

# JESUS FOR TODAY

## *A Socio-Political Reading of the Jesus Story*

Jesus For Everyone Podcast  
Episode 156: The Sayings of Jesus  
<https://renewedheartministries.com/Podcasts>

**Sam Wells**—“The traditional way of understanding discipleship as one of taking people out of the world because it is a hostile place, promising them a better place in God’s heavenly kingdom, has been radically transformed by this insight. Jesus call us rather to change the world in such a way that it will cease to be the hostile place it is, as we construct the way for God’s reign on earth . . . The one thing everyone seems to agree on today is that there’s plenty wrong with the world. There are only two responses to this—either go and put it right yourself, or, if you can’t, make life pretty uncomfortable for those who can until they do. When we take stock of our relationship with the powerful, we ask ourselves, ‘Does the shape of my life reflect my longing to see God set people free, and do I challenge those who keep others in slavery?’” (Introduction to *Binding the Strong Man: a political reading of Mark’s story of Jesus* by Ched Myers)

**Deuteronomy 15.4**—However, there need be no poor people among you,

**Acts 4.34**—There were no needy persons among them.

**Delores S. Williams**—It seems more intelligent and more scriptural to understand that redemption had to do with God, through Jesus, giving humankind new vision to see the resources for positive, abundant relational life. Redemption had to do with God, through the ministerial vision, giving humankind the ethical thought and practice upon which to build positive, productive quality of life. Hence, 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*, pp. 130-131)

**Mark 1.14-15**—After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. “The time has come,” he said. “The Kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the Good News!”

**Luke 9:2**—“ . . . he sent them [the twelve] out to proclaim the Kingdom of God . . . ”

**Luke 9.6**—So they set out and went from village to village, proclaiming the Good News.

**Luke 10.9**—[The seventy two]...tell them, ‘The Kingdom of God has come near to you.’

**Adolf Deissman**—“By its very nature Primitive Christianity stood contrasted with the upper class not at first as Christianity, but as a movement of the proletariat lower class.” (*New Light on the New Testament From Records of the Graeco-Roman Period*)

**Nelson Mandela**—“Overcoming poverty is not a task of charity, it is an act of justice. Like Slavery and Apartheid, poverty is not natural. It is man-made and it can be overcome and eradicated by the actions of human beings.”

**Q 11:2-4**—“When you pray, say, Father — may your name be kept holy! — let your reign come: Our day’s bread give us today; and cancel our debts for us, as we too have cancelled for those in debt to us.

**Oscar Romero**—“It helps, now and then, to step back and take the long view. The kingdom is not only beyond our efforts, it is even beyond our vision. We accomplish in our lifetime only a tiny fraction of the magnificent enterprise that is God’s work. Nothing we do is complete, Which is another way of saying that the kingdom always lies beyond us. No statement says all that could be said. No prayer fully expresses our faith. No program accomplishes the church’s mission. No set of goals and objectives includes everything. This is what we are about. We plant the seeds that one day will grow. We water seeds already planted, knowing that they hold future promise. We lay foundations that will need further development. We provide yeast that produces effects far beyond our capabilities. We cannot do everything, And there is a sense of liberation in realizing that. This enables us to do something, and to do it very well. It may be incomplete, but it is a beginning, a step along the way, An opportunity for the Lord’s grace to enter and do the rest. We may never see the end results, but that is the difference Between the master builder and the worker. We are workers, not master builders, Ministers, not messiahs. We are prophets of a future not our own. Amen.” (Taking the Long View)

**Charlie Kraybill**—“Where did Jesus get his inspiration? From the Torah, the Prophets, and the Writings, of course. Little of what Jesus said was original with him. His genius was not so much in the substance of his sayings as in the way he curated his source material, the methodology he used for selecting what to highlight and what to leave on the shelf. And Jesus left a lot on the shelf. He ignored the negative qualities attributed to Yahweh: the wrath, the retribution, the jealousy, the rage, the pettiness. He also ignored Yahweh’s military exploits, the occasions where God was portrayed as siding with one tribe over other tribes on the battlefield. Jesus knew, intuitively, that stories of Yahweh behaving badly were projections of the humans who had written the texts. He understood that “Yahweh the Warrior” is a literary character, created by the scribes for their patriotic tales of Israel’s glorious past. At the same time, Jesus resonated with Yahweh’s noblest qualities: mercy, compassion, generosity, forgiveness, non-judgment, etc. He scoured the scrolls for passages where God is shown in the best light. These became Jesus’s favorite passages. They inspired his philosophy of conciliation, affirmation, and pacifism. Because Jesus was confident that the God who really exists ~ the Source of All Truth and Beauty in the Universe ~ is conciliatory, affirming, and non-violent. All the time. Any teachings or texts that contradict the mercy and compassion of God carry no weight. It was a radical perspective for a marginal Jew from the Galilean hinterlands, yet it’s the perspective that has made Jesus such a provocative and inspirational figure for the past two millennia.” (Marginal Mennonite Society)

Herb Montgomery  
Renewed Heart Ministries  
PO Box 1211 | Lewisburg, WV 24901 | 304.520.0030  
herb@renewedheartministries.com  
www.renewedheartministries.com

**Matthew 6:12**—“And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.”

**Luke 11:2-4**—“Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sins against us.”

**Mark 1.21-22**—They went to Capernaum, and when the Sabbath came, Jesus went into the synagogue and began to teach. The people were amazed at his teaching, because he taught them as one who had authority, not as the teachers of the law.

**Mark 3.3**—Jesus said to the man with the shriveled hand, “Stand up in front of everyone.”

**Mark 3.6**—Then the Pharisees went out and began to plot with the Herodians how they might kill Jesus

**Luke 24.1-6**—On the first day of the week, very early in the morning, the women took the spices they had prepared and went to the tomb. They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. While they were wondering about this, suddenly two men in clothes that gleamed like lightning stood beside them. In their fright the women bowed down with their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, “Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here; he has risen!

**Mark 16.1-8**—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.

**Matthew 7.13-14**—“Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.

**Mark 12.31**—‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’

**Matthew 7.12**—So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.

**Mark 2.15-16**—While Jesus was having dinner at Levi’s house, many tax collectors and sinners were eating with him and his disciples, for there were many who followed him. When the teachers of the law who were Pharisees saw him eating with the sinners and tax collectors, they asked his disciples: “Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?”

