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Renewed Heart Ministries

Follow Herb!



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Herb Montgomery



A Look Back at 2018

As supporter of Renewed Heart Ministries, I want to share with you just a sampling of the responses we received last year from those this ministry had the privilege of impacting. Each one of these testimonies represents hundreds more who have also been touched by Jesus' message of God's love and restorative justice. Please don't read these as notes only to RHM. As a partner with RHM these notes are to you as well! Without your support our work could not continue. Thank you for being part of the RHM family. Our hope is that as you read these, your heart will be encouraged, and you, too, will be inspired alongside us to keep following Jesus in this new year. Another world is possible and these notes of thanks are proof of it.

"I'm so thankful for Renewed Heart Ministries and for the paradigm shift I've been given. I receive your daily quotations and your weekly eSights. I am amazed with the degree of liberation I have experienced through these materials. I have been downloading your podcasts and presentations and passing them onto my family. Thank you so much for opening my eyes renewing my heart, and moving my feet to action as I follow more deeply a Jesus who is a liberator of the oppressed."

"My wife and I hosted Herb Montgomery on a speaking tour of Australia. We invited Herb to speak because few others within our faith community seem motivated by how the historical Jesus modeled social justice. Herb's teaching, while grounded in the first century, is fresh — thanks, in part, to his wide and voracious reading of contemporary practitioners. Herb's preaching is powerful. But what I find most impressive? Herb lives what he teaches and preaches. Transparency trumps so many other values. Herb, and his ministry, will challenge you, even confront you. That may not sound like good news for those of us at the top of the economic pyramid, but it is. It is good because it is changing our lives."

"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."

"I just love Herb and this ministry. Have been following him for several years and can't get enough of it. He brings the sayings of Jesus to light in such a clear and beautiful way as he relates it to our society today."

"I heard Herb speak today for the first time and was deeply moved by his presentation. I came away understanding The Lord's Prayer from a new perspective and committed to become more involved in social justice. Thank you for your honesty and ability to shed new light on basic truths."

"My husband and I have been churchgoers for years, but over the years we have felt ourselves feeling more and more like outsiders. We kept saying 'wait, that's not what the gospels say' (to each other) and asking each other if we were just crazy. It got so bad that my husband felt like he simply wasn't welcome at church. We felt like the proverbial lepers. The people we work with are real people with real problems and we try to help them. It got to the point that we just didn't feel like anything about our church was even remotely relevant to them. In the middle of our discouragement a friend recommended your website. It has changed our lives and breathed new life into our hearts. Please keep doing what you are doing. I thought you might be able to use the encouragement. You are doing so MUCH and it really matters!"

As director of this ministry, thank you for supporting our work. Together we are making a difference. Lives are being touched in the here and now, as well as for eternity.

With much love and gratitude for you,

Herb Montgomery
Author | Speaker | Director
Renewed Heart Ministries



"After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. 'The time has come,' he said. 'The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!'"
(Mark 1:14)

by Herb Montgomery | January 4, 2019

I'm sitting here this morning, after the holidays, contemplating the future of Renewed Heart Ministries. This year will be our twelfth year: Renewed Heart Ministries has been sharing the message of love and inclusion for over a decade.

But four and a half years ago, something changed. We were introduced to a precious community of people who are the objects of God's love and who most deeply face marginalization on a daily basis. Something for us shifted because of this meeting. As the Rev. Dr. Emilie Townes so eloquently states in *Journey to Liberation*, "When you start with an understanding that God loves everyone, justice isn't very far behind."

In 2014, Renewed Heart Ministries started to become a welcoming and affirming ministry. We have become more intentional and passionate about the intersection of the teachings of Jesus in the gospels and our work today of increasing the love, compassion, action, and justice in society. This has been a time of rebirth and rebuilding here at RHM, and we believe we're a much healthier ministry with a much healthier focus, as a result.

Yet these changes have not been without deep loss, both of former friends and of support.

This is why this week's text spoke to me this morning.

"After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. 'The time has

come,' he said. 'The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!'" (Mark 1:14)

John was Jesus' mentor. He had refused to follow in his father's footsteps and be a priest of the Temple state. Possible reasons could have been the Temple state's exploitation of the poor and it's complicity with Rome as means of survival. John had chosen instead another very Jewish option. He chose to stand in the stream of actions found among the Hebrew prophets, the habitat of the wilderness, speaking truth to power.

For every action there is a reaction. And power typically responds to those who seek to name injustice. The reaction of Herod to John's outspoken critiques and call for change was initially to have him arrested. Herod expected the arrest to silence John. Those who have read the story know that John is eventually executed. At this point in the story, though, he is simply arrested. He is silenced by being forcefully removed from the masses.

Acts like these by those in power are purposed to intimidate others and discourage them from pursuing similar courses. They are acts of terror at worst, and acts of warning at best.

John's imprisonment by the political leader Herod had to have affected Jesus. It was a significant setback, and possibly also a warning. Jesus was setting out on a course for which John had cleared the way or blazed a path. In the words of Isaiah, John had been.

"A voice of one calling: 'In the

wilderness prepare the way for the LORD; make straight in the desert a highway for our God.'" (Isaiah 40:3)

Would Jesus turn back? Would Jesus abandon his solidarity with the marginalized sectors of his society? Or would he renew his purpose in the face of John's imprisonment?

For me, what Jesus did next shows his courage. Jesus chooses to stand in solidarity with the vulnerable and marginalized of his society in the face of deeply troubling, political consequences. John had just been imprisoned, and it's immediately afterwards that Jesus chooses to stand before the masses and resolutely say,

"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

cont'd on page 4

Book of the Month for January 2019

Strength to Love

by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

"If there is one book Martin Luther King, Jr. has written that people consistently tell me has changed their lives, it is *Strength to Love*."

So wrote Coretta Scott King. She continued:

"I believe it is because this book best explains the central element of Martin Luther King, Jr.'s philosophy of nonviolence: His belief in a divine, loving presence that binds all life. That insight, luminously conveyed in this classic text, here presented in a new and attractive edition, hints at the personal transformation at the root of social justice: " By reaching into and beyond ourselves and tapping the transcendent moral ethic of love, we shall overcome these evils."

In these short meditative and sermonic pieces, some of them composed in jails and all of them crafted during the tumultuous years of the Civil Rights struggle, Dr. King articulated and espoused in a deeply personal compelling way his commitment to justice and to the intellectual, moral, and spiritual conversion that makes his work as much a blueprint today for Christian discipleship as it was then.

Individual readers, as well as church groups and students will find in this work a challenging, yet energizing vision of God and redemptive love.

*You don't have to order this book through Amazon.com, but if you do, please consider using Amazon Smile (smile.amazon.com) and selecting Renewed Heart Ministries as your designated charity for a portion of your purchase to be donated to RHM at no additional cost to you.



others go without.

Finally, Jesus (I wonder if he was thinking of John at this moment) mentions those persecuted for the cause of justice: those who speak truth to power, who name bigotry, exclusion, marginalization, exploitation, and oppression and experience deep loss as a result of their outspokenness. He mentions those who are insulted by the privileged and who are falsely labeled as dangerous, evil, and heretical, or "too radical."

Yet it is this community of the poor, oppressed, marginalized, abused and mourning that Jesus names the salt of the earth and the light of the world. In learning to listen to those who experience is different from our own, those who are the most vulnerable to a variety of injustices that we begin to see [i.e. "light of the world"]. It is in learning to listen to the stories and the voices of communities who daily face oppression that we encounter the choice to change and the possibility of our social life, our life together as a human family, being preserved [i.e. "salt of the earth"].

I cannot help but think that Jesus might have also been afraid to stand in solidarity with those this world makes last. Would he also be arrested like John? Could choosing and modeling a preferential option for those society makes last, in one degree or another, even cost him his life?

We all know how the Jesus story ended. At the beginning of the Jesus story, though, it was still being played out.

This year, it means everything to me that, as he pondered his future if he, like John, continued to walk alongside and advocate for the oppressed, Jesus chose to keep believing that another world was possible. Jesus chose to keep working toward a world where those are presently made "last" would then be prioritized as those presently favored as "first" (See Matthew 20:8-16).

Lastly, this contemplation of John and Jesus, also makes me think of where Renewed Heart Ministries is today and what the future may hold for us. Has Renewed Heart Ministries faced setbacks as a result of our choice to stand

Courage... cont'd from page 3

Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you...

You are the salt of the earth...

You are the light of the world."
(Matthew 5:3-14)

Jesus is choosing the community of those whose "spirit" has been broken by systems of injustice. I think of those today who no longer have the spirit to keep fighting for a just world, those who have lost faith that another world is possible.

Jesus chose those who mourn because of the present structure. I think of parents like those of Trayvon Martin, or more recently, 8 year old Felipe Gomez Alonzo and 7 year old Jakelin Caal Maquin, whose hearts have been broken by deep loss caused by our society's systemic injustice. This is loss so deep it seems at

times that it can never be repaired.

Jesus chose the "meek," those this world typically walks all over. He chose the community of the ones hungering and thirsting for righteousness—the Hebraic idea of a societal, distributive justice, an end of violence, and an end to oppression.

He also affirms the community of the merciful. I think of those who see immigrants seeking asylum and welcome them rather than coldly stating that they deserve harsh treatment.

He names the pure in heart. In our time, I think of those who refuse to be shaped by capitalism's priorities of profit over people. And he names peacemakers, not peacekeepers: those who are willing to disturb the peace to work for a distributive justice that will give birth to genuine peace, where everyone has enough, and no one has too much while

cont'd on page 6



How have you benefited from RHM's work?

We at Renewed Heart Ministries are asking our followers to share their stories of how RHM has been a blessing to you. We believe every person's story matters and every person's voice has value. Sharing our stories is one of the ways that we bring change and heal our world. Hearing one another's stories empowers us to let go of our fear of one another and enter into compassion. Listening to the diverse experiences of one another's lives

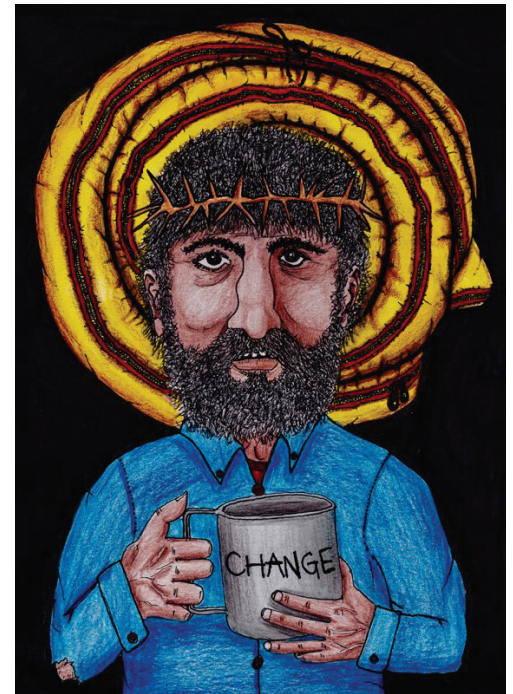
leads us to replace insecurity with a much broader understanding of each other and our larger world.

We want to hear your story! And if you give us permission, we may feature your story in one of our upcoming newsletter issues so your story can help others, too! (But only if you give us permission.)

Will you share your story with us?

Send your story of how you have been positively impacted by the ministry of Renewed Heart Ministries by emailing: info@renewedheartministries.com.

We're looking forward to hearing from you.



Schedule

JANUARY 20, 2019

Special Event
Phoenix, AZ, USA
304.520.0030

JANUARY 26, 2019

F.U.E.L. at Kingsway
Philadelphia, PA, USA
304.520.0030

MARCH 2, 2019

Finding Jesus
Glendale, CA, USA
304.520.0030

JULY 26 - AUGUST 4, 2019

Holy Troublemakers Tour
New South Wales, Australia
304.520.0030



Photo by Emanuel Hahn on Unsplash.com

Beauty is about how different shapes, colors, lines, or objects are arranged together.

Humanity is varied and richly diverse. We can hold our differences in relationships that are beautiful or in ways that are destructive. We have a choice.



Courage... cont'd from page 4

alongside those being marginalized? In one sense, yes.

But in another very real sense, we are in a better place today than we have ever been. Never before has the Jesus story so deeply resonated with us. I'm thankful for those who have taken the time and invested their energy to open our eyes. And I'm thankful for those who follow us who were willing to have their eyes opened, too, alongside us.

Like Jesus, we choose to work for a world where those presently made last are treated the same as those presently prioritized as first. Today, there are so many forms of "being made last." But our differences—race, gender, education, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, class, ability, etc.—don't make us less than another. Humanity is richly diverse, but we are all still family.

And it's for this human family that, alongside those who have gone before us, those presently making similar

choices, and those who will come after us, we here at RHM dedicate 2019 to continuing the work of shaping our world into a safer, just, and more compassionate home for all, especially those Jesus might call blessed members of the kingdom of God.

"After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. 'The time has come,' he said. 'The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!'" (Mark 1:14)

HeartGroup Application

This week, as a group, open up Matthew 5:3-12 and explore through discussion, if Jesus were to speak these words today, whom would he say were the blessed recipients of his vision for human community? Whom would he say would inherit the earth? Whom would he say would see God? Whom would he name? In 2014 I was a guest speaker at my first Kinship Kampmeeting.



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

Go to renewedheartministries.com/news/2014-Kinship-Kampmeeting-by-Herb-Montgomery and read how this experience impacted whom I chose in making my own list of beatitudes then. This is an example of this exercise. Look at our world today and come up with your own list.

Discuss how you, too, like Jesus, like John, can work alongside these communities to bring concrete change this year.

Then pick something from your discussion and begin doing it.

May 2019 bring us closer to rather than farther away from that pearl of great price, that world where everyone is safe, everyone has enough, and where compassion and love are the basis of our relating to one another.

Happy New Year to each of you.

Thank you for checking in with us. I'm so glad you did.

I love each of you dearly. ■

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.

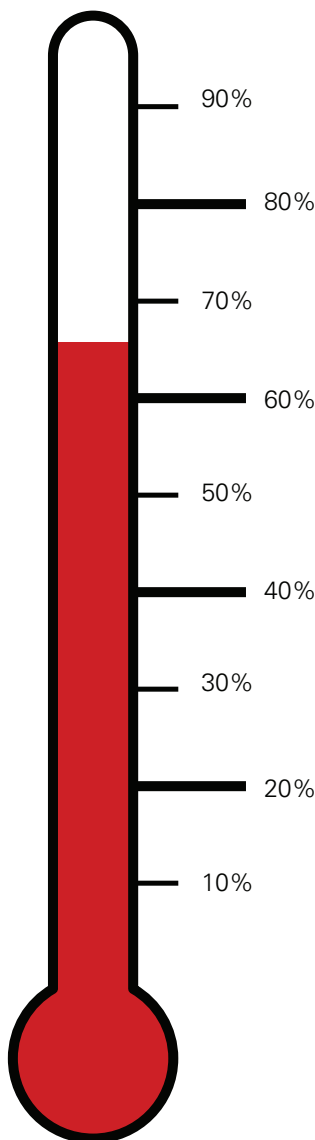
2018 Annual Budget Goal:
\$183,206.00

**January–November's
Budget Goal:**
\$167,937.00

**January–November's
Contributions Received:**
\$120,295.38

November's Budget Goal:
15,267.00

**November's Contributions
Received:**
\$31,055.27



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



Receipts for 2018 Contributions

All contributions to Renewed Heart Ministries are tax-deductible. Receipts for contributions from 2018 will be going out the end of January and the beginning week of February.

Thank you so much for your support throughout 2018 enabling our work to continue.

We are excited to see what we can accomplish together in this new year!



Sign up for RHM's free resources delivered right to your inbox!

- Daily email Quotations
- weekly email articles

- podcasts
- ministry updates
- monthly newsletters
- and more!

Sign up now so you don't miss a thing!

<http://bit.ly/RHMSignUp>

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

Jesus' Gospel

by Herb Montgomery

Liberation theologies, especially within the context of the Jesus story, speak out from the experiences of those whom this world prioritizes as last. Jesus envisioned a day with those who are presently "last" are prioritized the same as those who are presently "first." His gospel was the

announcement that this kind of a world was not only possible, but that it had already begun in the community of those who chose to follow his life and teachings. This month we are featuring a presentation from our series Appalachian Jesus where we are not considering merely a gospel about Jesus, but the good news Jesus himself taught in the gospel narratives. May your hope be renewed and your feet set to action in following this Jesus more deeply as you listen to this month's featured presentation – ***Jesus' Gospel***.



Shared Table Pottery Bowls Update

For those who took part in our Shared Table Pottery Bowls event last October, you should have received your bowl recently. If you have not received your bowl from becoming one of our automated monthly supporters, please contact us directly at info@renewedheartministries.com and we will find out what happened and get you your bowl quickly.

Thank you to everyone who participated in our Shared Table Pottery Bowl fundraiser. Your support is so deeply appreciated.