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RENEWED HEART MINISTRIES

*Working for a World
of Love and Justice*



2020 has been a challenging year for many nonprofits. 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.

#GIVING TUESDAY

#GivingTuesday 2020

December 1 is #GivingTuesday this year! #GivingTuesday is a global day of giving that harnesses the collective power of individuals, communities and organizations to encourage philanthropy and to celebrate generosity worldwide.

#GivingTuesday is held annually on the Tuesday after Thanksgiving (in the US) and the widely recognized shopping events Black Friday and Cyber Monday

to kick off the holiday giving season and inspire people to collaborate in improving our communities and to give back in impactful ways to the charities and causes they support.

#GivingTuesday is a global giving movement that began in 2012 that has been built by individuals, families, organizations, businesses and communities in all 50 states, and in countries around the world.

#GivingTuesday is endeavoring to transform how people think about, talk about, and participate in the

giving season. It inspires people to take collective action to improve their communities, give back in better, smarter ways to the charities and causes they believe in, and help create a better world.

#GivingTuesday demonstrates how every act of generosity counts, and that they mean even more when we give together.

Every year millions of people come together on this special day to give back and to support the causes they believe in.

This year we are asking you to support the work of Renewed Heart Ministries on this special day!

Also, all contributions this #GivingTuesday will be matched, dollar for dollar, thanks to a very generous and kind pledge to RHM by another of our supporters.

This December 1st, make a donation to Renewed Heart Ministries as one of your chosen non-profits and help make this #Giving Tuesday the best one yet. We can't thank you enough for your support!

On December 1, go to renewedheartministries.com and click "Donate."



Photo by Alex Geerts on Unsplash.com



“Seeing the man set free from his internalized oppression, the society around him refuses to get free of the same ‘demons.’ ...When people get free of collective violence toward a marginalized sector of our society, (whether in themselves toward themselves, or within themselves toward others) they are following the social truth within this gospel story.”

A Cautionary Tale for Society

by Herb Montgomery

In Mark’s gospel we read a story that many people find difficult:

“[Jesus and his disciples] went across the lake to the region of the Gerasenes. When Jesus got out of the boat, a man with an evil spirit came from the tombs to meet him. This man lived in the tombs, and no one could bind him anymore, not even with a chain. For he had often been chained hand and foot, but he tore the chains apart and broke the irons on his feet. No one was strong enough to subdue him. Night and day among the tombs and in the hills, he would cry out and cut himself with stones. When he saw Jesus from a distance, he ran and fell on his knees in front of Him. He shouted at the top of his voice, “What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? In God’s name, don’t torture me!” For Jesus had said to him, “Come out of this man, you evil spirit!” Then Jesus asked him, “What is your name?” “My name is Legion,” he replied, “for we are many.” (Mark 5:1-9)

The original audience of Mark’s gospel would have recognized the symbols and codes in this story. We are removed by time and context, and so it’s harder to follow.

I believe this story is a symbolic portrait of Roman imperialism. Ched Myers notes in his commentary on Mark’s gospel that this story is a story of “symbolic

confrontation” and has specific political meaning. The name of the man, Legion, was the name of a division of Roman soldiers.

“The conclusion is irresistible that we are here encountering imagery meant to call to mind the Roman military occupation of Palestine,” Myers writes in *Binding the Strong Man* (p. 191). This occupation was destroying the spirit, independence, and will of the people Rome colonized, and this story depicts what we refer to today as a person’s internalized oppression.

As soon as Jesus arrives in this story, he is met with immediate resistance. This ancient exorcism story is full of symbolic action: oppression by foreign rule appears as occupation by a foreign “spirit.” The man Jesus meets, whom no one could bind, cut himself with stones. Self-cutting in this context is a form of autolapidation. Lapidating is the act of pelting or killing someone with stones until they die, and the gospels typically attribute this activity to a crowd stoning someone (Matthew 21:35; 23:37; Luke 20:6; John 8:7, 59, 10:31–33, 1:8) Why would this man do this to himself?

In the gospels, it is always the many, the majority, the privileged crowd that engages in this form of capital punishment, but this man has internalized this kind of violence toward himself. So this is a story where societal oppression leads someone to believe their oppressors’ valuation of themselves, and that leads to self-hatred and self-destruction.

Social violence becomes collective as members choose someone they can

come together against. They find unity in agreeing on who they are against. Victims of this violence can adopt their society’s estimation of themselves. In our context this can take many forms:

Non-White people internalize White supremacy to survive,

Women internalize the patriarchy, going along to get along,

The poor and/or working-class people champion the cause of exploitative capitalists,

LGBTQ people internalize the repulsion and bigotry of cis-heterosexist, heteronormative society.

Jesus arrives in the story as someone outside of this man’s community coming to set him free from his own self-hatred.

The story doesn’t end with this man’s isolated experience, though.

“[Legion] begged Jesus again and again not to send them out of the area. A large herd of pigs was feeding on the nearby hillside. The demons begged Jesus, ‘Send us among the pigs; allow us to go into them.’ He gave them permission, and the evil spirits came out and went into the pigs. The herd, about two thousand in number, rushed down the steep bank into the lake and was drowned. Those tending the pigs ran off and reported this in the town and countryside, and the people went out to see what had happened. When they came to Jesus, they saw the man who had been possessed by the legion of demons, sitting there, dressed and in his right mind; and they were afraid. Those who had seen it told

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November's Recommended Reading from RHM

***How to Be an Antiracist*
by Ibram X. Kendi**

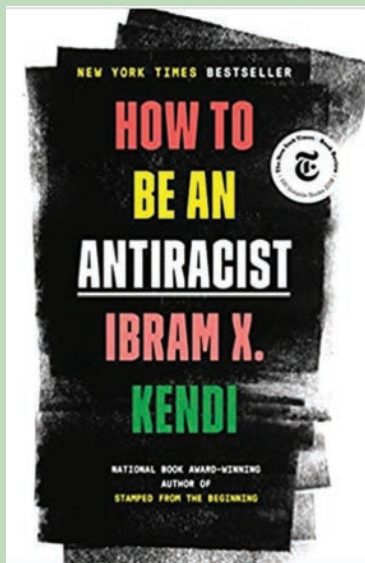
#1 NEW YORK TIMES BEST-SELLER
From the *National Book Award*–winning author of *Stamped from the Beginning* comes a “ground breaking (*Time*) approach to understanding and uprooting racism and inequality in our society—and in ourselves.

“The most courageous book to date on the problem of race in the Western mind.”—*The New York Times*

Named one of the best books of the year by *The New York Times Book Review* • *Time* • *NPR* • *The Washington Post* • *Shelf Awareness* • *Library Journal* • *Publishers Weekly* • *Kirkus Reviews*

Antiracism is a transformative concept that reorients and reenergizes the conversation about racism—and, even more fundamentally, points us toward liberating new ways of thinking about ourselves and each other. At its core, racism is a powerful system that creates false hierarchies of human value; its warped logic extends beyond race, from the way we regard people of different ethnicities or skin colors to the way we treat people of different sexes, gender identities, and body types. Racism intersects with class and culture and geography and even changes the way we see and value ourselves. In *How to Be an Anti-racist*, Kendi takes readers through a widening circle of antiracist ideas—from the most basic concepts to visionary possibilities—that will help readers see all forms of racism clearly, understand their poisonous consequences, and work to oppose them in our systems and in ourselves.

Kendi weaves an electrifying combination of ethics, history, law, and science with his own personal



story of awakening to antiracism. This is an essential work for anyone who wants to go beyond the awareness of racism to the next step: contributing to the formation of a just and equitable society.

Praise for *How to Be an Antiracist*

“Ibram X. Kendi’s new book, *How to Be an Antiracist*, couldn’t come at a better time...Kendi has gifted us with a book that is not only an essential instruction manual but also a memoir of the author’s own path from anti-black racism to anti-white racism and, finally, to antiracism.... *How to Be an Antiracist* gives us a clear and compelling way to approach, as Kendi puts it in his introduction, ‘the basic struggle we’re all in, the struggle to be fully human and to see that others are fully human.’”—*NPR*

“Kendi dissects why in a society where so few people consider themselves to be racist the divisions and inequalities of racism remain so prevalent. *How to Be an Antiracist* punctures the myths of a post-racial America, examining what racism really is—and what we should do about it.”—*Time*

Remember, you don’t have to order this book through [amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com), but if you do, please consider using Amazon Smile ([smile.amazon.com](https://www.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



the people what had happened to the demon-possessed man—and told about the pigs as well. Then the people began to plead with Jesus to leave their region.” (Mark 5:10-17).

In this Hellenized, mostly Greek region (Gentile with very few Jews), pigs were a farming commodity. Here the author zooms in to focus on the economic dimension of Jesus’ politics. If the larger community embraces this man’s liberation from internalized oppression, what will this mean for them? If they honestly estimate the Roman occupation, that will change everything, including their economic structure. Economic change is emotionally unsettling even when it’s more distributively just: it’s challenging what some people need for survival on one hand, and what others have hoarded for security and anxiety management on the other hand.

Jesus began by restoring the man, but the story quickly redirects us to the man’s surrounding society. His liberation of the man from internalized oppression threatens the unity and peace that the privileged of society had found in Roman occupation. Jesus turns their way of life, their stability, on its head and forces them to see the man as a fellow human being, like themselves. Jesus unobjectifies the man, de-dehumanizes him, un-degrades him. Jesus lifts this man up and returns him to a place of belonging in the humanity in the sight of a society that had found unity and coherence by purging him to the tombs. Jesus challenges the entire arrangement of this society.

The story doesn’t end well. The people choose economic and political security over the liberation Jesus pointed to. They cry, “Don’t bite the hand that feeds us.” Jesus and his liberation is not welcome with them.

Just this week I had a discussion with a neighbor of mine who was expressing their views about the upcoming election. He admitted that the present administration had economically benefited him and his business. At last, though, he said that even that economic benefit was not enough for him. He felt he also had to consider the thousands

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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/



A Non-Normative Jesus (Part 1-3)

This is a statement where Jesus stands with the more inclusive, progressive Jewish community interpreting their sacred texts.

Begin reading this series at patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2020/10/non-normative-jesus-part1/



The Social Location of Your Christianity Matters (Part 1 of 3)

In the story, it was the elite and privileged who felt this disgust and loathing. Today, it’s those on the margins of society, those who have been hurt by Christianity.

Begin reading this series at patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2020/10/social-location-christianity-matters-part1/



An Unjust Judge (Part 1 of 3)

This widow was pleading for equity, what today could be called social justice, and justice came after her prolonged effort to make the judge uncomfortable.

Begin reading this series at patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2020/10/unjust-judge-part1/

Find more articles at patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/

A Cautionary Tale... cont'd from page 5

upon thousands whom the administration had harmed. He was choosing harm-mitigation and planned to vote for change come November. My neighbor made the opposite decision to the privileged in Mark's story.

Seeing the man set free from his internalized oppression, the society around him refuses to get free of the same "demons." Until then, this man had become infected with the bigotry of his own society toward himself. He had allowed how his society defined him to become the way he defined himself as well. When people get free of collective violence toward a marginalized sector of our society, (whether in themselves toward themselves, or within themselves toward others) they are following the social truth within this gospel story.

This is my story, too. I am a member of the kind of scapegoating society

this man lived in. But I have also seen the humanity of the ones I once marginalized, and it has turned my world upside down. I wish I could claim some credit for this transformation, but I did not go looking for it. Once it was laid at my doorstep, though, I did have to make a choice.

Today, I simply want to bring others with me. Has it brought me some economic uncertainty? You bet. The ministry I direct has gone through huge economic shifts as our support base has changed. I hope it will continue to recover. Too often, economic reasons drive us to reject positive changes and this story is a cautionary tale for just such moments.

What would happen if we saw those people we have placed on society's altars as having just as much value, worth, and right to be included as we have? Though we are living with a very different worldview today than those

for whom this story was written, our society, political, economic, and even religious bigotries are no different than those in this gospel story.

This story calls us today to once again see those whom we have labeled as different or other as human, bearing the image of the Divine just as we do. Jesus calls us to embrace the reality that they are our siblings, we are part of the same human family, and they deserve a place at the table, too.

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.

1. Share something that spoke to you from this week's eSight/Podcast episode with your HeartGroup.
2. Share an experience with your group of how you broke free from your own internalized dehumanization from how others viewed you, or where you chose to reject your own dehumanization of others.
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 everyone?

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

I love each of you dearly. ■



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.

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

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

**2020's Projected Budget
January-September:
\$138,753.00**

**2020's Contributions
Received Through September:
\$56,452.11**

**September's Contributions
Received:
\$9,744.18**

**Whether you give
\$5 or \$5,000,
every amount helps us
continue our work.**

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.

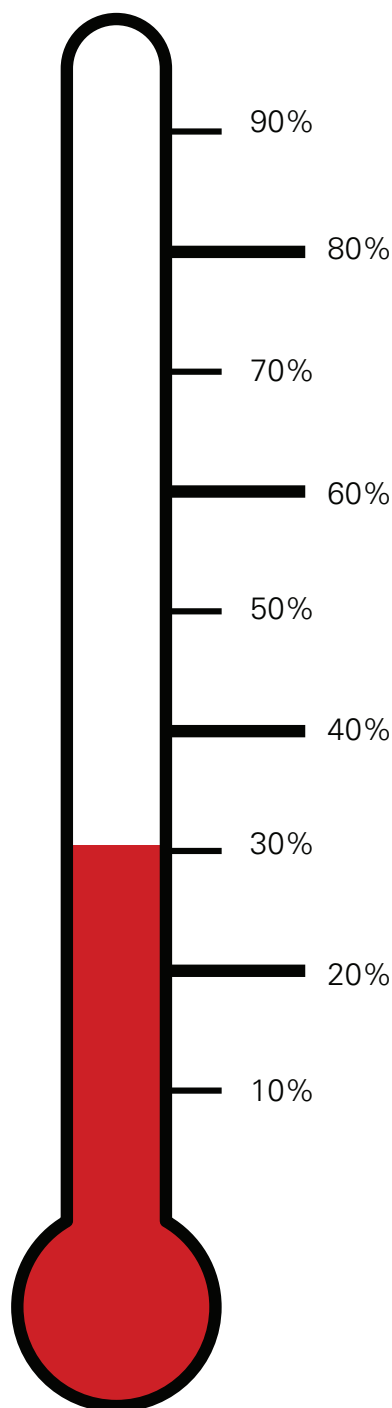
***Help Christians be
better humans.***

**Please consider making a
tax-deductible donation to
Renewed Heart Ministries today.**

To do so online go to renewedheartministries.com and click "Donate." Or if you prefer to make a donation by mail, our address is:

Renewed Heart Ministries
PO Box 1211
Lewisburg, WV 24901

**And to those of you out there
who are already supporting
this ministry, I want to say
thank you.** We could not continue being a voice for change without your support.



**Are you getting
RHM's *free*
resources in
your inbox?**

***Sign up today so you
don't miss a thing!***

**Go to
renewedheartministries.com
and click "Sign Up!"**



**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](http://renewedheartministries.com/Podcasts)**

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



Front cover artwork by Ali Montgomery.

"Learn to do good;
seek justice,
correct oppression."

Isaiah 1:17

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