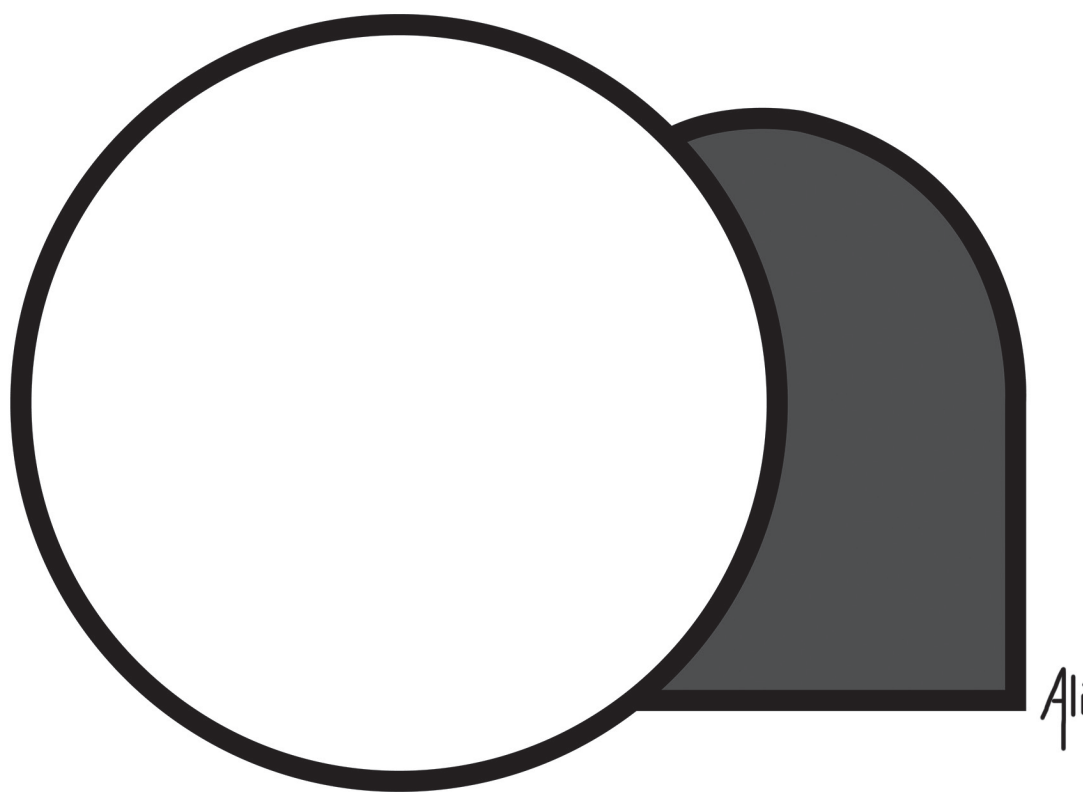


RENEWED
HEART
MINISTRIES



Awakenings

∴ THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF RENEWED HEART MINISTRIES ∴ SEPTEMBER 2020 ∴



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Herb Montgomery

RENEWED HEART MINISTRIES

*Working for a World
of Love and Justice*



2020 has been a challenging year for many non-profits. RHM is no exception. We need your support to impact lives and bring the faith-based, societal-justice focused resources and analysis RHM provides.

Intersections between faith, love, compassion, and justice are needed right now more than ever.

If you have been blessed by the work of RHM, please consider making a tax-deductible donation, today.



"The elite characters in the story represent the political and economic elite in partnership to conquer the life that many of the oppressed and excluded found in Jesus' teachings as a prophet of the poor. The resurrection is not a scientific declaration of a person coming back to life. It's a political statement that the present system does not have to have the last word. Life can conquer even when death seeks to extinguish it."

The Social Truth of Resurrection

by Herb Montgomery

In the gospel of Matthew, Jesus says,

"If you had known what these words mean, 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice, 'you would not have condemned the innocent.'" (Matthew 12:7, emphasis added)

In the gospel of John, we read:

"Jesus said to her, 'I am the resurrection and the life.'" (John 11:25)

What is the truth that the gospels are trying to communicate by including resurrection at the end of the Jesus story? I believe it's the truth, the hope, that life can triumph over death, even

when that death is inflicted by those who control and benefit from a system of injustice and exclusion.

The hope of the resurrection is no different from the gospel that Jesus announced throughout his life and teachings: life can triumph over death-dealing. I want to be very clear here though. I don't believe that triumph is automatic. We have to choose life and life-giving ways of organizing our society for life to ultimately triumph over systemic death and death-dealing. The elite, in their treatment of Jesus, revealed they were deeply threatened by the kind of egalitarian community Jesus taught.

The Jesus stories teach life values that have the potential to expose our political, economic, and religious systems when they are more aligned with death and death-dealing than life, justice, compassion, inclusion, equity, and

safety. Politics, economics, and religion can all become veiled forms of violence driven by fear that others will take what we desire rather than being the means through which we create a world where the sun shines and the rain falls on all in distributively just ways. Religion, too, can become the means of othering those who are different, an elaborate system of sacrifice that creates victims to give us hope. Political death-dealing becomes justifiable or, at least, seems inevitable, economic death-dealing becomes the wisest way to govern our resources, and then religious death-dealing based on the fear of the divine inspires us to marginalize others to keep our gods happy.

But Jesus announced that he was the resurrection and the life. He came calling us to a new human community, a distributively just community that shares with those who do not have and

practices mercy for another rather than “sacrifice.” (See Systems of Sacrifice) Such a community would reject the systemic violence of inequity. Those benefiting from inequity always see these types of communities as a threat. Jesus’ gospel is not good news to them; it promises to take from them much of what they think defines their value and keeps them secure. Everyone has enough to thrive. Pilate, Caiaphas, Herod, and the elite sectors of society these characters represented did not perceive Jesus’ gospel as good news.

Maybe this is why so much of Jesus’ message has been coopted since then to focus on postmortem heaven rather than challenging and transforming systemic injustice in our present world, here, now, today. Consider the three characters of Pilate, Caiaphas, and Herod in the following passage from the

gospels stories:

“Then they took Jesus from Caiaphas to Pilate’s headquarters. It was early in the morning.” (John 18:28)

“That same day Herod and Pilate became friends with each other; before this they had been enemies.” (Luke 23:12)

“Now the chief priests and the elders excited the mob to ask for Barabbas and to have Jesus killed.” (Matthew 27:20, emphasis added)

The political climate in the United States has revealed that the masses can use their power to stand up to injustice, and they can also be manipulated by people in power to promote death and oppose life.

Jesus does not represent those in the system. Instead, he is associated with

those like John the Baptist: voices in the wilderness, on the margins of society, calling for change. The elite characters in the story represent the political and economic elite in partnership to conquer the life that many of the oppressed and excluded found in Jesus’ teachings as a prophet of the poor. The resurrection is not a scientific declaration of a person coming back to life. It’s a political statement that the present system does not have to have the last word. Life can conquer even when death seeks to extinguish it.

In the New Testament book of Acts, the good news was not that Jesus had died, but that life had conquered that death:

“You that are Israelites, listen to what I have to say: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with deeds of power, wonders, and signs that God did through him among you, as you yourselves know—this man, given to you according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of those outside the law. But God raised him up, having freed him from death, because it was impossible for him to be held in its power... This Jesus God raised up, and of that all of us are witnesses. Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God...” (Acts 2:22-33)

“The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, the God of our ancestors has glorified his servant Jesus, whom you handed over and rejected in the presence of Pilate, though he had decided to release him. But you rejected the Holy and Righteous One and asked to have a murderer given to you, and you killed the Author of life, whom God raised from the dead. To this we are witnesses.” (Acts 3:13-15)

“Let it be known to all of you, and to all the people of Israel, that this man is standing before you in good health by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead. This Jesus is ‘the stone that was rejected by you, the builders; it has become the cornerstone.’” (Acts 4:10-11)

“The God of our ancestors raised up Jesus, whom you had killed by hanging him on a tree. God exalted him at his



A Special Message to Our HeartGroups

We at RHM are continuing to ask all HeartGroups not to meet together physically at this time. Please stay virtually connected and to practice physical distancing. You can still be there for each other to help ease anxiety and fears. When you do go out, please keep a six-foot distance between you and others to stop the spread of the virus.

This is also a time where we can practice the resource-sharing and mutual aid found in the gospels. Make sure the others in your group have what they need. We are more interconnected than we realize, as this has proven. And we need each other during this time.

This is a time to work together and prioritize protecting those most vulnerable among us. We’ll get through this. How many ways can you take care of others while we are physically apart?

JESUS FOR EVERYONE

Podcast

WWW.RENEWEDHEARTMINISTRIES.COM

The “Jesus For Everyone” podcast

New episodes every Friday!

A weekly podcast where we talk about the intersection of faith and societal justice and what a first-century, Jewish prophet of the poor from Galilee offers us today in our work of compassion, love and justice.

renewedheartministries.com/Podcasts

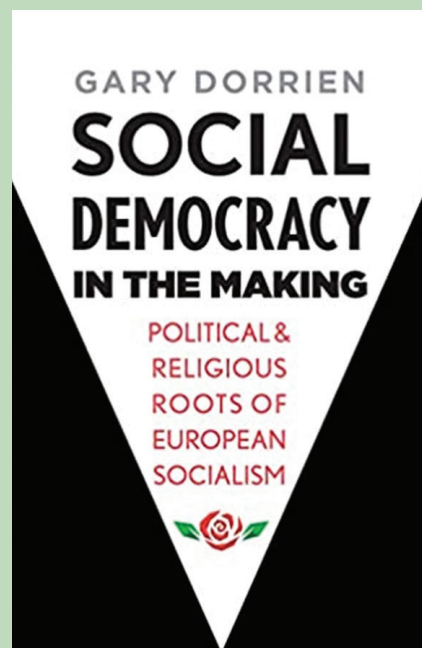
Book of the Month for September 2020

Social Democracy in the Making: Political and Religious Roots of European Socialism by Gary Dorrien

An expansive and ambitious intellectual history of democratic socialism from one of the world's leading intellectual historians and social ethicists.

The fallout from twenty years of neoliberal economic globalism has sparked a surge of interest in the old idea of democratic socialism—a democracy in which the people control the economy and government, no group dominates any other, and every citizen is free, equal, and included. With a focus on the intertwined legacies of Christian socialism and Social Democratic politics in Britain and Germany, this book traces the story of democratic socialism from its birth in the nineteenth century through the mid-1960s

Examining the tenets on which the movement was founded and how it



adapted to different cultural, religious, and economic contexts from its beginnings through the social and political traumas of the twentieth century, Gary Dorrien reminds us that Christian socialism paved the way for all liberation theologies that make the struggles of oppressed peoples the subject of redemption. He argues for a decentralized economic democracy and anti-imperial internationalism.

Remember, 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.

Weekly Zoom HeartGroup on Wednesday Nights

Each Wednesday evening, Glendale City Church will be hosting a Zoom-HeartGroup led by Herb Montgomery. Our discussion each week will focus on the content in Renewed Heart Ministries weekly eSight articles and the Jesus For Everyone podcast published each Friday. The time of each Zoom session will be on Wednesdays at 7:00 p.m. Pacific/10:00 p.m. Eastern.

For more information and for the link to participate each week, follow Pastor Todd Leonard's Facebook page at facebook.com/toddjleonard



#heartgroup #dojustice #citychurchonline

SOCIAL JESUS

A Blog Exploring the Intersection of Faith and Societal Justice



Recent Posts from RHM's "Social Jesus" Blog on Patheos

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/



Three Paths Toward Change Rejected (Parts 1–3)

The accumulation of bread is not the highest value of God's just future. God values how that bread is produced and what its production violates or affirms. Our hope is "not by bread alone."

Begin reading this series at patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2020/07/three-paths-toward-change-rejected-part1/



Social Liberation in the Jesus Story (Parts 1–3)

Their focus was very much on this present world, and the gospels showed a Jesus who taught a path toward righting oppression, violence, and injustice. Their message was that Jesus' unjust execution interrupted his liberation work, and his resurrection overcame or reversed the death that unjust systems dealt.

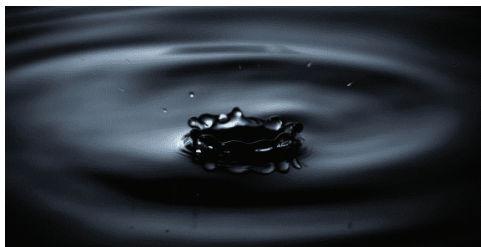
Begin reading this series at patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2020/08/social-liberation-jesus-story-part1/



Saltless Salt and Social Justice (Parts 1–3)

What does it mean for those who claim to be followers of Jesus to lose their salt? Jesus' social teachings grew out of the soil of his own Jewish, prophetic, justice tradition.

Begin reading this series at patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2020/08/saltless-salt-social-justice-part1/



A Pebble Cast Into a Pond (Parts 1–3)

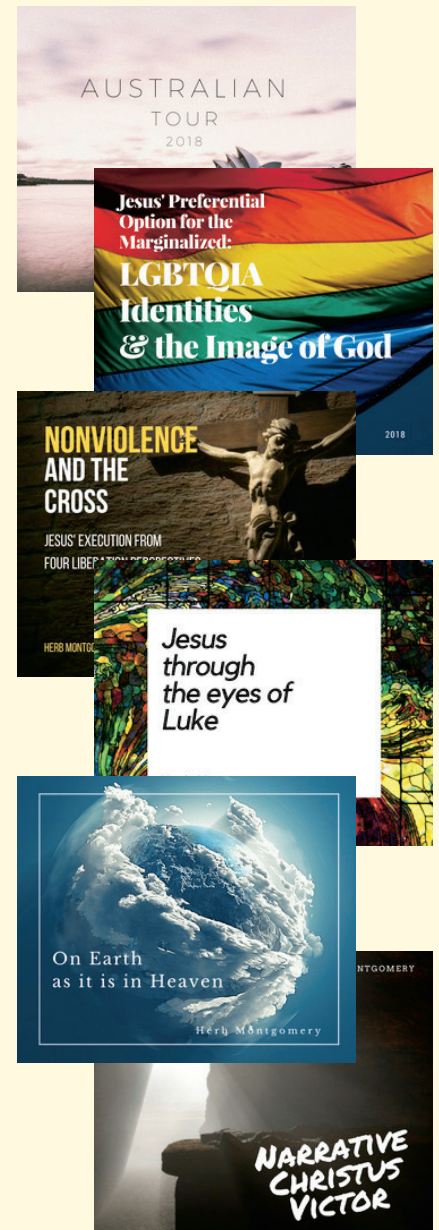
Jesus stood in the Hebrew prophetic justice: that tradition and hope was grounded here on earth with those who "hungered and thirsted" for things to be put right.

Begin reading this series at patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2020/08/pebble-cast-into-pond-part1/

Check Out RHM's Audio Presentations

Herb's presentations have been recorded at various speaking engagements over the years and are available to stream on our website or download.

renewedheartministries.com/Audio-Presentations



right hand as Leader and Savior that he might give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. And we are witnesses to these things..." (Acts 5:30)

"You know the message he sent to the people of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ—he is Lord of all. That message spread throughout Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John announced: how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power; how he went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him. We are witnesses to all that he did both in Judea and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree; but God raised him on the third day and allowed him to appear, not to all the people but to us who were chosen by God as witnesses, and who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one ordained by God as He who reigns over the living and the dead." (Acts 10:36-42)

"Of this man's posterity God has brought to Israel a Savior, Jesus, as he promised... My brothers, you descendants of Abraham's family, and others who fear God, to us the message of this salvation has been sent. Because the residents of Jerusalem and their leaders did not recognize him or understand the words of the prophets that are read every Sabbath, they fulfilled those words by condemning him. Even though they found no cause for a sentence of death, they asked Pilate to have him killed. When they had carried out everything that was written about him, they took him down from the tree and laid him in a tomb. But God raised him from the dead; and for many days he appeared to those who came up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem, and they are now his witnesses to the people. And we bring you the good news that what God promised to our ancestors he has fulfilled for us, their children, by raising Jesus..." (Acts 13:23)

The death of Jesus was not the "good news" of the original narrative, though it is characterized as such in much of Christianity today. The cross was the quintessential travesty of justice in the Jesus story: Jesus and his gospel of life become the victims of unjust political, economic, and religious systems that sacrifice others for their success. The resurrection reveals a Jesus who lived in solidarity with the innocent victims of those systems. It speaks of a way of organizing human community for life over and against unjust ways of organizing society, even when it faces lethal opposition from those in charge of the present death-dealing system. Jesus 'gospel didn't triumph because of death. Jesus 'murder interrupted his gospel and was an attempt to silence it. Jesus 'gospel triumphed in reversing, undoing, and conquering that death).

The story of Jesus 'resurrection, instead, endorses and proclaims that God's just future is possible. It doesn't depend on death for its existence. It shares generously the bread it receives today with the poor, the widow, and those othered as a foreigner, trusting that no matter what the future brings, we can face it—not alone, each person for themselves, but together as a community of love and care. Resurrection calls for the end of systems that sacrifice others, including sacrifice done in the name of standing up for and defending "the right thing." Jesus gospel calls us to embrace the way of mercy over sacrifice, and care for those previously deemed expendable by our politics and economics.

The story of a resurrection in the gospels calls us to recognize systems of death in every age and to obstruct them. The ancient Hebrew hope, a tradition in which Jesus solidly stood, was one where all injustice, oppression, and violence is set right. It was a hope of life conquering death.

Life can also conquer death today if we will choose it. Our political, economic, and even religious climate is full of

opportunities to stand up to death and choose life. Another iteration of our world is possible.

Will we have the courage to choose life-giving ways of ordering our society that can conquer death-dealing structures? Will we, as Jesus followers, have the courage to choose the living truth behind this ancient story of resurrection?

HeartGroup Application

We at RHM are continuing to ask all HeartGroups not to meet together physically at this time. Please stay virtually connected and practice physical distancing. When you do go out, please keep a six-foot distance between you and others, wear a mask, and continue to wash your hands to stop the spread of the virus.

This is also a time where we can practice the resource-sharing and mutual aid found in the gospels. Make sure the others in your group have what they need. This is a time to work together and prioritize protecting those most vulnerable among us. How many ways can you take care of each other while we are physically apart?

1. Share something that spoke to you from this week's eSight/Podcast episode with your HeartGroup.
2. How does the gospel story of Jesus 'resurrection impact your own justice work as a Jesus follower? Share with your group.
3. What can you do this week, big or small, to continue setting in motion the work of shaping our world into a safe, compassionate, just home for all? Discuss with your group and pick something from the discussion to put into practice this upcoming week.

Thanks for checking in with us this month.

Right where you are, keep living in love, choosing compassion, taking action, and working toward justice.

I love each of you dearly. ■

**2020 Projected Budget
Goal: \$185,000.00**

**2020 Projected Monthly
Budget Goal: \$15,417.00**

**2020's Projected Budget
January-July:
\$107,919.00**

**2020's Contributions
Received Through July:
\$41,283.57**

**July's Contributions
Received:
\$4,792.68**

Renewed Heart Ministries is a nonprofit organization working for a world of love and justice. We need your support to impact lives and provide the kind of resources and analysis RHM offers.

Intersections between faith, love, compassion, and justice are needed now more than ever.

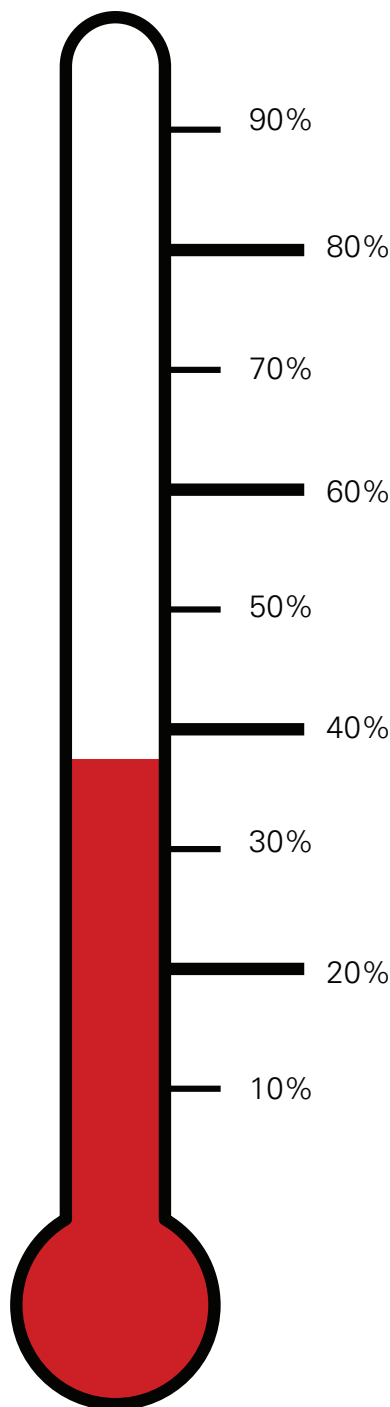
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Lewisburg, WV 24901

**And to those of you out there
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Testimony

"I continue to be inspired and empowered by your messages. The shoe leather that you place on the directives given by Jesus are equally relevant and critical here in Canada. Blessings to you as you continue to challenge each person who is committed to following Jesus." — D., Toronto

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
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Front cover artwork by Ali Montgomery.

"Direct philanthropy means giving directly to those who are suffering, social reform means creating and supporting organizations for their care, and social transformation is about justice—changing society so that the structures do not privilege some and cause suffering for others. The first two are about charity, the third is about justice. All three are important. Charity is always good and will always be necessary, but historically Christians have been long on the first two and short on the third. One reason is that charity never offends; a passion for justice often does. To paraphrase Roman Catholic bishop Dom Helder Camara from Brazil: 'When I gave food to the poor, they called me a saint; when I asked why there were so many poor, they called me a communist.'"

MARCUS BORG
THE HEART OF CHRISTIANITY, P. 204

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