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Herb Montgomery



# The Good News of Forceful Nonviolent Resurrection

by Herb Montgomery

Our reading this week is from Mark's version of the Jesus story,

"When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices so that they might go to anoint Jesus' body. Very early on the first day of the week, just after sunrise, they were on their way to the tomb and they asked each other, 'Who will roll the stone away from the entrance of the tomb?'

"But when they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had been rolled away. As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man dressed in a white robe sitting on the right side, and they were alarmed. 'Don't be alarmed,' he said. 'You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid him. But go, tell his disciples and Peter, "He is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you. 'Trembling and bewildered, the women went out and fled from the tomb. They said nothing to anyone, because they were afraid.'" (Mark 16:1-8)

Much of Western Christianity is commemorating Holy Week this week,

this coming Sunday being Easter Sunday. (Our Eastern Orthodox siblings will be celebrating Easter on May 2.) Christians spend a lot of energy this time each year reflecting on the closing scenes of the Jesus story: Jesus' last week, his death, burial, and resurrection. Leaders in many communities will interpret these events this weekend.

The early followers of Jesus varied widely in how they interpreted the closing scenes of Jesus' life. Some viewed his murder as somehow salvific on a cosmic level, while others focused their attention on how his resurrection overcame, reversed, and undid the interruption Jesus' death posed to his life-giving ministry and caused that life to live on.

These varied voices and explanations are in our sacred scriptures as well. The canon made room for all of them.

The voices that speak most deeply to me are the voices that emphasize God's overcoming of the unjust death of Jesus through bringing Jesus back to life rather than those that reframe such an unjust act as having a secret Divine purpose.

When we understand Jesus' audience to be disinherited Jews under Rome, those who were pressed down and silenced even among the ones forced to live on Jewish society's fringes, it becomes empowering to hear Jesus affirm that they are the light of the world. Jesus is investing those around him with value and telling them not to hide their light. They are to "let their light shine!"

Consider the "good news" identified in each of the following passages:

"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." (Acts 4:33, emphasis added)

"Fellow Israelites, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know. This man was handed over to you by God's deliberate plan and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross. *But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him.*" Acts 2:22-24, emphasis added)

"*God has raised this Jesus to life*, and we are all witnesses of it. Exalted to the right hand of God, he has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear." (Acts 2:32-33, emphasis added)

"When Peter saw this, he said to them: 'Fellow Israelites, why does this surprise you? Why do you stare at us as if by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk? The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified his servant Jesus. You handed him over to be killed, and you disowned him before Pilate, though he had decided to let him go. You disowned the Holy and Righteous One and asked that a murderer be released to you. You killed the author of life, *but God raised him from the dead*. We are witnesses of this. By faith in the name of Jesus, this man whom you see and know was made strong. It is Jesus' name and the faith that comes through him that has completely healed him, as you can all see.'" (Acts 3:12-16, emphasis added)

"Then know this, you and all the people of Israel: It is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified *but whom God raised from the dead*, that this man stands before you healed. Jesus is 'the stone you builders rejected, which has become the cornerstone.'" (Acts 4:10-11, emphasis added)

"*The God of our ancestors raised Jesus from the dead*—whom you killed by hanging him on a cross. *God exalted*

him to his own right hand as Prince and Savior that he might bring Israel to repentance and forgive their sins. We are witnesses of these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him.” (Acts 5:30-32, emphasis added)

“You know the message God sent to the people of Israel, announcing the good news of peace through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all. You know what has happened throughout the province of Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John preached—how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, and how he went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with him. We are witnesses of everything he did in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They killed him by hanging him on a cross, but God raised him from the dead on the third day and caused him to be seen. He was not seen by all the people, but by witnesses whom God had already chosen—by us 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 whom God appointed as judge of the living and the dead. All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.” (Acts 10:36-43, emphasis added)

“We tell you the good news: What God promised our ancestors he has fulfilled for us, their children, by raising up Jesus.” (Acts 13:32-33, emphasis added)

These passages are not without their problems. Yet what is unmistakable in each of them is their emphasis, not on salvific purpose in Jesus’ death, but in how God overcame the injustice of his murder through a life-giving, life-conquering, death-reversing, injustice-overturning resurrection.

Womanist theologians have shaped my thinking and faith journey. I owe them so much.

During the Easter season, for instance, I’m often reminded of statements like this one from Delores Williams in her classic work, *Sisters in the Wilderness: The Challenge of Womanist God-Talk*:

“Matthew, Mark and Luke suggest that

Jesus did not come to redeem humans by showing them God’s ‘love’ manifested in the death of God’s innocent child on a cross erected by cruel, imperialistic, patriarchal power. Rather, the texts suggest that the spirit of God in Jesus came to show humans life—to show redemption through a perfect ministerial vision of righting relations between body (individual and community), mind (of humans and of tradition) and spirit. A female-male inclusive vision, Jesus’ ministry of righting relationships involved raising the dead (those separated from life and community), casting out demons (for example, ridding the mind of destructive forces prohibiting the flourishing of

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**“We tell you the good news:  
What God promised our  
ancestors he has fulfilled for us,  
their children, by raising Jesus.”**

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Acts 13:32–33

positive, peaceful life) and proclaiming the word of life that demanded the transformation of tradition so that life could be lived more abundantly...God’s gift to humans, through Jesus, was to invite them to participate in this ministerial vision (“whosoever will, let them come”) of righting relations. The response to this invitation by human principalities and powers was the horrible deed the cross represents—the evil of humankind trying to kill the ministerial vision of life in relation that Jesus brought to humanity. The resurrection does not depend upon the cross for life, for the cross only represents historical evil trying to defeat good. The resurrection of Jesus and the flourishing of God’s spirit in the world as the result of resurrection represent the life of the ministerial vision gaining victory over the evil attempt to kill it. Thus, to respond meaningfully to black women’s historic experience of surrogacy oppression, the womanist theologian must show that redemption of humans can have nothing to do with any kind of surrogate or substitute role Jesus was reputed to have played in a bloody act that supposedly gained victory over sin and/ or evil.” (*Sisters in the Wilderness: The Challenge of Womanist God-Talk*, p. 130)

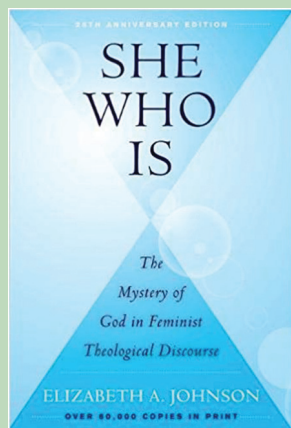
For Williams, it is the resurrection and the kingdom of God theme in the Jesus story that is life-giving. Not Jesus’ death. Jesus came, not to die, but to show us how to live. “The kingdom of God theme in the ministerial vision of Jesus does not point to death; it is not something one has to die to reach. Rather, the kingdom of God is a metaphor of hope God gives those attempting to right the relations between self and self, between self and others, between self and God as prescribed in the sermon on the mount, in the golden rule and in the commandment to show love above all else.” (*Sisters in the Wilderness: The Challenge of Womanist God-Talk*, pp. 130-131)

I also want to lift up the voice of Rev. Dr. Kelly Brown Douglas, who weaves even nonviolence into the meaning of the resurrection story event. She writes:

“The resurrection is God’s definitive victory over crucifying powers of evil. Ironically, the power that attempts to destroy Jesus on the cross is actually itself destroyed by the cross. The cross represents the power that denigrates human bodies, destroys life, and preys on the most vulnerable in society. As the cross is defeated, so too is that power. The impressive factor is how it is defeated. It is defeated by a life-giving rather than a life-negating force. God’s power, unlike human power, is not a ‘master race’ kind of power. That is, it is not a power that diminishes the life of another so that others might live. God’s power respects the integrity of all human bodies and the sanctity of all life. This is resurrecting power. Therefore, God’s power never expresses itself through the humiliation or denigration of another. It does not triumph over life. It conquers death by resurrecting life. The force of God is a death-negating, life-affirming force...God does not fight death with death. God does not utilize the violence exhibited in the cross to defeat deadly violence itself...through the resurrection, God responds to the violence of the cross—the violence of the world—in a non-violent forceful manner. It is important to understand that nonviolence is not the same as passivity or accommodation to violence. Rather it is the forceful response that protects the integrity of life. Violence seeks to do

*continued on page 6*





## RHM's Recommended Reading for April

### *She Who Is: The Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse*

by Elizabeth A. Johnson

Winner of the Louisville Grawemeyer Award in Religion, this classic text explains what feminist theology is and how we can rediscover the feminine God within the Christian tradition, offering a profound vision of Christian theology, women's experience, and emancipation. First published in 1992, it immediately caused a groundswell reaction for and against the concept of women's participation and role in the Christian church. It is both controversial and thought provoking. It served as the seminal text in the analysis of woman and Christianity. This 25th anniversary edition, with new content, will keep it in the forefront of the feminist theology conversation.

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.

**New episodes every Friday!**

## The *Jesus For Everyone* podcast.

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)

### EPISODE 364: THE POLITICS OF JESUS

"The synoptic gospels, Matthew, Mark, and Luke, offer consistent political comparisons between Jesus' vision for human society (God's just future) and the status quo of the society Jesus found himself in instead . . . certainly we can do the same with economic, political, and social policies in our time. And if we see progressive social movements resonate with the values we find in the Jesus story, then certainly all of us who claim that story as the heart of our faith tradition could check ourselves. We could choose to be last in line to oppose those progressive visions for American society rather than being among the loudest opponents of distributively just change."



## Are you taking advantage of all of RHM's *free* resources?

**Sign up today so you don't miss a thing! Go to [renewedheartministries.com](http://renewedheartministries.com) and click "Sign Up!"**





### ***Jesus and Protest (Part 1)***

"In one sense, it was a religious act for those who considered faithfulness to the Jubilee [debt cancellation] of the Torah to be faithfulness to the God of the Torah. But it was also an economic and political act too."

Read more at: [patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2021/03/jesus-protest-part1/](https://patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2021/03/jesus-protest-part1/)

### ***Jesus and Protest (Part 2)***

"Mark's version of the story is not speaking about Jesus' own death and resurrection as in John. It is speaking about how exploitative systems are not sustainable and will eventually crumble under the weight of their own injustice."

Read more at: [patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2021/03/jesus-protest-part2/](https://patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2021/03/jesus-protest-part2/)

### ***Jesus and Protest (Part 3)***

"Change for those being harmed never happens fast enough. But in each of our circles of influence we have today and all the potential for change today brings."

Read more at: [patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2021/03/jesus-protest-part3/](https://patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2021/03/jesus-protest-part3/)



### ***The Politics of Jesus (Part 1)***

"Not one conception in Jewish history fits Luke's description of how Mary conceived Jesus. But in Rome, the story of a virgin conceiving and giving birth to the son of God had a political context."

Read more at [patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2021/03/politics-jesus-part1/](https://patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2021/03/politics-jesus-part1/)

### ***The Politics of Jesus (Part 2)***

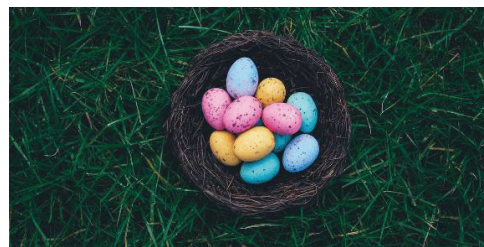
"Jesus was crucified by Rome not because he was starting a new religion, but because his political teachings on justice for the oppressed, marginalized, and disenfranchised threatened to upset the status quo."

Read more at [patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2021/03/politics-jesus-part2/](https://patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2021/03/politics-jesus-part2/)

### ***The Politics of Jesus (Part 3)***

"We could choose to be last in line to oppose those progressive visions for American society rather than being among the loudest opponents of distributively just change"

Read more at [patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2021/03/politics-jesus-part3/](https://patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2021/03/politics-jesus-part3/)



### ***Reinterpreting the Easter Story (Part 1)***

"Certain interpretations of these passages have born destructive and even death-dealing fruit in these communities. These experiences, concerns and critiques are worth listening to and wrestling with."

Read more at [patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2021/03/reinterpreting-easter-story-part1/](https://patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2021/03/reinterpreting-easter-story-part1/)

### ***Reinterpreting the Easter Story (Part 2)***

"The central image of Christ on the cross as the savior of the world communicates the harmful message that suffering is redemptive."

Read more at [patheos.com/blogs/](https://patheos.com/blogs/)

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

[socialjesus/2021/03/reinterpreting-easter-story-part2/](https://socialjesus/2021/03/reinterpreting-easter-story-part2/)

### ***Reinterpreting the Easter Story (Part 3)***

"Let's not ask ourselves how we can die. Jesus doesn't call a person to die, but to live. So what is it going to take for us to germinate?"

Read more at [patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2021/03/reinterpreting-easter-story-part3/](https://patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2021/03/reinterpreting-easter-story-part3/)



### ***Transparency and the Vilification of Darkness (Part 1)***

"Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that their deeds will be exposed."

Read more at [patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2021/03/transparency-vilification-darkness-part1/](https://patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2021/03/transparency-vilification-darkness-part1/)

### ***Transparency and the Vilification of Darkness (Part 2)***

"It's about them coopting the darkness, which is not inherently evil, and using the darkness not for the life giving purposes of which it is intended, but to hide so they can continue doing harm."

Read more at [patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2021/03/transparency-vilification-darkness-part2/](https://patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2021/03/transparency-vilification-darkness-part2/)

### ***Transparency and the Vilification of Darkness (Part 3)***

"When public consciousness is raised, change isn't very far behind, and change is what those benefiting from the status quo most desperately want to stop."

Read more at [patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2021/03/transparency-vilification-darkness-part3/](https://patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2021/03/transparency-vilification-darkness-part3/)



another harm, while nonviolence seeks to rescue others from harm. It seeks to break the very cycle of violence itself. The forces of nonviolence actually reveal the impotence of violent force. That God could defeat the unmitigated violence of the cross reveals the consummate power of the nonviolent, life-giving force that is God." (*Stand Your Ground: Black Bodies and the Justice of God*, p. 178-180)

This weekend, for those of us who choose to commemorate the resurrection event in the Jesus story and all the meaning that story event symbolizes, I hope that our easter rituals will further shape us into death-negating, life-giving people. That we will commit more deeply to life-affirming work in our world. That together we will continue to work toward a world that is a safe, compassionate, and distributively just home for everyone.

Happy Easter to each of you.

Love can conquer hate.

Equity can conquer fear and greed.

Inclusion can conquer exclusion and marginalization.

Life-affirmation can conquer death-dealing.

Forceful nonviolence can conquer life-negating violence.

The golden rule is this way of life.

Jesus is risen.

He is risen indeed.

## 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.

## Recent Events



### A Better Way to Tell the Easter Story

with Daneen Akers, Traci Smith and Herb Montgomery

Last week, I had the opportunity to chat with Daneen Akers and Traci Smith on Instagram live. This discussion was hosted on the *Holy Troublemakers* Instagram page. And the topic was nonviolent, non substitutionary ways to interpret and talk about the Easter story, especially with children. If you weren't able to catch it live, the recordings are up on Instagram's IGTV on the *Holy Troublemakers* page. The discussion was recorded in two parts as Instagram would not let us all three be on at once. Both of these women are brilliant, and I feel privileged to have been able to discuss this topic alongside them. To watch the recording of the discussion go to [instagram.com/holytroublebook/channel/](https://www.instagram.com/holytroublebook/channel/).



### Edgewood Presbyterian Church

**Lewisburg, WV  
March 21, 2021**

Recently I had the privilege of addressing the congregation of the Edgewood Presbyterian Church here in Lewisburg via zoom. Our topic was how to tell the Jesus story, especially during the Easter season, in a way that does not further communicate the harmful message for both survivors and victims that suffering is redemptive.

You can listen in to this presentation at the following link: [facebook.com/EdgewoodPresbyterianChurch/posts/2478014802322786](https://www.facebook.com/EdgewoodPresbyterianChurch/posts/2478014802322786)

1. Share something that spoke to you from this week's eSight/Podcast episode with your HeartGroup.
2. How does focussing on injustice-overturning resurrection in the Jesus story inform, inspire, and empower you in your own justice work today? 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 everyone?

Thanks for checking in with us.

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

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](https://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.

**2021's Projected Budget  
Goal: \$185,000.00**

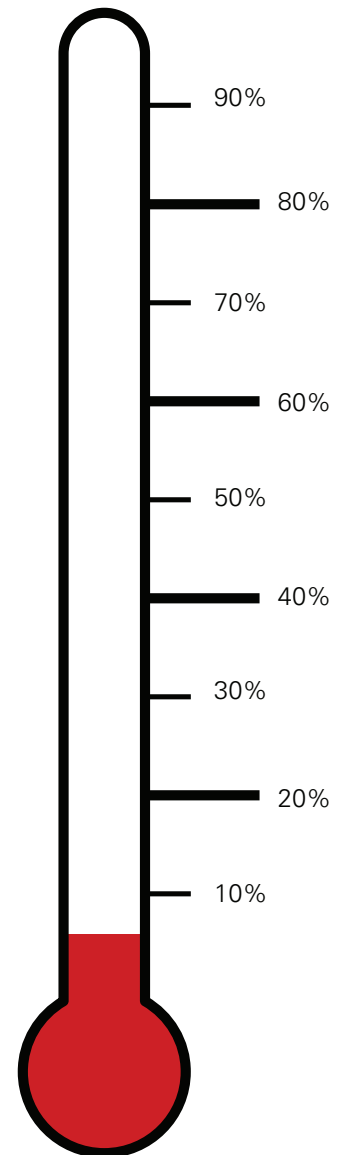
**February's Budget Goal:  
\$15,416.67**

**February's Contributions  
Received:  
\$7,457.14**

**2021 Budget Goal  
Through February:  
\$30,833.34**

**2021 Contributions Received  
Through February:  
\$13,887.71**

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



## 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.

Email [info@renewedheartministries.com](mailto:info@renewedheartministries.com) to receive the link for the Zoom meeting.



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.

"THE GOAL OF FEMINIST  
THEOLOGY, IN OTHER  
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IT IS TO TRANSFORM  
THE SYSTEM."

ELIZABETH A. JOHNSON  
SHE WHO IS

[renewedheartministries.com](http://renewedheartministries.com)

