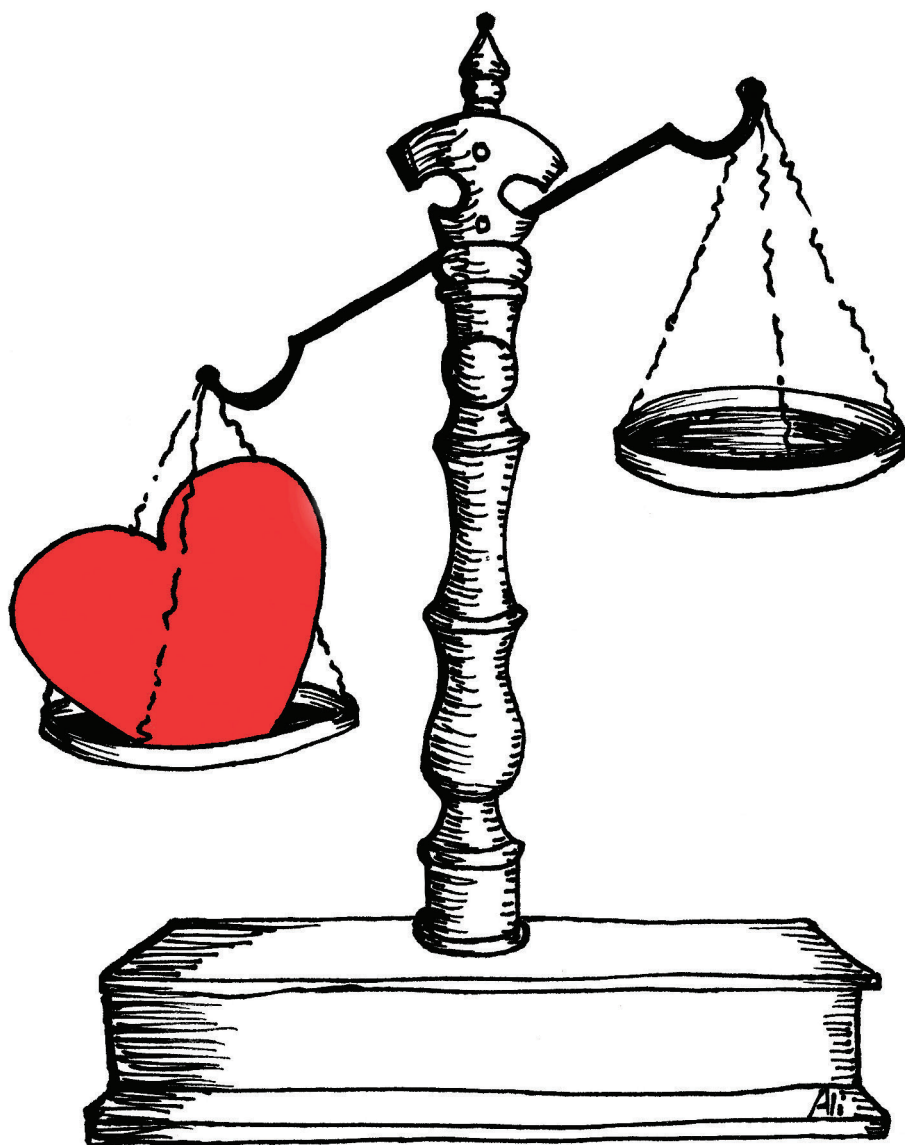


RENEWED
HEART
MINISTRIES



αwakenings

∴ THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF RENEWED HEART MINISTRIES ∴ JUNE 2022 ∴



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Renewed Heart Ministries

Follow Herb!



@HerbMontgomery



Herb Montgomery

"You can't love another" without desiring that those whom you love have what they need to thrive, and also doing what is in your power for them to have it...When we start to really consider what love means, then if we are honest we must begin to perceive love is not only personal, but also social, political, economic, religious, and even global."



Loving One Another and Justice

by Herb Montgomery

Our reading this week is from the gospel of John:

"When he was gone, Jesus said, "Now the Son of Man is glorified and God is glorified in him. If God is glorified in him, God will glorify the Son in himself, and will glorify him at once. My children, I will be with you only a little longer. You will look for me, and just as I told the Jews, so I tell you now: Where I am going, you cannot come. A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." (John 13:31-35)

After Judas leaves the room, Jesus begins to speak about glorification and love.

The theme of glorifying God and being glorified in and by God is rhetoric repeated through and unique to John's version of the Jesus story. John defines the closing scenes of Jesus' life, his arrest, crucifixion and resurrection, as how God and Jesus are glorified.

Another difference between John's version and the synoptics (Mark, Matthew, and Luke) is that John shifts Jesus message from love of neighbor and love of our enemies to love specifically among Jesus's followers. The author of

John, writing this late gospel, paints this shift as a "new teaching."

These varying objects of love in the canonical gospels—neighbor, enemies, and Jesus 'disciples—point to the tension of love across three concentric circles. The inner circle is Jesus 'disciples. The next circle is those Jesus 'disciples share society with, whether disciples of Jesus themselves or not. And the outer circle includes those who are those outside the disciples 'society or the community in which we do life together. "Enemy" in this context does not necessarily mean those who do us harm; it may simply mean those who are outside the circle we draw around whomever we define as "us."

In our time, I don't think it's helpful to define others as "enemies." We can be honest about labeling choices or actions as hurtful or not without naming the people choosing them as "enemies." And rather than speaking of "loving our enemies," we can speak of loving those who choose to harm us. This kind of love, too, needs careful defining and explanation to be genuinely life giving and not a tool to sustain harm.

But our reading this week focuses on love amongst fellow Jesus followers. By that love, Jesus says, others would know that Jesus 'followers were the disciples of Jesus. In other words, love was to be the primary distinguishing characteristic others could use to know that we are endeavoring to follow the moral philosophy of that Jewish prophet of the poor from Galilee. That marker is not a bumper sticker, nor what station

our radios are tuned to. It's not what church denomination we choose or voting Republican (I do live in West Virginia).

The marker is not even whether we choose live inside or outside of Christianity's faith claims. What signals to others that our attempts to follow Jesus are genuine is whether we live by an ethic of love. This is not to say that all who endorse an ethic of love as Jesus followers but that you can't be a Jesus follower without embracing an ethic of love.

Regardless of which object of love a particular version of the Jesus story focuses on (whether neighbor, enemies, or our own community), it is important to define what that love looks like. How we define love matters: including what we define love to be and what we define love as not. Genuine love does no harm.

Love and Justice

To paraphrase the great Dr. Emilie M. Townes, when we start with love, justice is isn't very far behind. Love expresses itself in distributive justice for all. It includes the desire to make sure the objects of our love have what they need to thrive. When we love, in each area of our lives, we desire that resources are shared so everyone's needs are met and no one has too much while others have too little. When disparities exist between those whose needs are unmet and those who have more than they could possibly need, all parties are harmed. They don't experience the same level of harm mind you, or even the same kind of harm, but they experience harm nonetheless.

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Loving... continued from page 2

This principle is at the heart of the Hebrew prophetic justice tradition in which the Jesus we encounter in the gospels stands:

Learn to do right; seek justice.
Defend the oppressed.
Take up the cause of the fatherless;
plead the case of the widow. (Isaiah 1:17)

Woe to those who make unjust laws,
to those who issue oppressive decrees,
to deprive the poor of their rights and
withhold justice from the oppressed of
my people, making widows their prey
and robbing the father-less. (Isaiah 10:1-2)

A bruised reed he will not break, and a
smoldering wick he will not snuff out.
In faithfulness he will bring forth justice;
he will not falter or be discouraged till
he establishes justice on earth. In his
teaching the islands will put their hope.
(Isaiah 42:3-4)

This is what the Most High says to you,
house of David: "Administer justice
every morning; rescue from the hand
of the oppressor the one who has been
robbed" (Jeremiah 21:12)

These stories don't help us recover so
much of the historical Jesus as much
as they establish the authority of his
disciples. In this week's reading, the
focus is Thomas and the story about him
serves a double purpose for the fledgling
Jesus movement.

I will search for the lost and bring back
the strays. I will bind up the injured and
strengthen the weak...I will shepherd
the flock with justice. (Ezekiel 34:16)

But let justice roll on like a river,
righteousness like a never-failing stream!
(Amos 5:24)

In love a throne will be established...one
who in judging seeks justice and speeds
the cause of righteousness. (Isaiah 16:5)

"Maintain love and justice." (Hosea 12:6)

Love without justice is hypocrisy. To read
Jesus' words of love as only sentimental,
and not as including a call to social justice
is to take Jesus out of his Jewish context
and transform him into something else for
another purpose. Jesus was a preacher
of the kind of love that expresses itself in

justice for the oppressed, marginalized,
excluded, and downtrodden.

This is why Jesus scholars such as the
late Marcus Borg and his co-author
John Dominic Crossan made such bold
statements such as, "The first passion
of Jesus was the kingdom of God,
namely, to incarnate the justice of God
by demanding for all a fair share of a
world belonging to and ruled by the
covenantal God of Israel." (Marcus J. Borg
& John Dominic Crossan, *The Last Week*,
Kindle location 44.)

This is what I think of when I hear Jesus'
admonition us to love one another.

You can't love another without desiring
that those whom you love have what
they need to thrive, and also doing what
is in your power for them to have it.

All of this leads me to some questions
about the intrinsic relationship between
love and justice that those of us who are
Jesus followers and who share my social
location in our society need to allow
ourselves to be confronted by.

Are we as White Jesus followers
practicing an ethic of love Black people
and people of color?

Are we as male Jesus followers
practicing an ethic of love for women?

Are we as straight Jesus followers
practicing an ethic of love for people
who identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual,
and/or pansexual?

Are we as cisgender Jesus followers
practicing an ethic of love for
transgender people?

Are we as educated Jesus followers
practicing an ethic of love for those who
are less educated?

Are we as middle-class Jesus followers
practicing an ethic of love for the poor?

Are we as U.S. citizen Jesus followers
practicing an ethic of love for refugees,
migrants, and the undocumented?

Are we as settler-colonial Jesus followers
practicing an ethic of love for indigenous
populations and communities?

Are we as North American Jesus
followers practicing an ethic of love for
those who live in the Global South?

Whom does this list of questions make
you think of this week?

When we start to really consider what
love means, then if we are honest
we must begin to perceive love is not
only personal, but also social, political,
economic, religious, and even global.

Whom do you think of when you hear
Jesus' words in John?

"By this everyone will know that you are
my disciples, if you love one another."

continued on page 4



Photo by Jon Tyson on Unsplash

RHM's Recommended Reading for June

Radical Love: Introduction to Queer Theology

by Patrick S. Cheng

"Patrick Cheng's *Radical Love* is an excellent introduction to queer theology. It is readable and nuanced, a marvelous teaching resource."

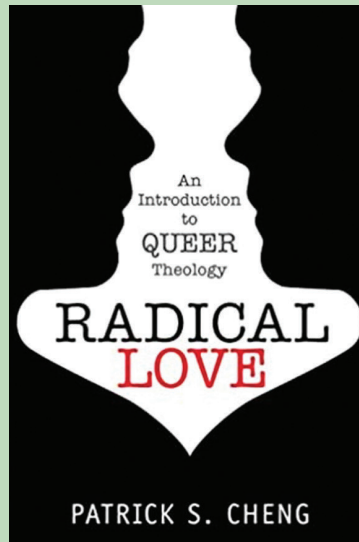
– Carter Heyward, author of *Keep Your Courage: A Radical Christian Feminist Speaks* and Professor Emerita of Theology, Episcopal Divinity School

"Patrick Cheng's *Radical Love* is not only an excellent introduction to LGBT theology but an important contribution to the discipline of theology and the life of the church. It is a must read for anyone who cares about the health of the church and theology today."

– James H. Cone, Charles A. Briggs Distinguished Professor of Systematic Theology, Union Theological Seminary, New York, NY

"Thoroughly Christian and thoroughly Queer, Cheng helps readers welcome a theology that leaves no one behind."

– Chris Glaser, author of *As My Own Soul: The Blessing of Same-Gender Marriage and Coming Out as Sacrament*



"This book is a clear, accessible and exciting analysis of Queer Theology. Cheng perfectly captures both the challenge and the rootedness of Queer Theology." – Elizabeth Stuart, Pro Vice-Chancellor, University of Winchester, UK

"I would characterize Cheng's notion of 'radical love' as 'wild grace' with which mainstream theology has yet to wrestle. This is a good text for introducing queer theology to undergraduate and graduate students." – Robert Shore-Goss, Senior Pastor/Theologian, Metropolitan Community Church in the Valley, North Hollywood, CA

"Radical Love - a love so extreme that it dissolves our existing boundaries! What concept could be more liberating for a culture like ours, where lives are crucified on rigid binaries like male

vs. female, us vs. them, straight vs. queer? *Radical Love* is an excellent introduction for beginners and an excellent synthesis for more advanced readers."

– Virginia Ramey Mollenkott, author of *Sensuous Spirituality and Omnigender*, among many other books

"While queer theory could be highly theoretical and off-putting, Cheng's *Radical Love* summarizes the contributions of queer theology in the last fifty years in an accessible and readable way." – Kwok Pui-lan, William F. Cole Professor of Theology and Spirituality, Episcopal Divinity School

"The struggle now is perhaps to get enough courses in theological colleges and seminaries in which we can use this wonderful book." – Lisa Isherwood, Professor and Director of Theological Partnerships, University of Winchester, UK

"Cheng covers a lot of territory and does so with clarity and solid interaction with the literature in the field. I would recommend this volume to anyone wanting a quick take on the various dimensions of Queer Theology." – Jeffrey S. Siker, Professor and Chair, Department of Theological Studies, Loyola Marymount University

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.

Loving... continued from page 3

HeartGroup Application

1. Share something that spoke to you from this week's eSight/Podcast episode with your HeartGroup.
2. How does loving others translate into societal justice for you? 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 today.

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

I love each of you dearly. ■

Upcoming Events

June 25, 2022

Good News Fellowship

**Toronto, Ontario, Canada
(Via Zoom)**

304.520.0030



SOCIAL JESUS

A Blog Exploring the Intersection of Faith and Societal Justice



Last month's "Social Jesus" blog posts on Patheos:

Articles posted each week at patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/



When Unity is Destructive (Part 1 of 3)

"Beliefs were important, but they always held in tension with what fruit those beliefs were actually producing in one's life. Are your beliefs manifesting themselves in life-giving ways or are your beliefs bearing harm."

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2022/05/when-unity-destructive-part1/

When Unity is Destructive (Part 2 of 3)

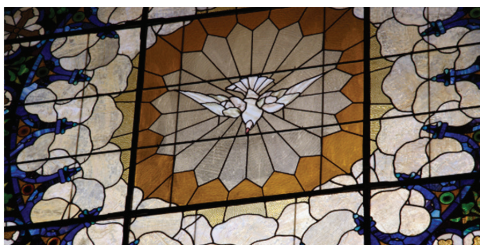
"Think of how communities that suffer harm and injustice are often called to forgive and reconcile with those who have harmed them while no efforts have been made toward restitution or reparations."

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2022/05/when-unity-destructive-part2/

When Unity is Destructive (Part 3 of 3)

"If we have to choose between unity and harm being done to those our status quo has made vulnerable, then in the name of justice and love and compassion, our highest concern should not be maintaining unity."

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2022/05/when-unity-destructive-part3/



Social Advocacy (Part 1 of 3)

"Advocacy is any action that speaks in favor of, recommends, argues for a cause, supports or defends, or pleads on behalf of others."

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2022/05/social-advocacy-part1/

Social Advocacy (Part 2 of 3)

"Early Christians were not concerned with saving people from post-mortem realities as much as they were focused on caring about people's social condition in the here and now."

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2022/05/social-advocacy-part2/

Social Advocacy (Part 3 of 3)

"The bodily autonomy of people in these communities is just the latest example of how advocacy work is needed today just as much as it has ever been. This is where my advocate heart is moved to action."

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2022/05/social-advocacy-part3/



Loving One Another and Justice (Part 1 of 3)

"This kind of love, too, needs careful

defining and explanation to be genuinely life giving and not a tool to sustain harm."

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2022/05/loving-one-another-justice-part1/

Loving One Another and Justice (Part 2 of 3)

"It includes the desire to make sure the objects of our love have what they need to thrive. Love without justice is hypocrisy."

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2022/05/loving-one-another-justice-part2/

Loving One Another and Justice (Part 3 of 3)

"When we start to really consider what love means, then if we are honest we must begin to perceive love is not only personal, but also social, political, economic, and even global."

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2022/05/loving-one-another-justice-part3/



Being Part of One Another (Part 1 of 3)

"This can remind Christians both of Jesus' deep Jewishness, and also how often the language of John is both covertly and overtly anti-Semitic."

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2022/05/being-part-one-another-part1/

Being Part of One Another (Part 2 of 3)

"This community defines itself as 'more

continued on page 6

Social Jesus Continued from page 5

than 'and those who do not define Jesus the way they do as 'less than. 'This is another intrinsically harmful form of exceptionalism or supremacy."

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2022/05/being-part-one-another-part2/

Being Part of One Another (Part 2 of 3)

"We thrive together. We survive together. What harms some, always in some way harms everyone."

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2022/05/being-part-one-another-part3/



Another Beginning (Part 1 of 3)

"Most scholars understand this version of the Jesus story to have ended in chapter 20, while they understand Chapter 21 to have been written by a different author."

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2022/04/another-beginning-part1/

Another Beginning (Part 2 of 3)

"The Hebrew prophetic justice tradition interprets fishing, as a metaphor for removing unjust political rulers from power. It is not like the Christian colonialist metaphor of evangelism."

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2022/04/another-beginning-part2/

Another Beginning (Part 3 of 3)

"This spring, may tulips and daffodils not be the only ones waking up from winter, but may the rays of the sun also usher us toward choices that lead to more just world."

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2022/04/another-beginning-part3/



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 HeartGroup on Zoom Every Wednesday Night!



"I've experienced paradigm shifts in my thinking that are transforming my spiritual journey."

That's what one participant recently wrote. Each Wednesday evening, Glendale City Church hosts 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 us at: info@renewedheartministries.com for the link for the Zoom meeting.

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

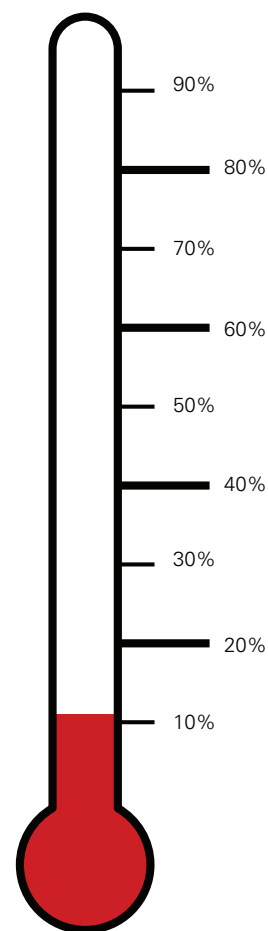
And to those of you out there who are already supporting this ministry, I want to say thank you. We continue being a voice for change because of your support.

**2022 Projected Budget Goal:
\$185,000.00**

**Donations Received
April 2022:
\$6,011.32**

**Donations Received
January through April:
\$21,300.80**

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



Quotable Quotes

"Democracy is not simply a license to indulge individual whims and proclivities. It is also holding oneself accountable to some reasonable degree for the conditions of peace and chaos that impact the lives of those who inhabit one's beloved extended community."

– Aberjhani;
*Splendid Literarium:
A Treasury of Stories,
Aphorisms, Poems, and Essays*

Alexandria Aniyah Rubio
Alithia Ramirez
Amerie Jo Garza
Annabell Guadalupe Rodriguez
Eliahana Cruz Torres
Eliana "Ellie" Garcia
Jackie Cazares
Jailah Nicole Silguero
Jayce Luevanos
Jose Flores
Layla Salazar
Makenna Lee Elrod
Maite Rodriguez
Miranda Mathis
Nevaeh Bravo
Rojelio Torres
Tess Marie Mata
Uziyah Garcia
Xavier Lopez
Eva Mireles
Irma Garcia

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.

RENEWED
HEART
MINISTRIES



"When you start with
an understanding
that God loves
everyone, justice
isn't very far
behind."

Dr. Emilie M. Townes
Journey to Liberation: The Legacy of
Womanist Theology



Ali Montgomery

Front cover artwork by Ali Montgomery.

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