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Herb Montgomery



Matching Donations for Year End Giving

As 2023 is coming to a close, we are deeply thankful for each of our supporters. We want to say thank you!

First, **all donations** during this last month of the year **will be matched, dollar for dollar**, making your support of Renewed Heart Ministries' work 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.



Sheep and Goats

by Herb Montgomery

Our reading this week is from the gospel of Matthew:

“When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his glorious throne. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.

Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.’

Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?’

The King will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’

Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you who are cursed,

into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.’

They also will answer, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?’

He will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.’

“Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life.” (Matthew 25:31-46*)

This week’s lectionary reading is one of my favorite passages in the gospel of Matthew. Some sectors of Christianity tend to read this passage individualistically, as if it’s a scene of individual people standing before an apocalyptic judgment seat. I encourage us not to fall into the individualism ditch this week. The passage in Matthew states that it is “the nations,” collective people groups, that are being gathered. This collective view aligns with the use of the phrase “son of man” and a judgment, from the Hebrew apocalyptic book of Daniel. Daniel 7 doesn’t address individuals or their personal, private deeds or misdeeds. It uses rich imagery to address empires, nations, and collective groups, not individuals. It is also telling that no one responds in this passage responds with the question “when did I see you”: they all ask “when did we see you.”

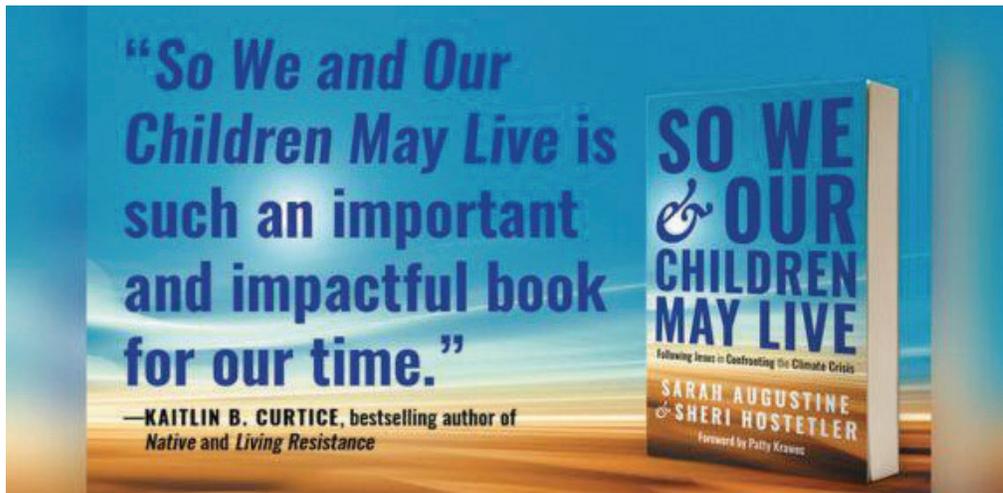
So this parable has a collective nature. It isn’t about how we live our lives as individuals or whether we practice personal charity. It’s about how we choose to structure our collective lives together and who we choose to care for. How do we systemically, as a nation, divide up resources, and how do we collectively distribute power? Do we privilege some above others? Or do we ensure everyone in our society is taken care of? More about this in a moment.

As well as painting a collective image, this passage also divides the nations into “sheep” and “goats.” My brother is a farmer here in Appalachia. He has both sheep and goats along with other livestock. Neither the sheep or the goats are expendable: both have value and worth. But you relate to both very differently. Sheep can be led, whereas goats are stubborn and must often be driven.

This parable is about how nations choose to relate to hunger and thirst, who gets food, shelter or clothing. We know it’s an economic parable because prisons in Jesus’ culture were not used for the crimes we use prisons for today. For example, if someone was guilty of murder, they would be executed, not imprisoned. Prisons were used for economic or political reasons. If someone was in prison, they were most likely in a kind of debtors prison working off a debt after suffering economic hardship. That’s why we need to read this parable in terms of distributive justice.

The parable then states that nations enter into either eternal life or eternal punishment or turmoil. What might this mean? Nations who practice a compassionate system of distributive justice will last a long time. You could say they enter a kind of eternal life. Other nations practice an economic system rooted in extraction, exploitation, privilege (where some are worth more than others), and power (where some have more power than others). These nations intrinsically experience turmoil, conflict, striving, and punishments that are always ongoing, or eternal. Nations learn the

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RHM's Recommended Reading for December

So We and Our Children May Live: Following Jesus in Confronting the Climate Crisis

by Sarah Augustine & Sheri Hostetler; Foreword by Patty Krawec

Will we choose life for our children and the future of our planet?

Everywhere we look, we see signs that all is not right with our earth—extreme temperatures and weather patterns wreak havoc, pollutants sour soils and waterways, and fires and floods ravage land and communities. Climate change is just a symptom of a larger ecological crisis. If we want change, we must realize that the solutions to the problems we face can't come through the same systems that created those problems in the first place.

Ecological justice requires that we

challenge our assumptions about creation and our relationship to it. It requires de-colonization. We must turn to the ship of Indigenous communities who struggle for all life as land and water protectors, and must call on people of faith to join them.

This book offers hope for a better future alongside concrete actions for joining with Indigenous Peoples to protect life and negotiate with decision-makers for sustainable change that follows Jesus. In these pages, readers are called to confront climate change and choose life for our children and the future of our planet.

Sheep and Goats continued from page 3

hard way that hunger, thirst, nakedness, abuse to foreigners, denying clothing including housing, debtors' prisons, and other things of this nature are unsustainable. They set in motion endless striving and if not corrected have brought down the most powerful empires in history from the inside out.

As an example, some contemporary Christians cite portions of Leviticus to support their own bigotry against LGBTQ folks but ignore passages like Leviticus 19:33 when it comes to immigration policies or how we treat

the "stranger":

"When a foreigner resides among you in your land, do not mistreat them. *The foreigner residing among you must be treated as your native-born.* Love them as yourself, for you were foreigners in Egypt. I am the LORD your God." (italics added)

How we choose to shape our nation's immigration policy matters. Pay close attention when certain sectors of Christianity choose to cherry pick and prioritize the death dealing passages of their sacred text, rather than the humanizing and life-giving passages.

Lastly, I want to briefly address this language of eternal life or eternal punishment. You can read a more in-depth treatment in the appendix of my new book *Finding Jesus: A Story of A Fundamentalist Preacher Who Unexpectedly Discovered the Economic, Social, and Political Teachings of the Gospels*.

First, the idea of an apocalyptic eternal punishment was taught by the Pharisees in Jesus society:

"They [the Pharisees] say that all souls are imperishable, but that the souls of good men only pass into other bodies while the souls of evil men are subject to eternal punishment*. (Josephus, *The Wars of the Jews*, Vol. II, Chapter 8, Paragraph 14)

It's important to understand the Greek words used to describe this "eternal punishment" as taught by the Pharisees. *Aidios* (eternal) was "pertaining to an unlimited duration of time" (Louw and Nida's *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains*). *Timoria* (punishment) meant "to punish, with the implication of causing people to suffer what they deserve" (Louw and Nida's *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains*). And *penal* refers to "the satisfaction of him who inflicts" (Thayer's *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*).

Why is this important? Because there were other words that one could choose to use if you were talking about eternal punishment as we understand that today. Philo, for instance, mentions eternal punishment but uses a different term than *aidios timoria*:

"It is better not to promise than not to give prompt assistance, for no blame follows in the former case, but in the latter there is dissatisfaction from the weaker class, and a deep hatred and eternal chastisement [aionion kolasis] from such as are more powerful." (Philo, *Fragments*)

Philo uses the words *aionion kolasis*. *Aionion* is "indeterminate as to duration" (Mounce's *Concise Greek English Dictionary of the New Testament*).

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SOCIAL JESUS

A Blog Exploring the Intersection of Faith and Societal Justice



Last month's "Social Jesus" Blog on Patheos



Sheep and Goats, Part 1

So this parable has a collective nature. It's about how we choose to structure our collective lives together and who we choose to care for.

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2023/11/sheep-and-goats-part1/

Sheep and Goats, Part 2

Pay close attention when certain sectors of Christianity choose to cherry pick and prioritize the death dealing passages of their sacred text, rather than the humanizing and life-giving passages.

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2023/11/sheep-and-goats-part2/

Sheep and Goats, Part 3

The difference was not wealth but wealth disparity; not its GDP but how much harm it created to produce that GDP.

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2023/11/sheep-and-goats-part3/



Reaping What Is Sown, Part 1

This would contrast starkly with how reaping and sowing are typically interpreted in these stories.

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2023/11/reaping-what-is-sown-part1/

Reaping What Is Sown, Part 2

Injustice is unsustainable for the long term. Ancient wisdom in multiple traditions tell us we intrinsically pay, reaping what we sow.

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2023/11/reaping-what-is-sown-part2/

Reaping What Is Sown, Part 3

If we sow the wind, we will be reaping the whirlwind. But we can instead sow love, and justice, and compassion, and safety.

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2023/11/reaping-what-is-sown-part3/



Apocalyptic Passivity, Part 1

This apocalyptic theme reflects more the concerns of the community after the crucifixion than it does before it.

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2023/11/apocalyptic-passivity-part1/

Apocalyptic Passivity, Part 2

An apocalyptic Jesus offers an excuse to ignore many of Jesus' teaching on the basis that Jesus supposedly thought the world was about to end.

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2023/11/apocalyptic-passivity-part2/

Apocalyptic Passivity, Part 3

We must actively resist an apocalyptic passivity that doesn't do much to make sure everyone else has what they need too.

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2023/11/apocalyptic-passivity-part3/



Ignored Egalitarian Themes of the Gospels, Part 1

He was not starting a new religion, but a Jewish renewal movement, calling his listeners back to the economic justice themes of the Torah.

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2023/10/ignored-egalitarian-themes-gospels-part1/

Ignored Egalitarian Themes of the Gospels, Part 2

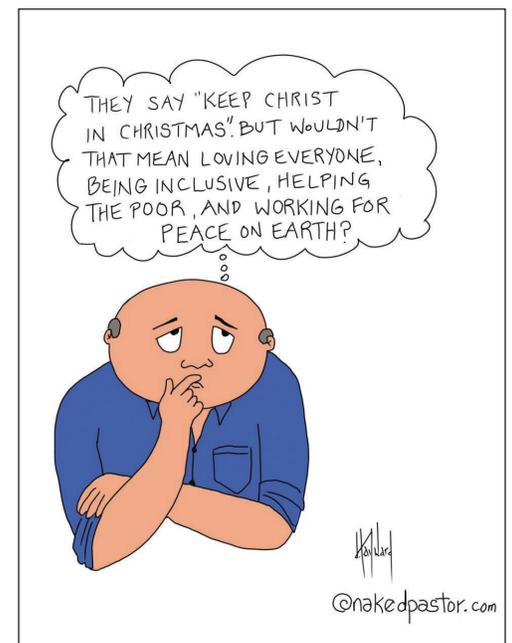
This critiques those seeking political power rather than doing the work required to bring about changes that make our world safer and just.

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2023/11/ignored-egalitarian-themes-gospels-part2/

Ignored Egalitarian Themes of the Gospels, Part 3

Why aren't our faith communities more egalitarian? Today we have all manner of escalating positions and titles in our communities.

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2023/11/ignored-egalitarian-themes-gospels-part3/




@nakedpastor.com

Sheep and Goats continued from page 4

In Thayer's *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, the word "gives prominence to the immeasurableness of eternity."

It's not that *aionion* lasts forever, but that linear time is not a constriction. It doesn't matter if it takes forever for whatever this adjective is describing to accomplish its purpose.

And as it relates to the definition of *kolasis*, Thayer's explains, "kolasis is disciplinary and has reference to him who suffers, [while] *timoria* is penal and has reference to the satisfaction of him who inflicts." (Thayer's *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*)

Plato uses *kolasis* in terms of discipline:

"If you will think, Socrates, of the nature of punishment, you will see at once that in the opinion of mankind virtue may be acquired; no one punishes [*kolasis*] the evil-doer under the notion, or for the reason, that he has done wrong—only the unreasonable fury of a beast acts in that manner. But he who

desires to inflict rational punishment [*kolasis*] does not retaliate for a past wrong which cannot be undone; he has regard to the future, and is desirous that the man who is punished [*kolasis*], and he who sees him punished, may be deterred from doing wrong again. He punishes for the sake of prevention, thereby clearly implying that virtue is capable of being taught." (Plato, "Protagoras")

Whereas *timora* was punishment that satisfied a need in the punisher to see someone suffer for what they had done, *kolasis* was discipline or punishment to address the need in the one being punished so that they might learn to make different choices. It was redemptive punishment: restorative justice, not retributive justice.

The words the author of Matthew's gospel choose to use for the goats in our story this week is not *aidious timoria* (retribution) but *aionion kolasis* (restoration). And this makes sense. Goats are of such a nature that they will only learn the hard way. Some nations will have to learn the hard way, too.

But whether a nation is a stubborn goat or a sheep that can be gently led, both goats and sheep only survive when they learn the lessons of distributive justice. I love the words of Rev. Dr. Jacqui Lewis speaking of social salvation within the context of our collective lives together:

"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." (in *Fierce Love*, p. 14)

And that seems to be what our reading this week is hinting at. A nation's greatness is not measured by its wealth but by its wealth disparity; not by its GDP but how much poverty it creates to produce that GDP; and not by how powerful its elite members are but by how it chooses to collectively take care of those the system deems to be "the least of these."

HeartGroup Application

1. Share something that spoke to you from this week's eSight/Podcast episode with your HeartGroup.
2. In what ways do you wish both our small faith communities and larger society and nation practiced more life-giving policies? How could our nation do a better job at taking care of the hungry, those in need of shelter, migrants and whom we choose to imprison? 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,



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**

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!

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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 7pm Pacific/10pm Eastern.

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

Sheep and Goats continued from page 6 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. ■

(*Scriptures taken from the Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV®. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.™ Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved worldwide. www.zondervan.com, The "NIV" and "New International Version" are trademarks registered in the United States Patent and Trademark Office by Biblica, Inc.™)

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

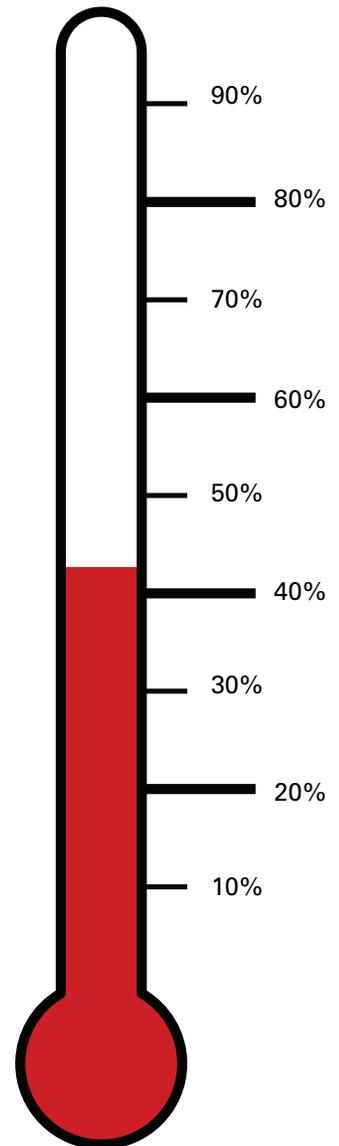
Please make sure you are receiving all of RHM's free resources by going to our website and clicking "sign up."

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 as of November 2023: \$64,268.58



This One Precious Life

by **Linda Hagan**

(HeartGroup Participant)

This one precious life is called me,
And I will allow nothing to escape.
Not one single thing to be lost.

Not all my medals and scars,
Neither my joys, nor sorrows.
Every triumph, every failure,
These are the things now me.

The tiny cuts that bled like mad,
The deeper wounds that severed parts
of me.

The ragged edges of frayed
relationships.

The broken bones of this one precious
life.

Not the child and youth have I shed,
Nor the adult who grew has been lost
In this older, wiser me.

Every fall and every getting back up,
Every curse I made for this life of mine
I take back, I revoke, I will get up again.

I will not reject you friend or foe,
nor stranger,
For taking one look and despising me.
Those bruises made me who I am
And there is only, will Ever only be,
one me.

What pain, what shame should I let go,
And risk the loss of something else
In this precious life of mine?

For all has been woven together, the
good things
And the bad, like colors on a tapestry,
merging
Black against the soft pastels.
Nothing shall be thrown away.

And You. The loves I've had, both
human and not.
Every smile, every touch, every word of
kindness.
Every sibling-shared laugh, every tear,
Every sorrow and silence.

Every flower that crossed my gaze,
Every furry head I felt,
Every sunrise that caught my breath, and
Sundown that let me rest.
Every star that twinkled just for me.

If I should come back a thousand times
It would not be me you see, nor I
Who I once knew. My gifts and shadows,
My diary, will not be of This one
precious life.

So carefully picking up all the pieces of
brokenness,
Along with the gems and jewels, I store
them safely,
Side by side in this one precious life
called me.

”

**DO NOT BE
AFRAID. I BRING
YOU GOOD NEWS
THAT WILL CAUSE
GREAT JOY FOR
ALL PEOPLE.**

“

LUKE 2:10

renewedheartministries.com

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!](http://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)



Upcoming Events

DECEMBER 23, 2023
Good News Fellowship
Toronto, Ontario Canada
For More Information:
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

