

RENEWED
HEART
MINISTRIES



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



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Renewed Heart Ministries

Follow Herb!



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Herb Montgomery



Thank You

I recently received this note in my email inbox:

"Also, just want to say, my child, who is transgender, will only listen to me share devotional readings from the emails you send out (versus any other I offer). Your views and care for the LGBTQ community have brought so much validation and hope to my child and to me as well. Thanks for all you do."

It's messages like these that remind us at Renewed Heart Ministries that what we do matters.

I want to take this opportunity to thank you for your support of our work.

Your generous support continues to enable us to provide much needed resources and support for help searching to find the intersection between their faith and their passion to heal our world. Your support enables us to provide a strong faith-based foundation for labors of love. It enables us to provide people with connection and inspiration as we compassionately participate together in the varied work of justice within our world today.

Quite simply, what we do is vitally needed both in our larger world as well as in our local faith communities. And we could not do what we do without you.

From all of us here at RHM, thank you.

Together, we will continue being a voice for change.



Upcoming Events

SEPTEMBER 24, 2022

Good News Fellowship

(via Zoom)

Toronto, Ontario Canada

304.520.0030



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



Photo by Gérôme Bruneau on Unsplash

I love the emphasis in the end of this passage. It's not that "they" will be blessed. It's that "you" will be blessed. The text defines that blessing as an extrinsic, extra bestowal of blessing at what Luke's readers understood in their worldview as a future "resurrection of the righteous." What I would rather have us understand is that there is an intrinsic blessing and value that people of varying experiences can bring to a community.



The Bodies We Inhabit

by Herb Montgomery

Our reading this week is from the gospel of Luke:

One Sabbath, when Jesus went to eat in the house of a prominent Pharisee, he was being carefully watched...

When he noticed how the guests picked the places of honor at the table, he told them this parable: "When someone invites you to a wedding feast, do not take the place of honor, for a person more distinguished than you may have been invited. If so, the host who invited both of you will come and say to you, 'Give this person your seat.' Then, humiliated, you will have to take the least important place. But when you are invited, take the lowest place, so that when your host comes, he will say to you, 'Friend, move up to a better place.' Then you will be honored in the presence of all the other guests. For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted."

Then Jesus said to his host, "When you give a luncheon or dinner, do not invite your friends, your brothers or sisters, your relatives, or your rich neighbors; if you do, they may invite you back and so you will be repaid. But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous." (Luke 14:1, 7-14)

In Roman culture, people in the upper classes usually followed a meal with philosophical discussion and debate. The meal that Luke's gospel describes in this week's passage involves debate about some of Luke's ethical favorites: humility and the inclusion of the marginalized, specifically people living in poverty or people with disabilities. These were groups that the historical Jesus had compassion on, and the author of Luke's gospel is emphasizing them as the objects of compassion too.

This passage doesn't introduce anything new about Jewish wisdom, but the ethic had deep roots in the Hebrew sacred texts:

Do not exalt yourself in the king's presence, and do not claim a place among his great men; it is better for him to say to you, "Come up here," than for him to humiliate you before his nobles. (Proverbs 25:6-7)

If they make you master of the feast, do not exalt yourself; be among them as one of their number. Take care of them first and then sit down; when you have fulfilled all your duties, take your place, so that you may be merry along with them and receive a wreath for your excellent leadership. (Sirach 32:1-2)

When pride comes, then comes disgrace; but wisdom is with the humble. (Proverbs 11:2)

For you [YHWH] deliver a humble people, but the haughty eyes you bring down. (Psalms 18:27)

This theme is found across the different version of the Jesus story we have today:

For those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted. (Matthew 23:12)

For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted. (Luke 18:14b)

I do need to revisit something I wrote last week about the Jesus story's shortcomings regarding people who live with disabilities. Nothing is ever simple, and the Jesus story is complex. While I believe that what I wrote is generally true, I see an exception in this week's passage. Here in Luke, Jesus does not bring change to the person with the disability but rather calling for change in the privileged people around that person. Jesus calls them to change their attitudes and include people with disabilities. He is calling for change in how people with disabilities are treated.

Last month's recommended reading at Renewed Heart Ministries was Nancy L. Eiesland's ecclesiastically challenging and deeply thought-provoking book *The Disabled God: Toward a Liberatory Theology of Disability*. If you did not get a chance to read it last month, I still recommend getting a copy and going through it.

Among many other valuable insights, Eiesland identifies three traditional theological barriers for people with disabilities within the Christian tradition:

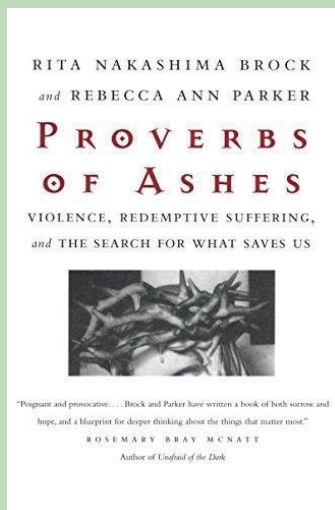
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RHM's Recommended Reading for September

Proverbs of Ashes: Violence, Redemptive Suffering, and the Search for What Saves Us
by Rita Nakashima Brock and Rebecca Ann Parker

Rebecca Parker was a young minister in Seattle when a woman walked into her church and asked if God really wanted her to accept her husband's beatings and bear them gladly, as Jesus bore the cross. Parker knew, at that moment, that if she were to answer the woman's question truthfully she would have to rethink her theology. And she would have to think hard about some of the choices she was making in her own life.

When Rita Nakashima Brock was a young child growing up in Kansas, kids taunted her viciously, calling her



names like "Chink" or "Jap." She learned to pretend that she did not feel the sting of scorn and the humiliation of contempt. The solitude and silence of her suffering-decreed by both her mother's Japanese culture and her father's Christian heritage-kept the wound alive.

It was the gap between knowledge born of personal experience and traditional theology that led Rita Brock and Rebecca Parker to write this emotionally gripping and intellectually rich exploration of the

doctrine of the atonement. Using an unusual combination of memoir and theology in the tradition of Augustine's Confessions, they lament the inadequacy of how Christian tradition has interpreted the violence that happened to Jesus. Ultimately, they argue, the idea that the death of Jesus on the cross saves us reveals a sanctioning of violence at the heart of Christianity.

Brock and Parker draw on a wide array of intimate stories about family violence, the sexual abuse of children, racism, homophobia, and war to reveal how they came to understand the widespread damage being done by this theology. But the authors also undertake their own arduous and unexpected journeys to recover from violence and to assist others to do so. On these journeys they discover communities that begin to give them the strength to question the destructive ideas they have internalized, and the strength to seek out an alternative vision of Christianity, one based on healing and love. *Proverbs of Ashes* is both a condemnation of bad theology and a passionate search for what truly saves us.

"Bodies We Inhabit" continued from page 3

These three themes—sin and disability conflation, virtuous suffering, and segregationist charity—illustrate the theological obstacles encountered by people with disabilities who see inclusion and justice with the Christian community. (*The Disabled God*, p. 74)

Let me explain. When people conflate sin and disability, they make disabilities a synonym for sinfulness or shortcomings. In all four of the canonical gospels, the gospel authors both subvert and strengthen that connection (i.e. blindness, Matthew 15:5; inability to be mobile, John 5; deafness, Matthew 13:15). As we've discussed, there are also elements in the gospels that can be interpreted as teaching inherent virtue in suffering, and when applied to people with disabilities, that means teaching they were chosen for disability to fulfill some heroic, good, divine purpose (see John 9:3). Finally, what Eiesland names as "segregationist

charity" means keeping people with disabilities at arms' length while calling for charity and withholding full inclusion and accessible justice from them (see John 19:36; Exodus 12:46; and Leviticus 21:16-23). Some faith traditions prevent disabled people from participating in fully ordained ministry.

It cannot be denied that the biblical record and Christian theology have often been dangerous for persons with disabilities. Nor can the prejudice, hostility, and suspicion toward people with disabilities be dismissed as relics of an unenlightened past. Today many interpretations of biblical passages and Christian theologies continue to reinforce negative stereotypes, support social and environmental segregation, and mask the lived realities of people with disabilities. In recent decades, while the problematic nature of the bible record with regard to women has



Photo by Daniel Gutko on Unsplash

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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/



The Bodies We Inhabit (Part 1 of 3)

"This week's story involves humility and the inclusion of the marginalized, specifically people living in poverty or people with disabilities"

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2022/08/bodies-we-inhabit-part1/

The Bodies We Inhabit (Part 2 of 3)

"These three themes...illustrate the theological obstacles encountered by people with disabilities who seek inclusion and justice with the Christian community."

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2022/08/bodies-we-inhabit-part2/

The Bodies We Inhabit (Part 3 of 3)

"To the degree that our communities are accessible to people whose bodies are different or disabled, to that same degree we will intrinsically experience either blessing or loss."

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2022/07/sharing-more-than-we-need-part3/



Our Collective Thriving (Part 1 of 3)

"This story creates a tension of priorities, pitting people's needs for thriving and not simply surviving against a religious observance."

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2022/08/our-collective-thriving-part1/

Our Collective Thriving (Part 2 of 3)

"We still see in our communities some of us who can be very intentional about our observances within our religion while we ignore the social justice concerns of others. Christians can sometimes be among the worst offenders in this."

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2022/08/our-collective-thriving-part2/

Our Collective Thriving (Part 3 of 3)

"This week's story also calls us to attend to things that enable all of us to thrive together without anyone being marginalized."

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2022/08/our-collective-thriving-part3/



The Personal Cost of Causing Division (Part 1 of 3)

"The struggle in the story is with the economic, political, and social harm being committed against those that society had made vulnerable, and with what should be done in response."

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2022/08/personal-cost-causing-division-part1/

The Personal Cost of Causing Division (Part 2 of 3)

"Our reading this week calls to mind times when we have also had to make decisions about speaking out against things we feel are unjust or harmful and facing division or controversy as a result."

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2022/08/personal-cost-causing-division-part2/

The Personal Cost of Causing Division (Part 3 of 3)

"In the end, it's about harm reduction and mitigation. It is the reality of this harm to everyone that outweighs the personal cost for speaking out."

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2022/08/personal-cost-causing-division-part3/

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Envisioning a World of Care (Part 1 of 3)

"The first portion of this week's reading centers on the ethics of resource-sharing and wealth redistribution as a universal expectation."

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2022/08/envisioning-world-care-part1/

Envisioning a World of Care (Part 2 of 3)

"Instead, we see him teaching a more socialized way of living here on earth that could lift up the marginalized and downtrodden from the harms their society was committing against them."

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2022/08/envisioning-world-care-part2/

Envisioning a World of Care (Part 3 of 3)

"This topic can lead us to heated discussions about things like taxes, wealth limits, redistribution, universal health care and child care, universal basic income, and more. And when I look around at today's disparities and the harm being produced, these are discussions worth having."

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2022/08/envisioning-world-care-part3/



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"Bodies We Inhabit" continued from page 4

become generally acknowledged, the degrading depictions of people with disabilities are often ignored or, worse, seen as fundamentally accurate to our experience. An uncritical use of the Bible to address the concerns of people with disabilities perpetuates marginalization and discrimination in the name of religion." (The Disabled God, p. 74-75)

As Jesus followers, we can and must do better.

I include myself in this. I, too, have conflated disability and sin, promoted the virtues of suffering, and withheld full inclusion in the past.

Our reading this week gives us the opportunity to interpret a gospel story in a life-giving way, one that calls for full accessibility and inclusion.

"When you give a luncheon or dinner, do not invite your friends, your brothers or sisters, your relatives, or your rich neighbors; if you do, they may invite you back and so you will be repaid. But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed."

I love the emphasis in the end of this passage. It's not that "they" will be blessed. It's that "you" will be blessed. The text defines that blessing as an extrinsic, extra bestowal of blessing at what Luke's readers understood in their worldview as a future "resurrection of the righteous."

HeartGroup Application

1. Share something that spoke to you from this week's eSight/Podcast episode with your HeartGroup.
2. What boundary transgressing definition of "neighbor" is this week's story bringing to mind for 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.

I love each of you dearly. ■

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

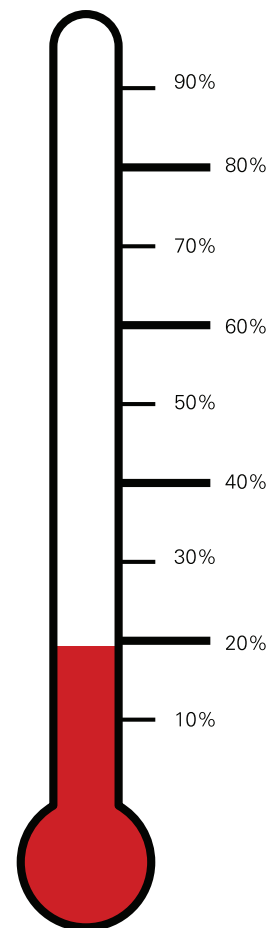
And to those of you out there who are already supporting this ministry, I want to say thank you. We continue being a voice for change because of your support.

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

**Donations Received
July 2022:
\$4,403.50**

**Donations Received
January through July:
\$36,916.95**

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



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 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.



Front cover artwork by Ali Montgomery.

"And forgive us our
debts,
as we also have
forgiven our
debtors."

Matthew 6:12

renewedheartministries.com

