

RENEWED
HEART
MINISTRIES



αwakenings

∴ THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF RENEWED HEART MINISTRIES ∴ AUGUST 2021 ∴



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Herb Montgomery

RENEWED HEART MINISTRIES

*Working for a World
of Love and Justice*



Renewed Heart Ministries is a nonprofit organization working for a world of love and justice.

We need your support to offer the kind of resources RHM provides.

Helping people find the intersection between their faith, compassion, and justice is work that continues to prove deeply needed.

Please consider making a donation to support Renewed Heart Ministries 'work, today.

You can donate online by clicking online at renewedheartministries.com

Or you can make a donation by mail at:

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Lewisburg, WV 24901

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



Those Things Which Are Eternal

by Herb Montgomery

Our reading this week is from the gospel of John.

'Once the crowd realized that neither Jesus nor his disciples were there, they got into the boats and went to Capernaum in search of Jesus. When they found him on the other side of the lake, they asked him, "Rabbi, when did you get here?" Jesus answered, "Very truly I tell you, you are looking for me, not because you saw the signs I performed but because you ate the loaves and had your fill. Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. For on him God the Father has placed his seal of approval." Then they asked him, "What must we do to do the works God requires?" Jesus answered, "The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent." So they asked him, "What sign then will you give that we may see it and believe you? What will you do? Our ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written: 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat.'" Jesus said to them, "Very truly I tell you, it is not Moses who has given you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is the bread that comes down from heaven and gives life to the world." "Sir," they said,

"always give us this bread." Then Jesus declared, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty." (John 6:24-35)

I grew up understanding this passage as encouraging focus on getting to heaven in the afterlife, and not focusing on earthly realities that impact our lives in the here and now. An earthward focus was considered a waste of time, "arranging deck-chairs on the Titanic." This school of interpretive thought has born deeply destructive fruit and has always been coopted by oppressive powers to create a kind of Christianity that leaves the oppressive systems of the powerful untouched by Christian followers. This kind of Christianity led those such as Karl Marx to label religion an opiate of the masses.

I want to offer an alternative interpretation of Jesus's words in John. Jesus said to those wanting to use him to gain political power, "Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life." (See last week's eSight.)

Most Biblical Greek scholars recognize that the word translated "eternal," *aionios*, described a future time when God would establish justice on Earth. That vision contrasted this present age of violence, injustice, and oppression with a future age of justice, restoration, and peace. The eternal age contrasted with a present temporary age. The focus of *anaios* was primarily about the *quality* of the age to come and only secondarily about the age's *duration*. In the eternal age or the eternal life,

injustice, oppression and violence would be put right.

In this context, an alternative, life-giving interpretation of Jesus' words in John's gospel is a call to focus on the long game of establishing justice in the earth over the temporary gains of power, privilege or property.

Let me offer some examples.

Those in control of and benefiting from the US fossil fuel industries have a decision to make: continue making enormous profits today and make our planet uninhabitable through the climate change that results from burning industry products, or abandon those profits ("food that spoils") to ensure our planet remains a safe, habitable home for everyone ("food that endures to eternal life").

A friend connected to various Evangelical and fundamentalist ministries shares another example. My friend has witnessed those who have successful ministries pressured to embrace or align with the current surge in Christian nationalism and that movement's politics. If they do, they're choosing to support or at least go along with things they never would have imagined themselves supporting just to keep money flowing into their ministries. Their choice is between standing against what they see happening, trying to rightly inform their supporters, losing financial support, and downsizing their "successful" ministries, and staying silent, going along with troubling things, and trying to maintain supporters who understand what they are doing and supporters who are sincere but misled or misinformed. This is a textbook example of working for "food that spoils" rather than "food that endures to eternal life."

US politicians now have a very similar choice: go along with Trumpism, anti-vaccination, and/or other troubling party platforms to get re-elected next year (working for "food that spoils") or stand against what they feel is harmful and face political ruin over the right thing to do long-term (working for "food that endures to eternal life").

This is another variant of the choice laid before Luke's gospel's audience:

"What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, and yet lose or forfeit their very self?" (Luke 9:25)

I know something of having to make this kind of choice.

When I had these decisions to make, I was naïve and did not fully understand what doing the right thing would cost. My line in the sand was for Renewed Heart Ministries to choose between inclusion and affirmation of LGBTQ folk and exclusion. My choice to embrace affirming Christian theology has cost this ministry everything to this day, and my journey has included consequences that have not always been easy to bear. I don't regret my decision. I also want to be honest that the decision almost tanked Renewed Heart Ministries. One year we were one of the most successful ministries of our denomination, and the next we were on the brink of having to close—and more than eight years later, we're still coming back from that.



For me, not "working for food that spoils" meant refusing to stay silent (and conventionally employable) when I saw my LGBTQ friends being harmed by our denomination. Working for

food that endures to eternal life meant doing the right thing, the just thing, the compassionate thing, the nonviolent thing, even if that meant I had to give up some things on that journey.

And what has been the result? Today I belong to a community that's very different than the one I used to belong to. Some folks from the old days have kept on journeying with me. Some have yet to make that journey, and still others never will; I've had to accept that.

But my community today includes people who feel as passionate as I do about justice and making our present world a better and safer place for those marginalized in the present system. Have we seen sacrifices? Absolutely. But have we seen gains as well? Yes! Our ministry is still recovering materially, but those I have met and am in relationship with today I might never have had the pleasure and privilege of knowing if I had not chosen this path. They make it worth it for me. If there is an age to come, as Jesus taught, what we will be able to take with us is not our money, political power, or our property, but rather the relationships we've made here, in our present age, with the people we hold most dear. Working with them is working for food that endures to eternal life for me.

What does that mean for you?

What decisions have you made in your own journey?

What have they cost you?

What have you gained instead as a result of making those difficult choices?

And, for all of us, what decisions still lie ahead?

Whatever they are, I have confidence today that the food that endures is the better choice. It may not always be the easiest choice, but it is ultimately the better choice, and together, in community, we can face the fallout of our better choices, come what may.

As Jesus said, "Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life."

continued on page 4

HeartGroup Application

1. Share something that spoke to you from this week's eSight/ Podcast episode with your HeartGroup.
2. What does eternal versus temporary mean to you? Discuss 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, today.

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



Photo by Kalea Morgan on Unsplash.com

RHM's Recommended Reading for August

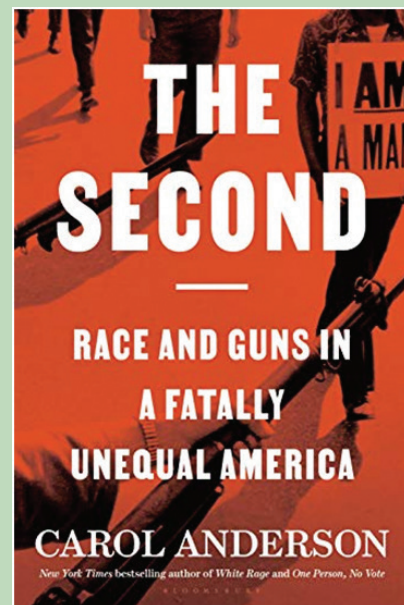
***The Second: Race and Guns in a Fatally Unequal America* by Carol Anderson**

From the *New York Times* bestselling author of *White Rage*, an unflinching, critical new look at the Second Amendment—and how it has been engineered to deny the rights of African Americans since its inception.

A *Kirkus Reviews* "8 Nonfiction Books to Read This Summer"

In *The Second*, historian and award-winning, bestselling author of *White Rage* Carol Anderson powerfully illuminates the history and impact of the Second Amendment, how it was designed, and how it has consistently been constructed to keep African Americans powerless and vulnerable. *The Second* is neither a "pro-gun" nor an "anti-gun" book; the lens is the citizenship rights and human rights of African Americans.

From the seventeenth century, when it was encoded into law that the enslaved could not own, carry, or use a firearm whatsoever, until today, with measures to expand and curtail gun ownership aimed disproportionately at the African American population, the right to bear arms has been consistently used as a weapon to keep African Americans powerless—revealing that armed or unarmed, Blackness, it would seem, is the threat that must be neutralized and punished.



Throughout American history to the twenty-first century, regardless of the laws, court decisions, and changing political environment, the Second has consistently meant this: That the second a Black person exercises this right, the second they pick up a gun to protect themselves (or the second that they don't), their life—as surely as Philando Castile's, Tamir Rice's, Alton Sterling's—may be snatched away in that single, fatal second. Through compelling historical narrative merging into the unfolding events of today, Anderson's penetrating investigation shows that the Second Amendment is not about guns but about anti-Blackness, shedding shocking new light on another dimension of racism in America.

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) 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.

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 Community of Dependence and Connectedness (Part 1)

"What does it actually mean for the empire of God to come? It begins with a knock at the door. On the stoop stand two itinerant beggars, with no purse, no knapsack, no shoes, no staff."

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2021/06/community-dependence-connectedness-part1/

A Community of Dependence and Connectedness (Part 2)

"In our context, American capitalistic individualism and independence, which too often masquerade as freedom, dependence as a good thing and a life-giving ethic for human thriving may be a bit difficult to get our minds around."

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2021/06/community-dependence-connectedness-part2/

A Community of Dependence and Connectedness (Part 3)

"We take responsibility for taking care of one another, not to establish dependency, but because we already are dependent on one another."

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2021/07/community-dependence-connectedness-part3/



Speaking Truth to Those in Power (Part 1)

"This story is an example of a familiar theme in the Hebrew prophets."

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2021/07/speaking-truth-those-power-part1/

Speaking Truth to Those in Power (Part 2)

"The phrase 'Speak Truth to Power' has its origins in the American Friends Service Committee in 1955. Yet the idea is ancient. Here are a few examples."

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2021/07/speaking-truth-those-power-part2/

Speaking Truth to Those in Power (Part 3)

"Truth telling will always carry consequences, some beneficial and others difficult to bear."

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2021/07/speaking-truth-those-power-part3/



Ticket to Heaven or Concrete, Earthly Liberation (Part 1)

"The itinerant liberator image of Jesus that we encounter in Mark raises a question of contrast between many

preachers today and the Jesus they claim to be worshiping."

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2021/07/ticket-heaven-concrete-earthly-liberation-part1/

Ticket to Heaven or Concrete, Earthly Liberation (Part 2)

"This scene is not about heaven or later, but about what people are experiencing here on earth right now, of an earthly, liberation-centered gospel."

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/07/ticket-heaven-concrete-earthly-liberation-part2/

Ticket to Heaven or Concrete, Earthly Liberation (Part 3)

"Whether we call it the reign of God or God's just future or simply a world that is a safe, compassionate, and just home for everyone, working for it is the work Jesus followers are to be about."

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2021/07/ticket-heaven-concrete-earthly-liberation-part3/



Enough for Everyone (Part 1)

"Among the canonical gospels, there are six versions of this story. Resource-sharing was central to the early Jesus movement"

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2021/07/enough-everyone-part1/

Enough for Everyone (Part 2)

"This social consciousness appears to be part of the fabric of what it meant to follow Jesus early on."

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/07/enough-everyone-part2/

Enough for Everyone (Part 3)

"Various expressions of Christianity have likewise been complicit in seizing power. Powerful Christians have cooperated with harmful social and political structures."

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2021/07/enough-everyone-part3/

Quotable Quotes

"People say, what is the sense of our small effort? They cannot see that we must lay one brick at a time, take one step at a time. A pebble cast into a pond causes ripples that spread in all directions. Each one of our thoughts, words and deeds is like that. No one has a right to sit down and feel hopeless. There is too much work to do."

- Dorothy Day;
The Long Loneliness

EPISODE 382: THOSE THINGS WHICH ARE ETERNAL

"The focus of anioios was primarily about the quality of the age to come and only secondarily about the age's duration. In the eternal age or the eternal life, injustice, oppression and violence would be put right. In this context, an alternative, life-giving interpretation of Jesus' words in John's gospel is a call to focus on the long game of establishing justice in the earth over the temporary gains of power, privilege or property."



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

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 to receive the link for the Zoom meeting.



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 and click "Sign Up!"



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 today more than ever.

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.

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

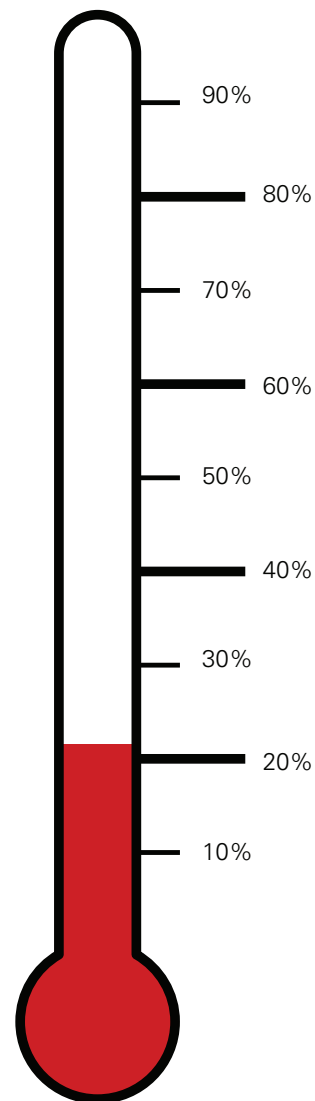
**June's Budget Goal:
\$15,416.67**

**June's Contributions
Received:
\$4,579.69**

**2021 Budget Goal
Through June:
\$92,500.02**

**2021 Contributions Received
Through June:
\$38,739.94**

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



Quotable Quotes

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

- James Robinson;

The Gospel of Jesus: A Historical Search for the Original Good News



Photo by Jonny Gios on Unsplash.com

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.

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.



THE SECOND IS:
'LOVE YOUR
NEIGHBOR AS
YOURSELF.'
THERE IS NO
COMMANDMENT
GREATER THAN
THIS.

#GetVaxxed

