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Matching Donations for the Rest of 2023

As 2023 is coming to a close, we are deeply thankful for each of our supporters. To express that gratitude we have a lot to share.

First, **all donations** during these last two months of the year will be **matched, dollar for dollar**, making your support of Renewed Heart Ministries go twice as far.

Also, to everyone who makes a special one-time donation in any amount to support our work this holiday season we will be giving away a free copy of *The Bible & LGBTQ Adventists*.



When making your donation all you have to do indicate you would like to take advantage of this offer by writing "Free Book" either in the comments section of your online donation or in the memo of your check if you are mailing your donation.



Lastly, it's time for our annual Shared Table event once again. For all those who choose to become one of our **monthly sustaining partners** for 2024 by clicking the "Check this box to make it a monthly recurring donation" online, we will be sending out one of our handmade Renewed Heart Ministries Shared-Table Pottery Bowl made by Crystal and Herb as a thank you gift for your support. Becoming a monthly sustaining partner enables RHM to set our ministry project goals and budget for the coming year.

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."

We will be starting out the new year by sending out these lovely bowls as our gift to you to thank you for your sustaining support. Look for them to arrive during the months of January and February.

Our prayer is that whether displayed or used these bowls will be a reminder of Jesus' gospel of love, caring and shared table fellowship. They also make a great gift or conversation starter, as well.

If you are already one of our sustaining partners for 2024, we want to honor your existing continued support of Renewed Heart Ministries, too. You'll also receive one of our Shared Table Pottery Bowls as a thank you.



No matter how you choose to donate to support Renewed Heart Ministries' work this holiday season, thank you for partnering with us to further Jesus' vision of a world filled with compassion, love, and people committed to taking care of one another. Together we are working toward a safer, more compassionate, and just world both for today and for eternity.

From each of us here at RHM, thank you!

We wish you so much joy, peace, and blessings as 2023 comes to a close. Your support sustains our ongoing work in the coming year.

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

In this coming year, together, we will continue to be a light in our world sharing Jesus' gospel of love, justice and compassion.



There are times when those teachings call me to lean more deeply into my civic duties because of the demands of love of neighbor and the belief that every person is the object of Divine love. As Dr. Emilie Townes so poignantly says, "If you begin with the idea that God loves everyone, justice isn't very far behind." And there are times when the state demands of me actions that opposes my commitment to justice. In moments like these, this story's wisdom is helpful in navigating a life-giving pathway forward.

Render to Caesar the Things that Are Caesar's

by Herb Montgomery

Our reading this week is from the gospel of Matthew:

Then the Pharisees went out and laid plans to trap him in his words. They sent their disciples to him along with the Herodians. "Teacher," they said, "we know that you are a man of integrity and that you teach the way of God in accordance with the truth. You aren't swayed by others, because you pay no attention to who they are. Tell us then, what is your opinion? Is it right to pay the imperial tax to Caesar or not?"

But Jesus, knowing their evil intent, said, "You hypocrites, why are you trying to trap me? Show me the coin used for paying the tax." They brought him a denarius, and he asked them, "Whose image is this? And whose inscription?"

"Caesar's," they replied.

Then he said to them, "So give back to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's."

When they heard this, they were amazed. So they left him and went away. (Matthew 22:15-22)

Jesus' saying in our reading this week appears in all three synoptic gospels and in the gospel of Thomas. It's one of the sayings of Jesus that's most misunderstood today, especially by the Christian Right.

If we are going to arrive at a life-giving interpretation of this story, we're going to have to back up some and consider some historical context.

Archeologists tell us that the most circulated coin in Jesus' day was a small coin with Tiberius Caesar's image on one side and a seated woman holding an olive branch and a scepter. On the side with Caesar's image were the words, "TI CAESAR DIVI AVG F AVGVSTVS": Tiberius is both Caesar Augustus (emperor), and the son of the Divine Augustus.

Augustus, Tiberius' father, had been declared divine by the Roman Senate in 14 C.E. upon his death. During his life, Augustus had circulated coins that referred to him as the son of God. After Julius Caesar's death, a star (really a comet), had appeared at the summer games dedicated to his honor. Many Romans interpreted this as a symbol

of Julius Caesar's soul ascending to the heavens to dwell with the gods. A year and half later, the Roman Senate declared Julius divine and the star that appeared in the summer began being referred to as the "Julian star." (I find it fascinating that when Jesus is born, Matthew's gospel describes a new star appearing in the heavens.)

Because of this tradition, Augustus had coins minted and circulated that had his image with the words "Augustus Ceasar" on one side and, on the back, the Julian Star with the words "Divine Julius," indicating that Augustus was the Son of God. Each succeeding Caesar after Julius and Augustus also described himself as the Divine Son of God ("God" being the previous Caesar), all the way to Tiberius in Jesus' time.

As we've said, on the back of the coin most likely held up in our story this week was the image of a woman holding both a scepter and an olive branch to symbolize of both the rule and the peace of Rome (or Pax Romana). The woman is most often identified as Tiberius' mother Livia, the mother.

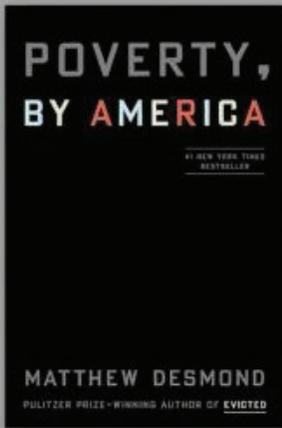
This gives our story this week a bit more context. When Jesus held up the coin and asked whose "image" was on the coin, there were two images, one of Tiberius Caesar claiming he was the Divine Son of God and the image of his mother Livia, the mother of the Son of God. Keep this imagery and its claims in mind for a moment.

In our reading, Jesus doesn't tell his followers to pay the Roman tax, nor does Jesus tell them not to pay the tax. What Jesus does tell them, holding this coin with its imagery and claims, is to know the difference between their obligations to Caesar and their obligations to the God of the Torah.

Now, consider those coin images and their claims again. Jesus' Jewish listeners that day would have heard his reply and remembered the words of the Torah itself:

"I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. You shall have no other

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RHM Book of the Month

RHM's Recommended Reading for November

***Poverty, by America* by Matthew Desmond**

#1 NEW YORK TIMES BEST-SELLER

The Pulitzer Prize-winning author of *Evicted* reimagines the debate on poverty, making a "provocative and compelling" (NPR) argument about why it persists in America: because the rest of us benefit from it.

"Urgent and accessible...Its moral force is a gut punch."—The New Yorker

Long-listed for the Andrew Carnegie Medal

The United States, the richest country on earth, has more poverty than any other advanced democracy. Why? Why does this land of plenty allow one in every eight of its children to go without basic necessities, permit scores of its citizens to live and die on the streets, and authorize its corporations to pay poverty wages?

In this landmark book, acclaimed sociologist Matthew Desmond

draws on history, research, and original reporting to show how affluent Americans knowingly and unknowingly keep poor people poor. Those of us who are financially secure exploit the poor, driving down their wages while forcing them to overpay for housing and access to cash and credit. We prioritize the subsidization of our wealth over the alleviation of poverty, designing a welfare state that gives the most to those who need the least. And we stockpile opportunity in exclusive communities, creating zones of concentrated riches alongside those of concentrated despair. Some lives are made small so that others may grow.

Elegantly written and fiercely argued, this compassionate book gives us new ways of thinking about a morally urgent problem. It also helps us imagine solutions. Desmond builds a startlingly original and ambitious case for ending poverty. He calls on us all to become poverty abolitionists, engaged in a politics of collective belonging to usher in a new age of shared prosperity and, at last, true freedom.

Render to Caesar... continued from page 3

gods before me. You shall not make for yourself an image in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them." (Exodus 20:2-5)

On the surface, the words "give to Caesar Caesar's due" would have sounded like an affirmation of paying taxes to Rome and thus kept Jesus out of trouble with the Romans. But to his Jewish listeners who knew the words of the Torah the following words "given to God what is God's" would have held a much deeper, subversive message.

According to the Torah, someone could not both honor Caesar's divine claims and honor the God of the Torah. These two claims were diametrically opposed to each other such that one could not

honor one without violating the other. You could not serve both the God of the Torah and Caesar as God. The question that had been given to Jesus was an effort to entrap him before the Romans, yet his response had turned the trap around, indicting the elites and powerful who the poor viewed as serving Rome through their positions in the Temple State.

Honestly, I love how slick this story is in the end. The people questioning Jesus sought to render him guilty of violating the Pax Romana before Rome, and in-stead, they end up being rendered guilty of infidelity to the God of the Torah in the eyes of the people.

How might we apply the lessons of our story in our context today?

I live in the United States. There are

times when the claims of my citizenship here are in perfect harmony with the teachings I believe are in the Jesus story. There are times when those teachings call me to lean more deeply into my civic duties because of the demands of love of neighbor and the belief that every person is the object of Divine love. As Dr. Emilie Townes so poignantly says, "If you begin with the idea that God loves everyone, justice isn't very far behind."

And there are times when the state demands of me actions that oppose the teaching I perceive in the Jesus story. I think of times when I'm asked to pledge allegiance to and support the American military-industrial complex. I think of the times when I'm asked to pledge allegiance to the economic

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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



A Politically Compassionate, Distributively Just Christianity, Part 1

Love of neighbor meant something specific. Social justice circles today often say that social justice is what love looks like in public.

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2023/10/politically-compassionate-distributively-just-christianity-part1/

A Politically Compassionate, Distributively Just Christianity, Part 2

This interpretive lens has lots of history in Jewish wisdom. It is most often attributed to the progressive Pharisee Hillel.

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2023/10/politically-compassionate-distributively-just-christianity-part2/

A Politically Compassionate, Distributively Just Christianity, Part 3

If our ideas of God's love doesn't also address love of neighbor in very real, concrete, material ways, then we are still missing the mark..

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2023/10/politically-compassionate-distributively-just-christianity-part-3/



Render to Caesar the Things that Are Caesar's Part 1

Life-giving interpretations of this story

depend on considering some historical context of the claims of Caesar on this coin.

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2023/10/render-caesar-things-that-are-caesars-part1/

Render to Caesar the Things that Are Caesar's Part 2

These two claims were diametrically opposed to each other such that one could not honor one without violating the other.

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2023/10/render-to-caesar-things-that-are-caesars-part2/

Render to Caesar the Things that Are Caesar's Part 3

This means to know the difference between our obligations to Caesar and to understand our higher commitments to love, justice and compassion.

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2023/10/render-to-caesar-things-caesars-part-3/



All Are Invited, Not All Are Welcome, Part 1

The parable of this wedding banquet is not about heaven, but a call to return to specific social justice themes in the Torah.

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2023/10/all-are-invited-not-all-are-welcome-part1/

A Wedding Banquet: All Are Invited, Not All Are Welcome, Part 2

This banquet parable draws our attention to those in our society who are marginalized, excluded, and pushed to the edges and undersides.

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2023/10/all-are-invited-not-all-are-welcome-part2/

A Wedding Banquet: All Are Invited, Not All Are Welcome, Part 3

All are invited, and not all are welcome. To be welcome at the table, you have to embrace the values for which the table stands.

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2023/10/wedding-banquet-all-are-invited-not-all-are-welcome-part3/



Unheeded Calls for Justice in the Parable of the Vineyard, Part 1

The crowds would have heard this parable of the vineyard differently than the elites and powerful.

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2023/10/unheeded-calls-for-justice-parable-vineyard-part1/

Unheeded Calls for Justice in the Parable of the Vineyard, Part 2

The crowds would have heard this parable of the vineyard differently than the elites and powerful. In that society there was no middle class.

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2023/10/unheeded-calls-for-justice-parable-vineyard-part2/

Unheeded Calls for Justice in the Parable of the Vineyard, Part 3

The Jewish crowds would not have loved Jesus if this parable taught they were being replaced. The vineyard parable instead is about justice.

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2023/10/unheeded-calls-for-justice-parable-vineyard-part3/

exploitative and poverty-creating elements of a global capitalism. I think of when I'm called to pledge allegiance to American policies that still systemically hurt those made vulnerable. I think of the systemic racism and misogyny still baked into how we do things.

Being a Jesus follower who is also an American is complicated. Sometimes I'm proud of this nation and happy to participate in its society and fulfill civic duties. At other times I'm ashamed of our national actions and I participate in our society by speaking out and by obstruction. As someone who both loves the Jesus of the Jesus story and many of America's democratic aspirations, even when I speak out, it's because of love. Love of neighbor is my highest call. But I also love this nation, or rather, I love the ideals this nation claims to aspire to. If a human society actually could live up to these high ideals, they would not contradict the ethics and values I read in the Jesus story. What I read in the Jesus story would lead me to lean into those high ideals and my civic duties if those ideals could be realized. And that's the big "if."

The values of the Jesus story call me to continually choose to work toward making our world a safe, compassionate, home for everyone. Wherever people are working to make American society a safe, compassionate home for everyone, I can come alongside them and participate in the work. Where they are working to make American society unsafe, lacking in compassion, and unjust, I can come alongside those working to oppose them. My allegiance is to love and justice and compassion first and foremost. My allegiance to America is contingent upon its fidelity to these values. I don't give my country a blank check when it comes to my allegiance. When I oppose spaces that contradict the values I am most deeply committed to, I oppose them out of love for what we as a society could be if we leaned more deeply into the just demands of love of neighbor.

This is what the gospel teaching render to Caesar those things that

are Caesar's and to God those things that are God's means for me in my context today. It means to know the difference between the obligations of my civic duties as an American and to understand my higher commitments to love, justice and compassion. It means to hold the former wholly dependent on my fidelity to the latter.

HeartGroup Application

1. Share something that spoke to you from this week's eSight/Podcast episode with your HeartGroup.
2. How are your own civic responsibilities contingent on your commitments to love, compassion, and justice? Share and 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!

I want to say a special thank you to all of our supporters out there.

And if you would like to join them in supporting Renewed Heart Ministries' work you can do so by going to renewedheartministries.com and clicking "donate."

You can find Renewed Heart Ministries on Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and Threads. 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 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 us here at RHM 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. ■

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New Weekly YouTube Show!

Just Talking with Herb and Todd

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.

You can find the latest show on YouTube at: [@herbandtoddjusttalking](https://www.youtube.com/@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!

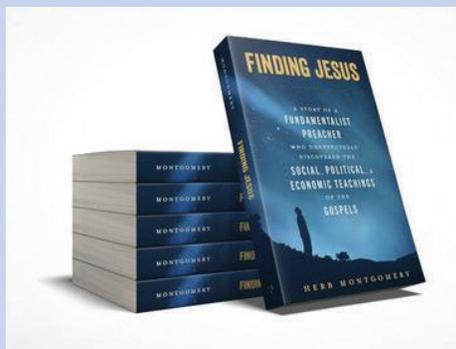
Finding Jesus is Here!

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: **"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!



Upcoming Events

NOVEMBER 25, 2023
Good News Fellowship
 Toronto, Ontario Canada
For More Information:
 304.520.0030

RENEWED
HEART
MINISTRIES



The work of helping people find life-giving ways to live out their faith through love, compassion, and justice are needed now more than ever. At Renewed Heart Ministries, we provide resources of faith and healing with the aim of renewing hope and inspiring action as we allow the Jesus story to inform each of us as we work together to shape our world into a compassionate, just and safe home for everyone.

Renewed Heart Ministries is a 501(c)3, grassroots ministry on the margins that prioritizes the needs of marginalized communities, especially those who have been the recipients of misinformed, faith-based harm. Your support enables us to be a life-giving, healing light in our faith communities and continue to be a voice for desperately needed change.

You get to decide what shape our faith communities take and what voices get to be heard.

You can support Renewed Heart Ministries with a one-time gift or by becoming one of our monthly contributors. Your donation can be made online at: renewedheartministries.com or by mail at:

Renewed Heart Ministries
 PO Box 1211
 Lewisburg, WV 24901

Please make sure you are receiving all of RHM's free resources by going to our website and clicking "sign up."

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

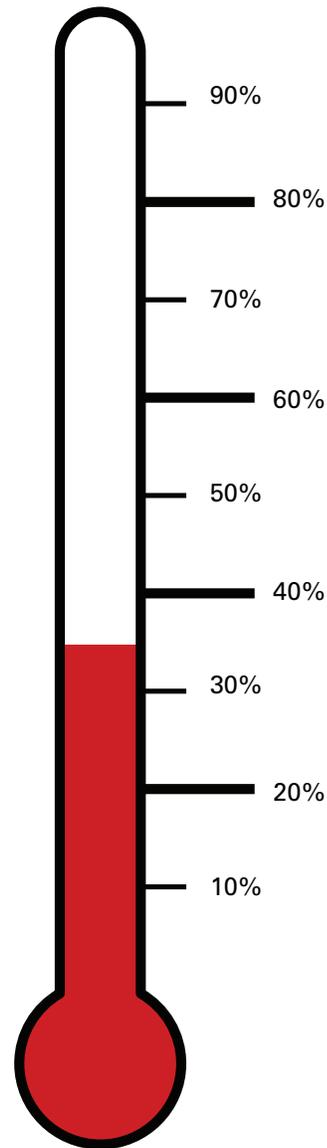
And **THANK YOU** for reading, listening to, sharing and supporting RHM's work. Thank you for the decisions you make every day to make our world a safer, compassionate, just home for everyone. Thank you for your dedication to engaging our world and the care you demonstrate, and for being such an important part of our community.

2023 Projected Budget

Goal: \$150,000.00

Donations Received Thru October 2023:

\$53,113.48





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 7pm Pacific/ 10pm Eastern.

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



“If you want to learn how to be in this world, you must go to the places that suffer. Then listen and learn there.”

Wendsler Nosie Sr.

Quoted by Adam Barnes
We Cry Justice (p. 83)

renewedheartministries.com



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 you email inbox every day. (Or weekly if you prefer.)

Visit renewedheartministries.com and click "Sign Up!"

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

