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Podcast

RENEWED HEART MINISTRIES

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Herb Montgomery

Finding Jesus is Here!

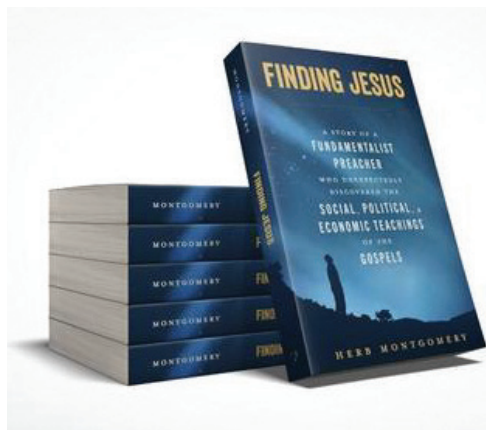
It's finally here! Herb's new book, *Finding Jesus: A story of a Fundamentalist preacher who unexpectedly discovered the social, political, and economic teachings of the Gospels*, is now available at renewedheartministries.com just in time for the holidays!

Here is what people are saying:

"Herb has spent the last decade reading scripture closely. He also reads the world around us, thinks carefully with theologians and sociologists, and wonders how the most meaningful stories of his faith can inspire us to live with more heart, attention, and care for others in our time. For those who've ever felt alone in the process of applying the wisdom of Jesus to the world in which we live, Herb offers signposts for the journey and the reminder that this is not a journey we take alone. Read *Finding Jesus* with others, and be transformed together."

—Dr. Keisha McKenzie, Auburn University

"In *Finding Jesus*, Herb Montgomery unleashes the revolutionary Jesus and his kin-dom manifesto from the shackles of the domesticated religion of empire. Within these pages we discover that rather than being a fire insurance policy to keep good boys and girls out of hell, Jesus often becomes the fiery enemy of good boys and girls who refuse to bring economic justice to the poor, quality healthcare to the underserved, and



equal employment to people of color or same-sex orientation. Because what the biblical narratives of Jesus reveal is that any future human society—heavenly or otherwise—will only be as good as the one that we're making right here and now. There is no future tranquil city with streets of gold when there is suffering on the asphalt right outside our front door today. *Finding Jesus* invites us to pray 'thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven' on our feet as we follow our this liberator into the magnificent struggle of bringing the love and justice of God to all—right here, right now."

—Todd Leonard, pastor of
Glendale City Church, Glendale CA

"Herb Montgomery's teachings have been deeply influential to me. This book shares the story of how he came to view the teachings of Jesus through the lens of nonviolence, liberation for all, and a call to a shared table. It's an important read, especially for those of us who come from backgrounds where the myth of redemptive violence and individual (rather

than collective) salvation was the focus."

—Daneen Akers, author of
Holy Troublemakers & Unconventional Saints and co-director/producer of
Seventh-Gay Adventists: A Film about Faith, Identity & Belonging

"So often Christians think about Jesus through the lens of Paul's theology and don't focus on the actual person and teachings of Jesus. This book is different. Here you find a challenging present-day application of Jesus' teachings about the Kingdom of God and the Gospel. Rediscover why this Rabbi incited fear in the hearts of religious and political leaders two millennia ago. Herb's book calls forth a moral vision based on the principles of Jesus' vision of liberation. *Finding Jesus* helps us see that these teachings are just as disruptive today as they were when Jesus first articulated them."

—Alicia Johnston, author of
The Bible & LGBTQ Adventists

"Herb Montgomery is a pastor for pastors, a teacher for teachers and a scholar for scholars. Part memoir and part theological reflection, *Finding Jesus* is a helpful and hope-filled guide to a deeper understanding of who Jesus is and who he can be. Herb's tone is accessible and welcoming, while also challenging and fresh. This book is helpful for anyone who wants a new and fresh perspective on following Jesus."

—Traci Smith, author of
Faithful Families

Pages: 210

Price: \$14.95 (USD)

Available at renewedheartministries.com

Matching Donations for December!

As 2022 is coming to a close, we are deeply humbled and thankful for each of you who reads, listens to, and shares RHM's work. We are grateful for the actions you continue to take to make our world a safer, compassionate, just home for all. Thank you for being such an important part of our community, and for your continued support.

Thanks to a kind donor we are able to match every donation this month as the year closes. All donation during these last two months will be matched, dollar for dollar, making your support of Renewed Heart Ministries, and the work we do, go twice as far.

Help us meet our year-end budget and be able to plan for 2023.

Your support enables RHM to continue providing much needed resources to help Jesus-followers find the intersection between their faith and labors of love, compassion, and justice in our world today.

As 2022 ends, we invite you to make a donation to Renewed Heart Ministries to make the most of this offer.

You can donate online by going to renewedheartministries.com and clicking "Donate."

Or you can make a donation by mail at:
Renewed Heart Ministries,
PO Box 1211 Lewisburg, WV 24901

Thank you in advance for your continued support.

This coming year, together, we will continue being a voice for change.



A Shared Table 2022

During the months of November and December, become one of our monthly sustaining partners and receive a handmade **Renewed Heart Ministries Shared-Table Pottery Bowl** made by Crystal and Herb as a thank you gift for your support.

To become a monthly sustaining partner, go to renewedheartministries.com/donate and sign up for an automated recurring monthly donation of any amount by clicking the "Check this box to make it

a monthly recurring donation" option. Or if you are using Paypal, select "Make this a monthly donation."

In January 2023 we will be starting out the new year by sending out these lovely bowls as our gift to you to thank you for your support.

In the gospels, Jesus teaches a gospel of loving our neighbors, being committed to caring for one another, a gospel of a shared table of inclusion, especially of the marginalized. Jesus modeled this gospel by a life spent healing hurts in our world, and challenging the systems responsible for that harm.

Jesus 'gospel of a shared table is what this pottery bowl represents.

Our prayer is that each time one of our bowls is used you will be reminded of Jesus 'gospel of love, caring and sharing. They also make a great gift or an excellent conversation starter, as well.

Thank you for partnering with us to further the work of love, compassion, justice, and taking care of one another. Together we are working toward a safer, more compassionate, and just world both for today and for eternity.

If you are already one of our sustaining partners making a monthly automated donation each month, we want to honor your existing continued support of Renewed Heart Ministries, too. You'll receive one of our Shared Table Pottery Bowls as a thank you, also, for your continued support.

From each of us here at RHM, thank you for your support of our work.

We wish you joy, peace, happiness, and blessings as we enter this year's holiday season. Your support sustains our ongoing work in the coming year.

Both within our society as well as our various faith communities, together we will continue being a voice for love and inclusion.

"In this just future that we are working for now, may all things death-dealing be burned up like chaff with fire that cannot be quenched. May all things life-giving be gathered up and cherished. And may this future be one of salvation for each of us together."



Advent and Coming Justice

by Herb Montgomery

Our reading this week comes from the gospel of Matthew:

In those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the wilderness of Judea and saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near." This is he who was spoken of through the prophet Isaiah:

"A voice of one calling in the wilderness, 'Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him.'"

John's clothes were made of camel's hair, and he had a leather belt around his waist. His food was locusts and wild honey. People went out to him from Jerusalem and all Judea and the whole region of the Jordan. Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River.

But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to where he was baptizing, he said to them: "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the

coming wrath? Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. And do not think you can say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham. The ax is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire.

I baptize you with water for repentance. But after me comes one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with

continued on page 4

the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor, gathering his wheat into the barn and burning up the chaff with unquenchable fire." (Matthew 3:1-12)

Our reading this week resonates with the context of Advent at this time of year. Advent is a time to commemorate not only the arrival of Jesus in Bethlehem, but also the coming of a just, safe, compassionate world here, one where every person, with all our differences, has space to feel at home.

Our present world doesn't match that vision yet. In our world, some traits and experiences are privileged and centered while others are pushed to the margins. In this week's reading, John the Baptist was not speaking from the center of his community. He was speaking from the margins of the wilderness. Ched Myers speaks of a possible narrative meaning for this detail in his book *Say to This Mountain: Mark's Story of Discipleship*:

"While the margin has a primarily negative political connotation as a place of disenfranchisement, Mark ascribes to it a primarily positive theological value. It is the place where the sovereignty of God is made manifest, where the story of liberation is renewed, where God's intervention in history occurs." (Ched Myers, *Say to This Mountain: Mark's Story of Discipleship*, p. 12)

Our most cherished and sacred Jesus story begins and persists on the margins, on the edges, or in less centered social settings. Not only was Judea a marginalized region of the Roman empire, but the narrative placing John's itinerant ministry outside the synagogues is a hint that readers or listeners should look toward the margins. For this itinerant ministry to be further located in Galilee, an even more marginalized region for already marginalized Jewish people within the Roman empire, makes Jesus and John's ministry thrice-located on the margins compared to the urban institutions of their society.

From this narrative point, we learn that restoration, liberation, and life-giving transformations toward a more just world come from marginalized social locations in our societies. Change comes from the bottom up and outside in. To put it in our language today, change

begins with the grassroots.

Another thing that strikes me about our reading this week is John's no-nonsense, offensively blunt comments to the Pharisees and Sadducees who showed up to see what he was up to. It was a call out, but I want to steer clear of Christian anti-Semitic interpretations here. John the Baptist was Jewish. He was not trying to begin a new religion or rejecting his Judaism. John's movement was about the renewal, restoration, and liberation of his fellow Jews, not about replacing them with a new people.

John's attack of Pharisees and Sadducees in this story was not religious as we would understand it in our culture, but it was very much political. Remember, the Pharisees and Sadducees were powerful political parties in John's society that not only competed with one another for political power, but also were complicit with Roman imperialism and Rome's colonization of Judea, Galilee, and other small, rural communities across the region. Both Jesus' and John's movements were rural movements, not urban. Only at the end of his life did

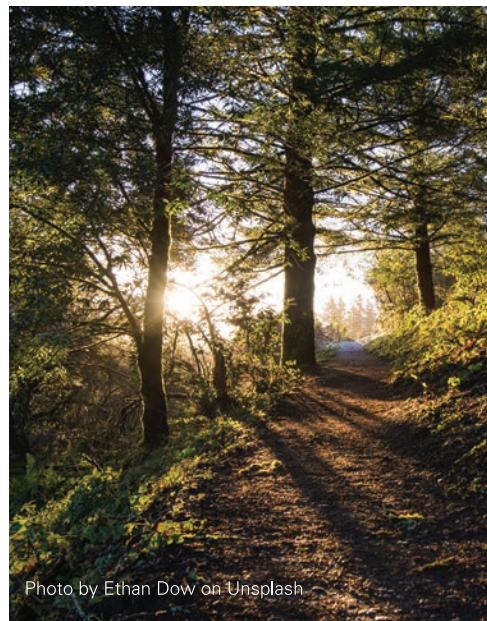


Photo by Ethan Dow on Unsplash

Jesus set his sights on Jerusalem and the economic injustices centered in the Temple state there.

Thus, the wilderness location of John's ministry was also associated with his practice of a Judaism that rejected complicity with the Roman empire and contrasted with urban institutions including Herod's family's reign in Judea and the Temple state seated in Jerusalem.

John the Baptist was part of a Jewish liberation and reformation movement. He, like others, practiced immersion baptism as an act of repentance, atoning for past injustices, recommitting to righteousness, and dedicating oneself to a vision of liberation and restoration for Jewish people. That era of restoration would begin with a global end to all injustice, violence, and oppression.

I agree with scholars who interpret Jesus as having begun as a disciple of John's. Within John's community, there is a spirit of looking forward to something that was about to change for the better, and whereas John said it was coming, Jesus said it had arrived, was near, or was already among us, in our midst.

Today, those of us engaging justice work also look forward to and are working toward an iteration of our world that is more in harmony with justice and inclusion. Justice workers who value the Jesus story sometimes refer to this change as God's just future, the *basileia*, the kin-dom, beloved community, and more. John the Baptist interpreted this change as the breaking in of God's work in our world, an intervention in which his followers were invited to participate. Today, we also understand that a more just future depends on our cooperation with each other (and with the Divine for those of you who are theists).

As we wrap up another year, what accomplishments do we have to be thankful for? What lies ahead as we anticipate another year of working toward a world that is a safe and just home for everyone?

This week's reading concludes with John's anticipated restoration and liberation being an era of reversal and upheaval, not just restoration. It was to be a time of opposites, where wheat was gathered and chaff was burned up. I'm okay with this imagery if we apply it to life-giving social elements: I actually like the idea of gathering up life-giving things and forming a society out of them. I like the idea of death-dealing elements and systems being burned up in the purifying fire of life, love, compassion, and justice. I can lean into that!

But I want to lean away from any interpretation of this passage that applies threshing, gathering, or burning

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SOCIAL JESUS

A Blog Exploring the Intersection of Faith and Societal Justice



Last month's "Social Jesus" Blog on Patheos



The Beginning of Advent (Part 1 of 3)

"In this Advent narrative, all violence, injustice, and imperial oppression is finally answered for as a just future breaks in."

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2022/11/beginning-advent-part1/

The Beginning of Advent (Part 2 of 3)

"I understand why this encouragement resonated with the experience of its original audience. Today, we need even more life-giving stories."

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2022/11/beginning-advent-part2/

The Beginning of Advent (Part 3 of 3)

"I understand why a reversal would have resonated with the original audience of our passage, and today, we can do better."

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2022/11/beginning-advent-part3/



Crosses and Resurrections (Part 1 of 3)

"In the story, the crucifixion was an unjust act of state violence, an act God responds to by undoing it."

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2022/11/crosses-and-resurrections-part1/

Crosses and Resurrections (Part 2 of 3)

"The story we read this week is ultimately a story of hope, a story of ups and downs, victories and defeats, and defeats undone."

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2022/11/crosses-and-resurrections-part2/

Crosses and Resurrections (Part 3 of 3)

"Life can overcome death. Love can overcome hate. Justice and compassion can overcome wrongs even when those wrongs have the backing of the propertied, powerful, and privileged."

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2022/11/crosses-resurrections-part3/



Practicing Honesty Regarding Harmful Forms of Christianity (Part 1 of 3)

"Through these stories, anti-Jewishness could grow into these passages and interpretations of these passages that have been deeply destructive to our Jewish neighbors and friends."

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2022/11/practicing-honesty-regarding-harmful-forms-christianity-part1/

Practicing Honesty Regarding Harmful Forms of Christianity (Part 2 of 3)

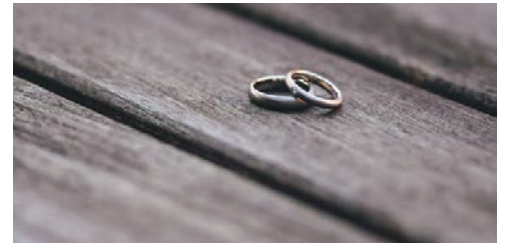
"This passage in the lectionary gives us the opportunity to talk about the harm that some interpretations of Christianity's sacred texts have led to."

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2022/11/practicing-honesty-regarding-harmful-forms-christianity-part2/

Practicing Honesty Regarding Harmful Forms of Christianity (Part 3 of 3)

"We need to be honest about the harm we have done in the past, and we also need to do the hard work of practicing more life-giving ways to follow Jesus today."

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2022/11/practicing-honesty-regarding-harmful-forms-christianity-part3/



When Marriage is Unjust (Part 1 of 3)

"His response in each synoptic gospel is telling: and that response doesn't seem to be good news for the patriarchy, heterosexism, or the social institution of marriage."

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2022/11/when-marriage-unjust-part1/

When Marriage is Unjust (Part 2 of 3)

"This week's reading challenges all our institutions, systems, and social structures including marriage."

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2022/11/when-marriage-unjust-part2/

When Marriage is Unjust (Part 3 of 3)

"Today, we must ask whether our social institutions are being practiced in life-giving or death-dealing ways."

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2022/11/when-marriage-unjust-part3/

to people. We can say "no" to injustice while not letting go of the humanity of those responsible for that injustice. We can obstruct them and their activity today while holding space for them to change if they should choose to tomorrow. We want to reclaim and hold on to our own humanity while not letting go of anyone else's. I love the way Rev. Dr. Jacqui Lewis of Middle Collegiate Church says it in her book *Fierce Love*:

"As a scholar who has studied religion and psychology, as an author of books on identity development and the power of stories, as a professor who teaches about leadership and anti-racist work, I understand why and how people and systems change. I know this to be true: The world doesn't get great unless we all get better. If there is such a thing as salvation, then we are not saved until everyone is saved; our dignity and liberation are bound together." (Rev. Dr. Jacqui Lewis, *Fierce Love*, p. 14).

During this season of Advent, we commemorate where justice, liberation and salvation has arrived in the past and make time to look forward to where it may arrive again and how we can participate that just future today. In the spirit of Lewis' inclusive salvation for everyone, I'll close with a quote from Pam McAllister who, in explaining the work of Barbara Deming, shares this applicable wisdom:

"Barbara wrote about the two hands of nonviolence. She wrote that non-violence gives us two hands upon the oppressor... This visual metaphor is particularly helpful in describing the basic attitude underlying the nonviolent sensibility. With one hand we say to an oppressor, 'Stop what you are doing. I refuse to honor the role you are choosing to play. I refuse to obey you. I refuse to cooperate with your demands. I refuse to build the walls and the bombs. I refuse to pay for the guns. With this hand I will even interfere with the wrong you are doing. I want to disrupt the easy pattern of your life.' But then the advocate of nonviolence raises the other hand. It is raised out-stretched—maybe with love and sympathy, but many not—but always outstretched with the message that (as Barbara wrote), 'No, you are not the other, and no, I am not the other. No one is the other.' With this hand we say, 'I won't let

go of you or cast you out of the human race. I have faith that you can make a better choice than you are making now, and I'll be here when you're ready. Like it or not, we are part of one another.' The peculiar strength of nonviolence comes precisely from the dual nature of its approach—the two hands." (Pam McAllister, *You Can't Kill The Spirit*, p. 6-7)

In this just future that we are working for now, may all things death-dealing be burned up like chaff with fire that cannot be quenched. May all things life-giving be gathered up and cherished. And may this future be one of salvation for each of us together.

HeartGroup Application

1. Share something that spoke to you from this week's eSight/Podcast episode with your HeartGroup.
2. What does inclusive, societal salvation look like to 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.

You can find Renewed Heart Ministries on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram. If you haven't done so already, please follow us on your chosen social media platforms for our daily posts. Also, if you enjoy listening to the Jesus for Everyone podcast, please like and subscribe to the JFE podcast through the podcast platform you use and consider taking some time to give us a review. This helps others find our podcast as well.

And if you'd like to reach out to us through email, you can reach us at info@renewedheartministries.com

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

I love each of you dearly. ■

RHM's Recommended Reading for Dec.

Finding Jesus: A story of a Fundamentalist preacher who unexpectedly discovered the social, political, and economic teachings of the Gospels

by Herb Montgomery

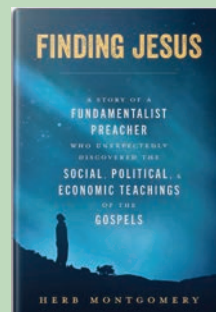
"Herb has spent the last decade reading scripture closely. He also reads the world around us, thinks carefully with theologians and sociologists, and wonders how the most

meaningful stories of his faith can inspire us to live with more heart, attention, and care for others in our time. For those who've ever felt alone in the process of applying the wisdom of Jesus to the world in which we live, Herb offers signposts for the journey and the reminder that this is not a journey we take alone. Read *Finding Jesus* with others, and be transformed together."

— Dr. Keisha McKenzie,
Auburn University

"Herb Montgomery's teachings have been deeply influential to me. This book shares the story of how he came to view the teachings of Jesus through the lens of nonviolence, liberation for all, and a call to a shared table. It's an important read, especially for those of us who come from backgrounds where the myth of redemptive violence and individual (rather than collective) salvation was the focus."

— Daneen Akers, author of *Holy Troublemakers & Unconventional Saints* and co-director/producer of *Seventh-Gay Adventists: A Film about Faith, Identity & Belonging*



**GET YOURS NOW AT
renewedheartministries.com**

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

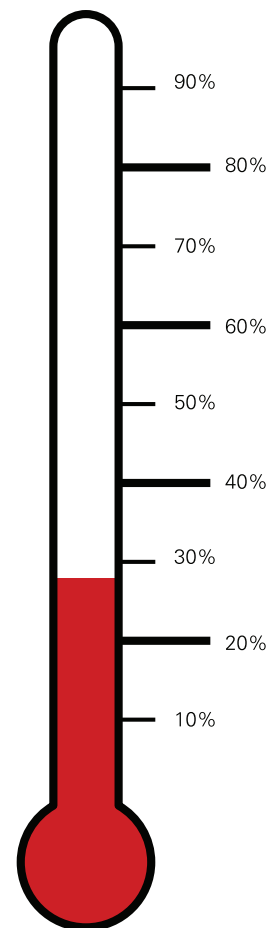
And to those of you out there who are already supporting this ministry, I want to say thank you. We continue being a voice for change because of your support.

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

**Donations Received
October 2022:
\$7,852.45**

**Donations Received
January through October:
\$53,007.20**

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



Upcoming Events

December 24, 2022

Good News Fellowship
(via Zoom)
Toronto, Ontario Canada
304.520.0030



Weekly HeartGroup on Zoom Every Wednesday Night!

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 p.m. Pacific/10 p.m. Eastern.

Email us at: info@renewedheartministries.com for 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!***

Visit us at:
renewedheartministries.com
and click "Sign Up!"



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.



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

