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RENEWED HEART MINISTRIES

P.O. Box 1211, Lewisburg, WV 24901

Phone: 304.520.0030

Email: info@renewedheartministries.com

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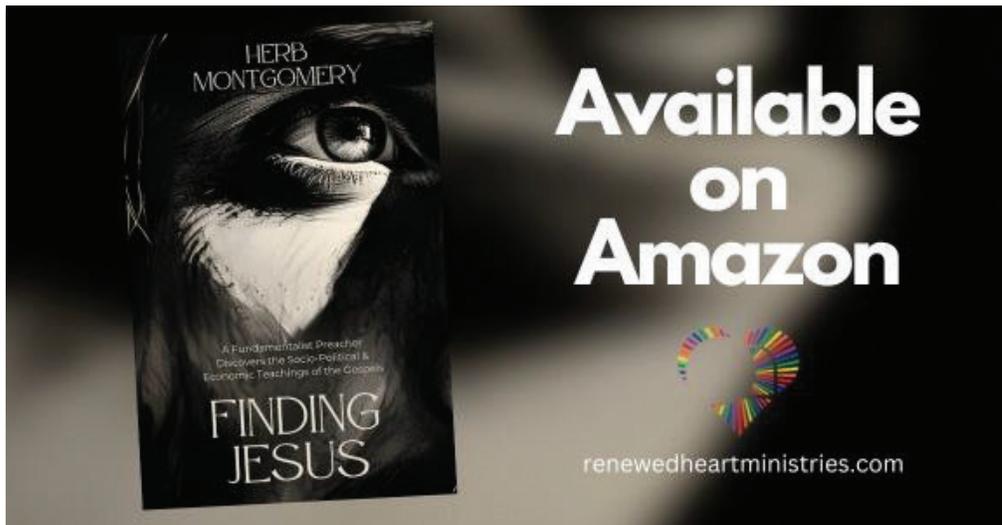
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***Finding Jesus* Second Edition!**

I have some exciting news! I have just signed an agreement with a new book publisher (Quoir), and we are putting together a launch team for the second edition of *Finding Jesus*, coming out next month!

If you have been blessed by the first edition, and you would like to see this book have greater exposure to reach an even larger audience, I want to invite you to be a part of the launch team. This second edition will be available in paperback, Kindle, and an audio-book available on Audible. And great news for those who already have a copy of the first edition, the first 25 people to sign up to be part of our launch team will also receive a FREE Audible copy of the audiobook for *Finding Jesus*.

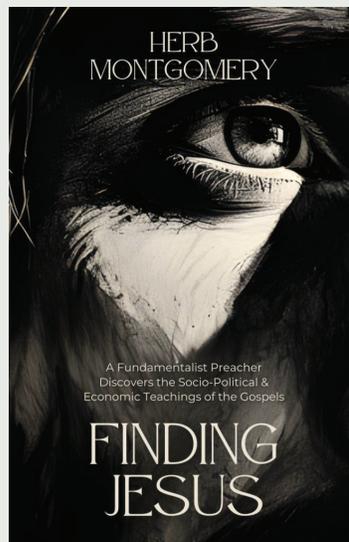
To join the Finding Jesus launch team, all you need to do is four things:

1. Email us at info@renewedheartministries.com and put "Launch Team" in the subject of your email. We will send you a free advance pdf copy of the second edition of *Finding Jesus* for you to read.
2. Go to Amazon and order either a Kindle or Paperback copy. After your purchase leave a review for *Finding Jesus*. You'll be able to do this immediately since you've already read the pdf copy. Amazon will then be able to verify your review is from someone who purchased the book.
3. Share your review of *Finding Jesus* on your social media pages that day, also.

It's pretty simple. That's all. And if you already have a copy of the first edition this is a great opportunity to get the audiobook version on Audible as soon as it is available.

If you would like to join our launch team your first step is to email us at: info@renewedheartministries.com

Thank you in advance for being part of this special second edition publishing and ensuring this edition is a success.



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.

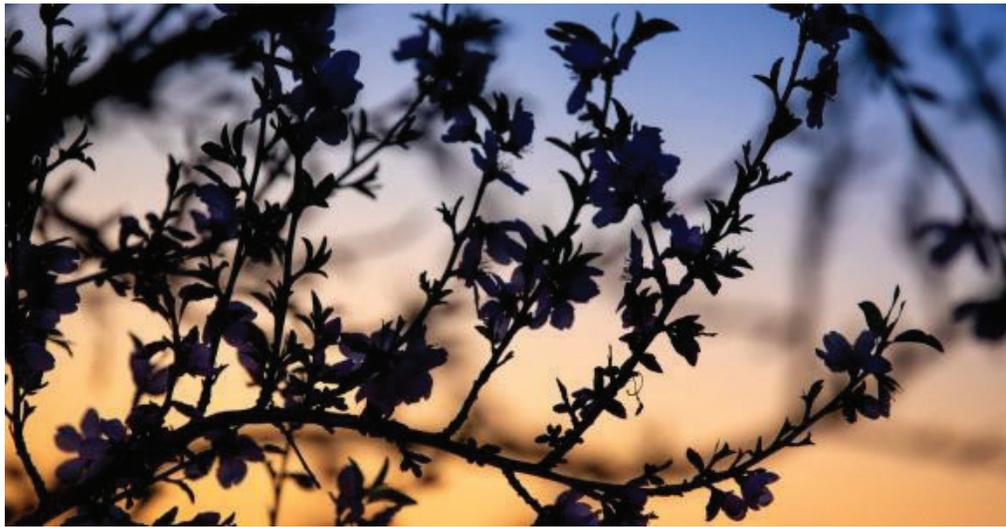
To receive the link for the Zoom meeting, email us at: info@renewedheartministries.com



Upcoming Events

FEBRUARY 17, 2024
Good News Fellowship
 Toronto, Ontario Canada

For more info or the Zoom link, email us at:
info@renewedheartministries.com
or call: 304.520.0030



Conduits of Healing and Liberation

by Herb Montgomery | February 2, 2024

Our reading this week is from the gospel of Mark:

As soon as they left the synagogue, they went with James and John to the home of Simon and Andrew. Simon's mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they immediately told Jesus about her. So he went to her, took her hand and helped her up. The fever left her and she began to wait on them.

That evening after sunset the people brought to Jesus all the sick and demon-possessed. The whole town gathered at the door, and Jesus healed many who had various diseases. He also drove out many demons, but he would not let the demons speak because they knew who he was.

Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed. Simon and his companions went to look for him, and when they found him, they exclaimed: "Everyone is looking for you!"

Jesus replied, "Let us go somewhere else—to the nearby villages—so I can preach there also. That is why I have come." So he traveled throughout Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and driving out demons. (Mark 1:29-39)

A lot of subtle truths are being

communicated in this week's reading as we transition from Jesus' inaugural acts to his ongoing mission. Immediately after Jesus' inaugural exorcism, we encounter a story of healing.

Historical Jesus scholars all agree that Jesus was characterized as a healer. Last week we saw that Jesus was associated with exorcism from the demons of Roman occupation, possession, and oppression. Similarly, Jesus' healing was to be associated with both liberating the oppressed from Roman possession and the work of healing the vulnerable masses from harm done by Roman occupation.

When we read these stories from our vantage point today, it's easy to read these stories as individual occurrences of "Magic Jesus" as my friend Todd Leonard refers to them. But the stories in Mark were originally intended to be read politically, socially, and economically as signs of the arrival of God's just world (the kingdom) and liberation from Roman oppression and harm to Jesus' community. Mark's Jesus is casting out the demons of Roman oppression and healing the people's maladies that oppression has caused.

There is also a subtle tension building between Jesus' exorcisms in the Roman coopted synagogues (sacred space) and Jesus' acts of healing and the restoration of the original intention of the Sabbath (sacred time). In this week's story, Jesus heals Peter's mother-in-law on the Sabbath and the people won't come for healing until after sunset. As soon as the Sabbath

hours are over, though, the rest of the town shows up at the door. In this story, the Sabbath is not a conduit of healing and restoration but a barrier that the people must wait out so they can come and be healed. This sets up the tension of healing on the Sabbath and the authority of the local powerbrokers that will come into even greater focus later in Mark. We'll get to that in upcoming weeks.

For now, we see the Sabbath had also been coopted. Healing was completely detached from it. If you were to be healed, it had to be outside of the Sabbath, after the Sabbath had passed. The Sabbath, which was originally a time of healing and restoration, had now become a day where healing was forbidden. So Restoring the Sabbath's liberation value is also a subtle part of this story.

Walter Brueggemann makes a modern application for the value of the Sabbath as we, too, find ourselves in contemporary systems of economic extraction:

"The way of mammon (capital, wealth) is the way of commodity that is the way of endless desire, endless productivity, and endless restlessness without any Sabbath." (*Sabbath as Resistance*, p. 11)

"In our own contemporary context of the rat race of anxiety, the celebration of Sabbath is an act of both resistance and alternative. It is resistance because

continued on page 4



RHM's Recommended Reading for February

Finding Jesus: A Fundamentalist Preacher Discovers the Socio-Political & Economic Teachings of the Gospels (2nd Edition)

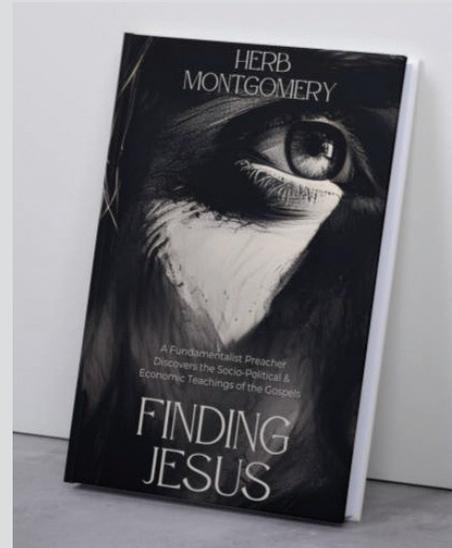
by Herb Montgomery

In *Finding Jesus*, author Herb Montgomery delves into the profound and often overlooked political dimensions of the gospels. Through meticulous analysis of biblical texts, historical context, and social discourse, this thought-provoking book unveils the gospels' socio-political, economic teachings as rooted in a profound concern for justice, compassion, and the well-being of the marginalized. The book navigates the intersections between faith and societal justice, presenting a compelling argument for a more socially engaged and transformative Christianity.

Readers will journey through the

Gospel narratives, discovering the ways in which the Jesus of these stories challenged the political and religious establishments of his time. Herb Montgomery draws parallels between the societal issues faced by the people of Jesus' era and the challenges of the present day, sparking reflection on the role of faith in addressing contemporary political and social issues.

Finding Jesus is not just a scholarly exploration; it is a call to action. It challenges readers to reevaluate their understanding of Christianity's role in public life and to consider how the radical teachings of the gospels can inspire a renewed commitment



to justice, equality, and compassion. This book is a must-read for those seeking a deeper understanding of the social implications of Christian faith and a blueprint for building a more just and inclusive society.

Available now on Amazon.

Conduits... continued from page 3

it is a visible insistence that our lives are not defined by the production and consumption of commodity goods. Such an act of resistance requires enormous intentionality and communal reinforcement amid the barrage of seductive pressures from the insatiable insistences of the market, with its intrusion into every part of our life from the family to the national budget...But Sabbath is not only resistance. It is alternative." (*Sabbath as Resistance*, Preface)

In future weeks, we'll discuss this tension between Jesus' healings and the Sabbath as it continues to build in Mark's stories.

In the final part of our reading this week, Jesus withdraws from the crowds for some self-care. It's an example of the balance that's so vital to the sustainability of any justice work. And Jesus shares his own understanding of his mission in this version of the Jesus story:

"Let us go somewhere else—to the nearby villages—so I can preach [the

gospel of the kingdom] there also. That is why I have come."

Next Jesus embarks on an itinerant circuit throughout Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, or the good news of the arrival of God's just world within the synagogues throughout Galilee. The story makes a point to specifically name that the gospel work includes "driving out demons."

Preaching the arrival of God's just world in the synagogues includes exorcisms performed in the synagogues. These exorcisms aren't anti-synagogue, anti-Jewishness, or anti-Sabbath. Instead they're opposing the Roman Empire coopting the synagogue and the Sabbath. They're opposing the complicity of those in power with the Roman Empire. They're opposing the Empire's possession of sacred places in both space and time.

As I shared last week, whatever we make of it through our scientific lenses today, exorcism was a common practice in Jesus' world. That practice typically gathered zero pushback from the establishment. But Jesus'

exorcisms in Mark's gospel are different. Those in power push back against Jesus' exorcisms immediately, and are threatened by them. This is because exorcism in Mark is a metaphor for exorcising Rome (see Mark 5:9):

Then the Pharisees went out and began to plot with the Herodians how they might kill Jesus. (Mark 3:6)

And the teachers of the law who came down from Jerusalem said, "He is possessed by Beelzebul! By the prince of demons he is driving out demons." (Mark 3:22)

So what are we to make of Mark's stories of exorcism and healing in our post-enlightenment world today?

Through rising Christian nationalism, a political party has coopted evangelical Christianity. Misinformation takes advantage of vulnerable White Christians through their personal biases and bigotries. Partisan fidelity has "possessed" evangelical Christianity to the point that, like those in the exorcism

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SOCIAL JESUS

A Blog Exploring the Intersection of Faith and Societal Justice



Last month's "Social Jesus" Blog on Patheos



Exorcism of a Man with an Unclean Spirit, Part 1

The exorcism stories in the gospels were not written to answer our modern scientific questions. These stories were political.

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2023/01/man-with-unclean-spirit-part1/

Exorcism of a Man with an Unclean Spirit, Part 2

The framing of this first exorcism story gives us a hint that we should interpret these stories politically in the gospel of Mark.

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2023/01/exorcism-man-with-an-unclean-spirit-part2/

Exorcism of a Man with an Unclean Spirit, Part 3

This specific inaugural exorcism story in Mark's gospel would have been read systematically and not individually.

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2023/01/exorcism-man-with-an-unclean-spirit-part3/



The Gospel Jesus Taught, Part 1

"Unlike the gospel these Roman messengers announced, the gospel Jesus announced was different."

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2023/01/gospel-jesus-taught-part1/

The Gospel Jesus Taught, Part 2

His gospel was not calling his listeners to repent of rebellion against empire or to accept the empire, but rather for his listeners to rethink their complicity with the status quo.

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2023/01/gospel-jesus-taught-part2/

The Gospel Jesus Taught, Part 3

"While it is much easier to preach a gospel that says, 'God loves us,' it is a much more challenging venture to teach a gospel calling on people to love each other."

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2023/01/gospel-jesus-taught-part3/



Jacob's Ladder, Part 1

"It's not honesty or freedom from deceit as our story subtly (sarcastically) points out here, but harmful bias."

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2023/01/jacobs-ladder-part1/

Jacob's Ladder, Part 2

These show us what the gospel call was. It was not to simply accept a gift and then go on living in the system as you always had.

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2023/01/jacobs-ladder-part2/

Jacob's Ladder, Part 3

Where do we still long for justice? Jacob's ladder reminds us that change is still possible and still worth working toward.

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2023/01/jacobs-ladder-part3/



Epiphany, Baptism, Solidarity and Justice, Part 1

In this epiphany story another star (comet) appears. This time not at a caesar's death as a token of his divinity, but at an infants birth.

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2023/01/epiphany-baptism-solidarity-justice-part1/

Epiphany, Baptism, Solidarity and Justice, Part 2

The entire Epiphany narrative in Matthew speaks of liberation and justice for those pushed to the undersides and edges of their society.

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2023/01/epiphany-baptism-solidarity-justice-part2/

Epiphany, Baptism, Solidarity and Justice, Part 3

As we reflect on Epiphany and the establishment of justice in the themes of Jesus' Baptism, where are we working for justice today?

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2023/01/epiphany-baptism-solidarity-justice-part3/

Conduits... continued from page 4

stories in Mark, they simply cannot free themselves. To those outside of Evangelicalism, it's quite puzzling how those who claim to follow Jesus can be so loyal to such an unChristlike ideology. Evangelical Christianity today needs an "exorcism" from demons like White supremacy, Christian nationalism, heteropatriarchy, and authoritarian totalitarianism. Just as the injustices of the Roman empire coopted the Temple state in Jesus' community, our societal demons today have possessed larger sectors of Christianity.

The good news in the Jesus story is that we see the Jesus movement grow from the margins of Galilee through nearby villages to "Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

And today, whether we use Christian language to describe it as the kingdom, God's just world, or the reign of God or use more accessible language about the way of distributive justice, the way of love, and the way of compassion and caring, our justice work can continue to grow, too. We may feel like our justice work is small, and it may be beset by contemporary obstacles, but we should never underestimate the power of local efforts toward making our communities a safer, more just place for everyone. We may feel like we are only working in a "nearby village," but every act, big or small, has a ripple effect and we never know just how far those justice ripples will travel. Today, as Jesus followers, we too can "cast out" the demons of injustice and be conduits of healing to those injustice has harmed.

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

I love each of you dearly. ■

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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.

If you'd like to email us here at Renewed Heart Ministries, you can reach us at: info@renewedheartministries.com.

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



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](https://renewedheartministries.com/Podcasts)



Our 2023 Shared Table Pottery Bowls Are Shipping Out!

If you participated in RHM's Shared Table event last November and December, your pottery bowls are ready and will be shipped out this month. Anticipate their arrival at your doorstep shortly. A heartfelt appreciation goes out to our automated monthly sustainers; your steadfast partnership in our crucial endeavors is truly invaluable. Thank you for your ongoing support.



2023 Donation Receipts

Receipts for donations made in 2023 have been sent via mail. If, for any reason, you have not received your receipt and thank you letter, please get in touch with us to ensure your mailing address is up to date. You can contact us by sending an email to info@renewedheartministries.com or by mailing us at:

Renewed Heart Ministries
PO Box 1211
Lewisburg, WV 24901



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:

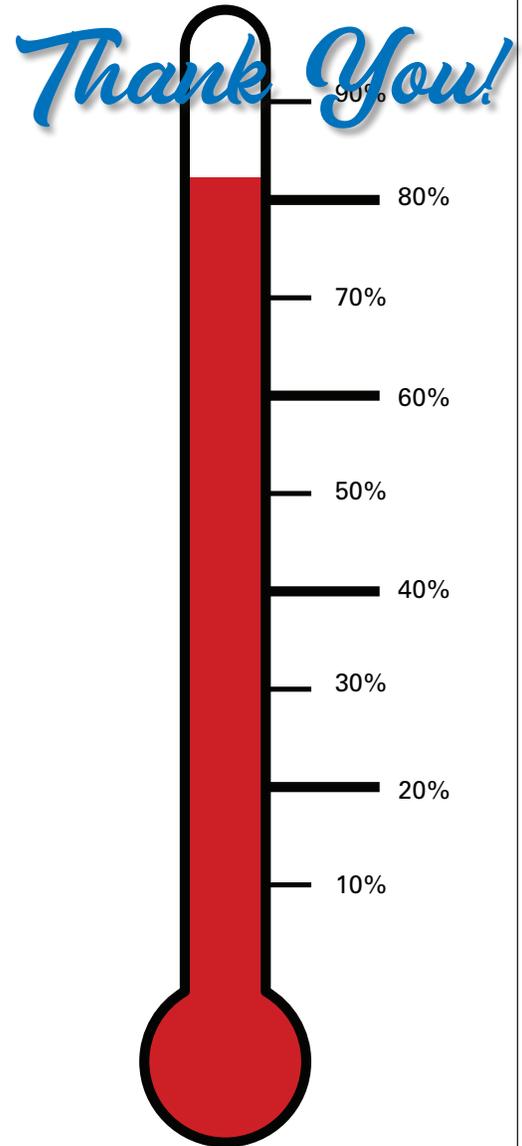
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Whether you give \$5 or \$5,000, every amount helps us to continue our work.

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 in 2023: \$123,977.26





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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!"



"It is much easier to preach a gospel about Jesus that says, 'God loves us,' than it is to venture to teach the gospel Jesus teaches in the stories calling on us to love each other."



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!

Quotable Quotes

"The point is not that Jesus was a good guy who accepted everybody, and thus we should do the same (though that would be good). Rather, his teachings and behavior reflect an alternative social vision. Jesus was not talking about how to be good and how to behave within the framework of a domination system. He was a critic of the domination system itself."

– Marcus J. Borg;

The God We Never Knew: Beyond Dogmatic Religion to a More Authentic Contemporary Faith