of working and poor people, the words for rope and camel are also very similar. The difference is in a single vowel: kamélos (camel) and kamilos (rope), but the pronunciation is the same. The meaning of the phrase remains the same: It is impossible for either a camel or a large fishing rope to be threaded through a small sewing needle.

Jesus isn't making it hard for rich people to "enter" his kingdom of resource sharing, mutual aid, cooperation, and a just distribution of the resources needed for survival and thriving. Instead he's simply being honest about how difficult it is for people with accumulated wealth to embrace this world. A rope (or camel) won't fit through the eye of a needle. And for the rich to enter Jesus new human society, here and now, they must

be willing to let go of their wealth and embrace a distributive justice where everyone has enough.

Again, Jesus isn't picking on the rich. He's simply saying that in his vision for human society there's no longer a wide chasm between the rich and poor. His vision is a society where everyone has enough to thrive. No more rich. No more poor. The sun shines and the rain falls indiscriminately on all.

Today we live in a world where the few who are on top are striving to maintain their position of control. But if one looks, on the horizon, a new day is coming. Will that new day bring a world that is safe, just, and compassionate for everyone regardless of their race, gender, orientation, gender identity and expression, current economic status, ability, age, and education? It's up to us. We can make it that way, if we choose to. Another world is not only possible, it's coming. Change is coming. Let's make the choices that ensure that that change is for the better.

"Jesus looked at him and loved him. 'One thing you lack,' he said. 'Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.' At this the man's face fell. He went away sad, because he had great wealth. Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, 'How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God!' The disciples were amazed at his words. But Jesus said again, 'Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God.'" (Mark 10:21-24)



Photo by Tim Marshall on Unsplash

HeartGroup Application

As of yesterday's U.S. Supreme Court deadline, over 900 parents are still separated from their children. Here are three ways your HeartGroup can do something.

1. If you live in a boarder state, you can volunteer at an organization that is engaging the work of helping families that have been separated. If a protest is happening in your area, you can show up and participate.
2. If these are not an option, you can donate to organizations who are involved and need your support. One such organization (which I know some of the ones who are involved) is the New Sanctuary Coalition. This is a coalition comprised of Auburn Theological Seminary, Central Synagogue, Congregation Beth Elohim, HIAS, Immigrant Families Together, International Rescue Committee, New Sanctuary Coalition of New York City, and Union for Reform Judaism. You can support their work to help reunite families by going to newsanctuarycoalition.nationbuilder.com/family_reunification.
3. Lastly, contact your local elected representatives. It is important that we continue to express our outrage against the current policies. Let them know.

Thanks for checking in with us.

Wherever you are this week, right where you are, keep living in love, survival, resistance, liberation, reparation, and transformation. Together we can make our world a safe, just, compassionate home for us all.

I love each you dearly. ■

To support these podcasts and weekly eSight articles, go to renewedheartministries.com and click "donate."



The *Jesus For Everyone* podcast. New episodes every Friday!

A weekly podcast where we discuss where faith in Jesus and social justice work for the vulnerable today intersect and what a first-century, Jewish, Galilean prophet of the poor might offer us today in our work of survival, resistance, liberation, restoration, and transformation.

renewedheartministries.com/Podcasts

Quotable Quotes

"[Jesus's] basic issue, still basic today, is that most people have solved the human dilemma for themselves at the expense of everyone else, putting them down so as to stay afloat themselves. This vicious, antisocial way of coping with the necessities of life only escalates the dilemma for the rest of society. All of us know the result all too well, for we have experienced it ourselves in one form or another: the breakdown of mutually supportive human relations that results in the distinction between the haves and have-nots; the ruling class subjugating serfs, sharecroppers, and blue-collar workers; the battle of the sexes; dictatorships of one kind or the other; exploitation in the workplace; and on and on."

– James Robinson;
The Gospel of Jesus: A Historical Search for the Original Good News

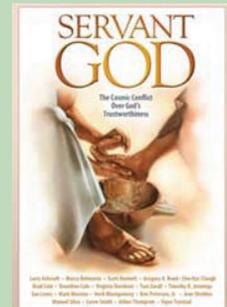
Schedule

SEPTEMBER 7, 2018
First Fridays at Kingsway House
Philadelphia, PA, USA
304.520.0030



Free Audiobooks on RHM's Website!

Listen now at:
renewedheartministries.com/Audio-Books



Servant God: The Cosmic Conflict Over God's Trustworthiness

Written by 16 Contributors including Herb Montgomery



Finding the Father by Herb Montgomery



“The poverty of the poor is not a call to generous relief action, but a demand that we go and build a different social order.”

GUSTAVO GUTIÉRREZ
THE POWER OF THE POOR IN HISTORY





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Daily email Quotations, weekly email articles, podcasts, and ministry updates, monthly newsletters, and more!

Sign up now so you don't miss a thing!
<http://bit.ly/RHMSignUp>

Feedback

"I was introduced to RHM a number of years ago and it has absolutely changed my spiritual life for the better! There was so much about what I believed about God that didn't connect for me until being introduced to a few of RHM's series. I have found an amazing spiritual peace as a result.

A few of our young adult group brought him to speak at our church, and I was introduced to the kindest, most genuine set of people I have ever met in my life. I have since had the privilege to get to know Herb, Crystal, and their family over the years, and I honestly love them even more. I believe they truly exemplify the love of Jesus and strive to make the world a better place." - LD, Oahu, HI, USA

The RHM team, in any given month, consists of a small team of 10–12 people working either full-time, part time, or as volunteers dedicating hundreds of hours to make what we do possible. If you find blessing, encouragement, and renewal here, please consider becoming one of our Monthly Partners with a reoccurring donation or by making a one time gift.

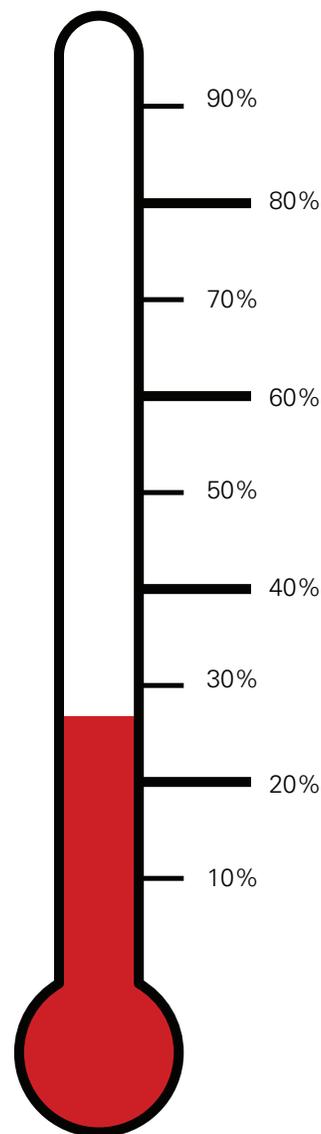
2018 Annual Budget Goal:
\$183,206.00

January–June's Budget Goal:
\$91,602.00

January–June's Contributions Received:
\$54,803.52

Monthly Budget Goal:
15,267.00

June's Contributions:
\$5,977.04



To support the work of RHM and help us grow, go to renewedheartministries.com and click "donate."

Quotable Quotes

"So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honored by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you."

– Jesus;
 Matthew 6:2-4

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 hold in various venues. You can support our work either with a one-time gift or by becoming 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 personal, systemic and structural differences in the lives of people who are less privileged.

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

August's featured presentation is a presentation Herb gave earlier this year at Avondale College in Cooranbong, Australia titled *The Sayings of Jesus: The Intersection Faith and Social Justice*. In this presentation we consider how Jesus' teachings can still impact our lives today as we, together, work toward a world rooted in distributive justice

and compassion for all. It's our hope that your heart will be renewed and your feet set to action as you listen to this month's featured presentation:

The Sayings of Jesus: The Intersection Faith and Social Justice
by Herb Montgomery.



Photo by Ben White on Unsplash