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Herb Montgomery

We Need Your Support

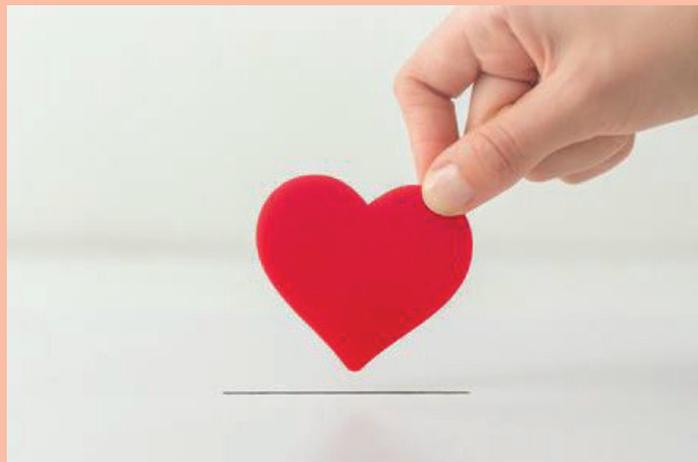
The cost of everything is on the rise and with that the cost of doing ministry is becoming more expensive, too.

To help Renewed Heart Ministries meet these rising costs, we are asking each of you to consider making a *special one time donation* to Renewed Heart Ministries, this month.

You get to decide what voices get to be heard in our faith communities. Your support enables us to be a life-giving, healing light and continue to be a voice for desperately needed change. Renewed Heart Ministries is a ministry on the margins that prioritizes the needs of marginalized people, especially those who have been the recipients of misinformed, faith-based harm.

The work of helping people find ways to heal and live out their faith through love, compassion, and justice are needed now more than ever.

You can make your one time give online by going to renewedheartministries.com and click "Donate."



Or if you prefer to make your donation by mail, you can do so by mailing it to: Renewed Heart Ministries, PO Box 1211, Lewisburg, WV 24901.

Together we will continue being a source of healing, light, life, and change. **Thank you in advance for your support.**

Finding Jesus is Here!

It's 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!

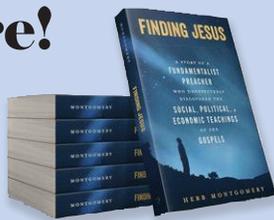
Here is what one reader wrote in:

"Your book is everything that I have been looking for! I need four more copies to share. I have some people I really need to give this to. I want them to read it, too!"

Pages: 210

Price: \$14.95 (USD)

Available now at renewedheartministries.com



Shared Table Bowls Are Being Shipped!

Everyone who became one of our automated monthly sustaining partners during the months of November and December 2022 will receive one of our handmade **Renewed Heart Ministries Shared Table Pottery Bowls** made by Crystal and Herb as a thank you gift for your support.

We're happy to announce they are finished and will be shipped out this month! Thank you once again for your continued support.

Are you receiving all of RHM's free resources each week?

You can find Renewed Heart Ministries on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram for our daily posts. Our *JFE* podcast can be subscribed to through the podcast platform you use. And you can even get messages from RHM delivered to your email inbox every day. (Or weekly if you prefer.)

Sign up today so you don't miss a thing!

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“He was not creating a new religion, but rather seeking to spark a Jewish renewal movement. It makes much more historical sense to see Jesus working alongside Moses and Elijah, as a then-contemporary example of the works that Moses and Elijah had done...What difference does it make to see Jesus working in the spirit of Moses and Elijah rather than interpreting him as a replacement for Moses and Elijah?”



Jesus as Liberation from Systemic Injustice

by Herb Montgomery

Our reading this week is from the gospel of Matthew.

After six days Jesus took with him Peter, James and John the brother of James, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. There he was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and his clothes became as white as the light. Just then there appeared before them Moses and Elijah, talking with Jesus.

Peter said to Jesus, “Lord, it is good for us to be here. If you wish, I will put up three shelters—one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah.”

While he was still speaking, a bright cloud covered them, and a voice from the cloud said, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!” When the disciples heard this, they fell facedown to the ground, terrified. But Jesus came and touched them. “Get up,” he said. “Don’t be afraid.” When they looked up, they saw no one except Jesus.

As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus instructed them, “Don’t tell anyone what you have seen, until the Son of Man has been raised from the dead.” (Matthew 17:1-9)

Allow me to geek out for just a moment. This week’s passage is packed with interesting liberation themes.

First though, the story of the transfiguration in the gospels is another example where Christian supersessionism, or replacement theology, has harmed Jewish people. Christian history and traditions are full of interpretations of this story in ways that turn away from Moses and Elijah and toward Jesus. They emphasize a Divine endorsement that points the disciples who followed the teachings of Moses and Elijah (the Law and prophets in these interpretations) to now follow Jesus instead!

I couldn’t disagree more with this way of interpreting this week’s story.

Remember that Jesus was a Jew. His was a Jewish voice in a discussion with other Jewish voices from his society. He was not creating a new religion, but rather seeking to spark a Jewish renewal movement. It makes much more historical sense to see Jesus working alongside Moses and Elijah, as a then-contemporary example of the works that Moses and Elijah had done according to the Jewish legends about them.

What difference does it make to see Jesus working in the spirit of Moses and Elijah rather than interpreting him as a replacement for Moses and Elijah?

First, let’s talk about how the various transfiguration stories in the gospels emphasize Moses and Elijah differently. Mark’s gospel states, “There appeared before them Elijah and Moses, who were talking with Jesus” (Mark 9:4). Matthew reverses the order, placing Moses first: “Then there appeared before them Moses and Elijah, talking with Jesus.”

For Mark’s intended audience, it was important to emphasize Elijah. Shortly afterward, he characterized John the Baptist’s renewal movement as a fulfillment of Malachi’s prophecy: “See, I will send the prophet Elijah to you before that great and dreadful day of the LORD comes. He will turn the hearts of the parents to their children, and the hearts of the children to their parents” (Malachi 4:5-6).

The prophet Elijah called out the apostasy of elites who he felt were leading the people away into harm. Elijah paralleled how Mark’s audience interpreted John the Baptist. In the spirit of Elijah, John called out the elite of his era, their complicity with the Roman Empire, and the destructive effects of that complicity on the small rural farming communities of Judea, Galilee, and surrounding regions, as well as the poor in more urban areas.

So I understand why Mark places Elijah first.

But our passage this week is from Matthew, and Matthew switches the order to emphasize Moses. There are so many parallels between the story of Moses on the mountain and Matthew’s story of Jesus on this mountain. Again, it is much more intrinsically life-giving to see Jesus’ and Moses’ liberation work as the primary parallel. The often repeated replacement theory is that, as Moses once gave commandments, so too Jesus gave commandments that we are to follow instead.

But Matthew’s intended audience

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“...Liberation...” continued from page 3

would have interpreted Jesus’ teachings in harmony with the laws of Moses (see Matthew 5:17). Moses as lawgiver is not the primary parallel we should emphasize here. Rather we should recognize Moses as the one who stood for the Israelites’ liberation from Egyptian slavery. Moses the liberator from foreign oppression was the parallel to Jesus that Matthew’s gospel tried bring to mind for its audience of Jewish poor and rural farmers who desperately longed to be liberated from Roman oppression.

So Jesus doesn’t *replace* Moses. Jesus is *another* Moses. Jesus stood in relation to Roman oppression the way Moses stood in relation to Egyptian oppression in the Hebrew folklore.

Notice these parallels that Matthew creates to call to mind images of Moses:

“Then the LORD said to Moses, “Come up to the LORD, you and **Aaron, Nadab and Abihu...**” (Exodus 24:1)

“Jesus took with him **Peter, James and John** the brother of James, and led them up a high mountain by themselves.” (Matthew 17:1)

“When Moses went up on the mountain, the cloud covered it, and the glory of the LORD settled on Mount Sinai. For **six days** the cloud covered the mountain, and on the seventh day the LORD called to Moses from within the cloud.” (Exodus 24:15-16)

“After **six days** Jesus took with him Peter, James and John the brother of James, and led them up a high mountain by themselves.” (Matthew 17:1)

“When Moses came down from Mount Sinai with the two tablets of the covenant law in his hands, he was not aware that **his face was radiant** because he had spoken with the LORD...**his face was radiant...**he put a veil over his face...**his face was radiant...**” (Exodus 34:29-35)

“After six days Jesus took with him Peter, James and John the brother of James, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. There he was transfigured before them. **His face shone like the sun...**” (Matthew 17:1-2)

On the mount of transfiguration Jesus speaks with God face to face. This had only happened for two others in Hebrew folklore: Moses and Elijah.

“Since then, no prophet has risen in Israel like Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face” (Deuteronomy 34:10)

“There he went into a cave and spent the night. And the word of the LORD came to him: “What are you doing here, Elijah?” He replied, “I have been very zealous for the LORD God Almighty. The Israelites have rejected your covenant, torn down your altars, and put your prophets to death with the sword. I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me too.” The LORD said, “Go out and stand on the mountain in the presence of the LORD, for the LORD is about to pass by.”

Then a great and powerful wind tore the mountains apart and shattered the rocks before the LORD, but the LORD was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake. After the earthquake came a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire. And after the fire came a gentle whisper. When Elijah heard it, he pulled his cloak over his face and went out and stood at the mouth of the cave. Then a voice said to him, “What are you doing here, Elijah?” (1 Kings 19:9-13)

Unlike Mark, Matthew repeats the words that were spoken earlier to Jesus at his baptism. This would have reminded Matthew’s audience of a verse in Isaiah:

“Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom I delight; I will put my Spirit on him, and he will bring justice to the nations.” (Isaiah 42:1)

And lastly, Moses and Elijah were both Hebrew heroes for whom, according to tradition, death did not have the last word.

“As they were walking along and talking together, suddenly a chariot of fire and horses of fire appeared and separated the two of them, and Elijah went up to heaven in a whirlwind.” (2 Kings 2:11)

“He buried [Moses] in Moab, in the valley opposite Beth Peor, but to this day no one knows where his grave is.” (Deuteronomy 34:6 cf. Jude 9)

Remember, the good news for early Jesus community members was not that Jesus had died, but that this Jesus, whom Rome crucified, God had brought back to life (see Acts 4:22; Acts 2:22-24; Acts 2:32-33; Acts 3:12-16; Acts 4:10-11; Acts 5:30-32; Acts 10:36-43; and Acts 13:35-38):

“We tell you the good news: What God promised our ancestors he has fulfilled for us, their children, by raising up Jesus.” (Acts 13:32-33)

These early Jesus followers viewed his death as a Roman act of state violence to silence Jesus. But what was intended to stop Jesus only proved to be an interruption. The resurrection reversed, undid, and overcame everything accomplished through the death of Jesus, and this was the good news. The

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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.

Each Zoom session will be on Wednesdays at 7:00pm Pacific/10:00pm Eastern.

To receive the link for the Zoom meeting, email us at info@renewedheartministries.com.



SOCIAL JESUS

A Blog Exploring the Intersection of Faith and Societal Justice



Last month's "Social Jesus" Blog on Patheos



Sacrificing our Humanity to Change the World (Part 1 of 3)

"Sacrificing our humanity for bread, contrasted with those things that are life-giving in the long term, I think still can speak to us today."

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2023/02/sacrificing-our-humanity-to-change-world-part1/

Sacrificing our Humanity to Change the World (Part 2 of 3)

"This concept often then turns into unhealthy passive acceptance and unhealthy forms of self-sacrifice having a greater purpose and meaning."

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2023/02/sacrificing-our-humanity-to-change-world-part2/

Sacrificing our Humanity to Change the World (Part 3 of 3)

"Regarding sacrificing out humanity, we'll need to interpret these stories differently than the original audience may have, today."

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2023/02/sacrificing-our-humanity-to-change-world-part3/



Jesus as Liberation from Systemic Injustice (Part 1 of 3)

"This week's theme is Transfiguration. What difference does it make to see this story in the spirit of liberation rather than as replacement?"

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2023/02/jesus-as-liberation-from-systemic-injustice-part1/

Jesus as Liberation from Systemic Injustice (Part 2 of 3)

"Jesus as liberation from systemic injustice doesn't replace Moses. Jesus here is another Moses this time in relation to Roman oppression."

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2023/02/jesus-as-liberation-from-systemic-injustice-part2/

Jesus as Liberation from Systemic Injustice (Part 3 of 3)

"Matthew's version of the transfiguration was intended to inspire the gospel's original audience with a vision of Jesus as a liberator."

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2023/02/jesus-as-liberation-from-systemic-injustice-part3/



Rewriting the Sermon on the Mount (Part 1 of 3)

"Our reading this week from the sermon on the mount gives us a window into the life and concerns of the community for which it was written."

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2023/02/rewriting-sermon-mount-part1/

Rewriting the Sermon on the Mount (Part 2 of 3)

"This language in the sermon on the mount is warning not of a postmortem experience, but of a distinctly this-life, this-world experience."

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2023/02/rewriting-sermon-on-mount-part2/

Rewriting the Sermon on the Mount (Part 3 of 3)

"In our rewrite of the sermon on the mount, one thing that should remain is our regard for the concrete harm people are experiencing, today."

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2023/02/rewriting-sermon-on-mount-part3/



Upcoming Events

MARCH 25, 2023

**Good News Fellowship
(via Zoom)**

Toronto, Ontario Canada
304.520.0030

“...Liberation...” continued from page 4

liberation of Jesus lived on in the lives of his followers who sought to spread his teachings of love, liberation, justice, inclusion, and peace.

Matthew’s version of the transfiguration was intended to inspire the gospel’s original audience with a vision of Jesus as a liberator.

A lot has changed in the world since then. Today, Rome is no more.

But now there are other systems of injustice in each of our societies that we need liberation from. How might the teachings of the Jewish prophet of the poor from Galilee inspire and liberate us today, as we, in our own way and context, work to shape our world into a safe, compassionate, just home for all?

Does Jesus liberate us from the concreted systems of injustice we suffer from in our daily lives here and now? Do Jesus’ teachings still have world-changing power and relevance for us today?

I believe they do.

HeartGroup Application

1. Share something that spoke to you from this week’s eSight/Podcast episode with your HeartGroup.
2. What difference does it make for you to interpret Jesus as working in the spirit of Moses and Elijah rather than interpreting him as a replacement for Moses and Elijah? 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



Matthew 5:21-37, Lectionary Year A, Epiphany 6

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.

Also I want to share that we are partnering in a new weekly YouTube show called “Just Talking.” Each week, Todd Leonard and I will be talking about the gospel lectionary reading for the upcoming weekend. We’ll be talking about each reading in the context of love, inclusion, and societal justice. Our hope is that our talking will be *just* talking (as in justice) and that during our brief conversations each week you’ll be inspired to also do more than just talking.

If you teach from the lectionary each week, or if you’re just looking for some thoughts on the Jesus story from a more progressive perspective within the context of social justice, check it out, you might like it. Todd is brilliant in his discernment of how the Jesus story can speak into our lives today as we work together toward shaping our world into a just, safe and compassionate home for everyone. He’s worth listening to.

You can find *JustTalking* each week on YouTube at [youtube.com/@herbandtoddjusttalking](https://www.youtube.com/@herbandtoddjusttalking). Please Like, Subscribe, hit the Notification button, and leave us a comment.

And if you’d like to reach us here at Renewed Heart Ministries through email, you can reach us at info@renewedheartministries.com.

My new book, *Finding Jesus: A story of a fundamentalist preacher who unexpectedly discovered the social, political, and economic teachings of the Gospels* is now also available at renewedheartministries.com

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

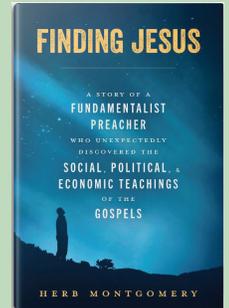
I love each of you dearly. ■

RHM’s Recommended Reading for March

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*

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RENEWEDHEARTMINISTRIES.COM**

WE NEED YOUR SUPPORT.

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 right now 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:

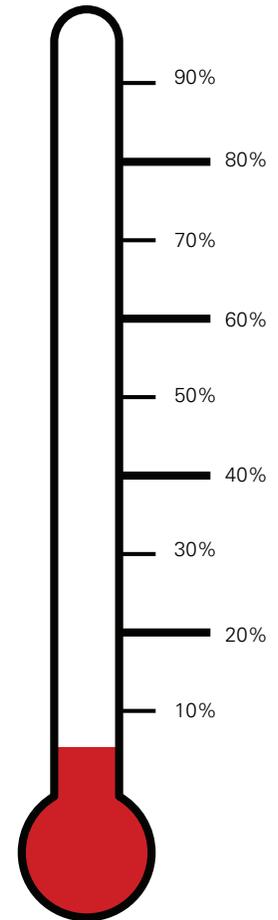
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PO Box 1211
Lewisburg, WV 24901

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

Thank you,
Herb Montgomery
Director, Renewed Heart Ministries

**2023 Projected Budget Goal:
\$150,000.00**
**Donations Received
January 2023:
\$7,685.75**

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



New Weekly YouTube Show!

Each week, we'll be talking about the gospel lectionary reading for the upcoming weekend. We'll be talking about each reading in the context of love, inclusion, and societal justice. Our hope is that our talking will be *just* talking (as

in justice) and that during our brief conversations each week you'll be inspired to also do more than just talking.

If you teach from the lectionary each week, or if you're just looking

for some thoughts on the Jesus story from a more progressive perspective within the context of social justice, check it out, you might like it.

Todd is brilliant in his discernment of how the Jesus story can speak into our lives today as we work together toward shaping our world into a just, safe and compassionate home for everyone. He's worth listening to.

You can find the latest show on YouTube:

@herbandtoddjusttalking

Please Like, Subscribe, hit the Notification button, and leave us a comment.

All of this will help us get this new YouTube channel off the ground.

Thanks in advance for watching!

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
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MINISTRIES



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

