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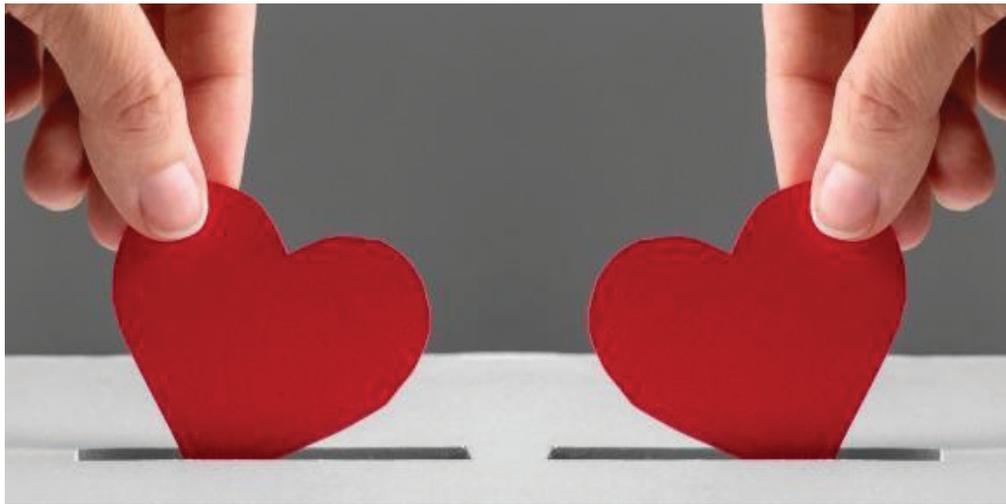
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Matching Donations Till the End of the Year

As we are seeking to reach our ministry budget goals here at the end of 2024, we are excited to share that all donations to Renewed Heart Ministries for the remainder of year will be matched! Every dollar you give will have twice the impact, helping us further expand the work of Renewed Heart Ministries in 2025. Join us in making a difference—together, we can maximize our collective impact!



We are excited to announce the return of our annual Shared Table event! This year, we invite you to become one of our monthly sustaining partners for 2025. By selecting the “Check this box to make it a monthly recurring donation” option when you donate online, you’ll receive a special thank-you gift: a handmade *Renewed Heart Ministries Shared Table Pottery Bowl* crafted by Crystal and Herb.

Becoming a monthly sustaining partner helps RHM plan and budget for our ministry projects throughout the year. To sign up, simply visit renewedheartministries.com/donate

and choose an automated recurring monthly donation of any amount. If you prefer using PayPal, you can also select the “Make this a monthly donation” option.

As a token of our appreciation, we’ll be sending out these beautiful pottery bowls to our all of monthly partners at the start of the new year. Our hope is that these bowls, whether displayed or used, will serve as a reminder of Jesus’ message of love, care, and shared table fellowship. They also make wonderful gifts or conversation starters!

If you’re already a sustaining partner



ZOOM HEART GROUP
GLENDALE CITY CHURCH &
RENEWED HEART
MINISTRIES

EVERY WEDNESDAY NIGHT
10 PM EASTERN / 7 PM PACIFIC

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 *Social Jesus* podcast published each Friday.

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

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



for 2024 and you would like to continue your support for 2025, we deeply appreciate your ongoing support and you will also receive one of our Shared Table Pottery Bowls as a thank-you gift, as well.

Regardless of how you choose to support Renewed Heart Ministries at the end of this year, we are profoundly grateful for your partnership in furthering Jesus’ vision of a world rooted in compassion, love, and mutual care. Together, we strive to create a safer, more compassionate, and just world for today and for eternity.



Thank You!

We want to take a moment to extend our deepest gratitude to all of our supporters for your invaluable contributions to the Renewed Heart Ministry community and your unwavering dedication to our mission of fostering love, justice, compassion, and healing. **Your support is the foundation of our work and empowers us to continue what we do.** During a time when ministries like ours are being called to achieve more with limited resources, your commitment is especially significant, and we simply want to say thank you. In our broader society and within local faith communities, Renewed Heart Ministries remains steadfast in advocating for change, striving for a world that is inclusive, just, and safe for all, and serving as a source of love and hope. From all of us at Renewed Heart Ministries, thank you for your generous support. **We deeply appreciate each and every one of our supporters.**

If you'd like to join them in supporting our work, please go to: renewedheartministries.com and **click on "Donate" or you can mail your support to:**

Renewed Heart Ministries
PO Box 1211
Lewisburg, WV 24901



When Faith Does Societal Harm

by Herb Montgomery

Our reading this month is from the gospel of Mark:

As he taught, Jesus said, "Watch out for the teachers of the law. They like to walk around in flowing robes and be greeted with respect in the marketplaces, and have the most important seats in the synagogues and the places of honor at banquets. They devour widows' houses and for a show make lengthy prayers. These men will be punished most severely."

Jesus sat down opposite the place where the offerings were put and watched the crowd putting their money into the temple treasury. Many rich people threw in large amounts. But a poor widow came and put in two very small copper coins, worth only a few cents.

Calling his disciples to him, Jesus said, "Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others. They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything—all she had to live on." (Mark 12:38-44)

Political Context of Mark 12

Interpreting Jesus' critique of the teachers of the law without its context too often leads to thinking that Jesus was against the law (Torah) itself. Jesus was not engaging in a

Protestant, post-Reformation contrast of the law versus grace. That way of reading our story is anachronistic and misses Jesus' point entirely.

Jesus was leading a Jewish renewal movement that hoped to liberate and restore the rural village communities disintegrating because of the Roman occupation. Jesus was calling his listeners back to fidelity to the Torah's justice in opposition to the ruling class of his day, which was colluding with Roman oppression for its own gain.

The tension in the gospels is not between Jesus and the law, but between Jesus and Roman oppression, including the Romans' client regional ruler Herod and high priests of the Temple State. Roman exploitation and oppression through those Rome had placed in positions of power in the Temple State was wreaking economic and social havoc on the vast majority of people living in villages of Galilee, Samaria, and Judea. According to Richard Horsley, those named in the gospels such as the scribes, the Pharisees and the "teachers of the law" served in the Judean temple-state as "intellectual-legal retainers." (Richard A. Horsley, *Jesus and the Politics of Roman Palestine*, p. xi)

This leads to some interesting political and social insights into who these "teachers of the law" were.

Teachers of the Law in Mark 12

The teachers of the law in our reading

continued on page 4

November's Recommended Reading

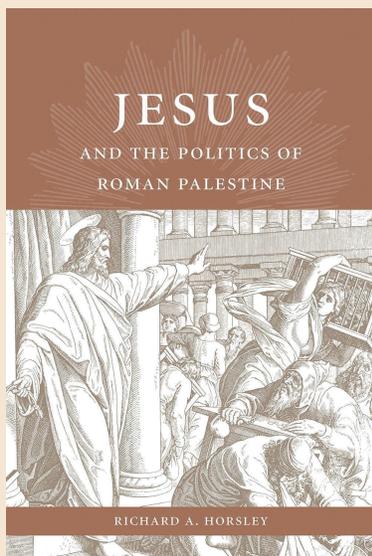
Jesus and the Politics of Roman Palestine

by Richard A. Horsley

This comprehensive critical analysis of the historical Jesus examines his mission and involvement in the conflicted politics of ancient Palestine.

In *Jesus and the Politics of Roman Palestine*, Richard A. Horsley brings the context and implications of recent historical research to bear on our understanding of Jesus of Nazareth. Based on a critical reconsideration of the Gospels and contemporary sources for Roman imperial rule in Judea and Galilee, Horsley argues that Jesus was deeply concerned with the politics of his day. Drawing on anthropological studies of peasant politics, Horsley discerns how Jesus, as a Moses- and Elijah-like prophet, generated a movement of renewal in Israel that was focused on village communities.

Following the traditional prophetic pattern, Jesus pronounced God's



judgment against the rulers in Jerusalem and their Roman patrons. This confrontation with the Jerusalem rulers and his martyrdom at the hands of the Roman governor, however, became the breakthrough that empowered the rapid expansion of his movement in the immediately ensuing decades. In the broader context of this comprehensive historical construction of Jesus's mission, Horsley also presents a fresh new analysis of Jesus's healings and exorcisms and his conflict with the Pharisees, topics that have been generally neglected in the last several decades.

taking place in the Temple-state.

The first critique, desiring the most important seats and places of honor, should be read with the backdrop of the lessons Mark's gospel just taught in Mark 10. James and John also desired the most important seats and places of honor, and asked to sit at Jesus' left and right hands in the kingdom. Mark 10 contrasts this request with the request of Bartimaeus, who rightly perceives Jesus' movement and joins it. (For more, we discussed this at length in *Bartimaeus and Christians of Privilege*.)

Next, Jesus zeros in on the intrinsic harm the teachings of these teachers was actually doing. Their teaching

made the rich power brokers in the Temple state richer at the expense of the most vulnerable in Jesus' society.

Mark's gospel critiqued this group's teachings on the basis of the economic injustice they were causing in Mark 7:

And he continued, "You have a fine way of setting aside the commands of God in order to observe your own traditions! For Moses said, 'Honor your father and mother,' and, 'Anyone who curses their father or mother is to be put to death.' But you say that if anyone declares that what might have been used to help their father or mother is Corban (that is, devoted to God)—then you no longer let them do anything for their father or mother. Thus you nullify the word of God by your tradition that you have handed down. And you do many things like that." (Mark 7:9-13)

"Devoted to God" meant devoted to the Temple-State, and it didn't trickle down to the poor, but rather into the pockets of those in positions of power who already possessed so much. It gave them even more at the expense and harm of those from whom these resources were being taken, all while they piously said lengthy prayers in public to add religious influence to their economic exploitation. Standing in the Hebrew prophetic tradition, Jesus like the prophets of old who spoke truth to power, declared that these teachers of the law would be "punished most severely."

Our reading gives a clear example of this exploitation in one of the most misunderstood economic teachings in the gospel Mark: the story of the widow's mites.

The Widow's Mites of Mark 12

Whenever I heard the story of the widow's mites growing up in church, it was always held up as an example of the piety and fidelity we should follow. She gave so much with the little she had and we should sacrificially do the same. But nothing could be further from the point of why Mark's gospel is actually telling this story. The widow's mites story is not a story to applaud

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...*Harm* continued from page 3

this week advised the Judean rulers of the Temple State and enjoyed political and economic favor as a result.

They were those whose interpretations of the Torah provided religious justification for the unjust status quo of the Roman-appointed high priestly rulers.

Jesus offers two critiques of these teachers in our reading: they desired status and privilege rather than the life-giving pedagogy of the Torah and they were "devouring widows' houses," which indicates their complicity in the economic exploitation through over-taxation

SOCIAL JESUS

A Blog Exploring the Intersection of Faith and Societal Justice



Recent “Social Jesus” Blog on Patheos



Love and Social Justice (Part One in the *Two Greatest Commandments* series.)

So closely is love connected to justice that it is impossible to claim you even have love if you disregard social justice for one's neighbor.

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2024/10/love-social-justice/

Loving God is Loving One's Neighbor (Part Two in the *Two Greatest Commandments* series.)

In this life, the closest we will ever get to loving God is how we choose to relate with our fellow members of the human family.

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2024/10/loving-god-is-loving-ones-neighbor/

Loving One's Neighbor and Voting (Part Three in the *Two Greatest Commandments* series.)

This Tuesday, love your neighbor by getting out there and voting for love and justice. Then the next morning when you wake, keep at it.

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2024/10/loving-ones-neighbor-and-voting/



Bartimaeus and Christians of Privilege, Part 1

The Bartimaeus story has social, political, and economic dimensions that are rarely touched on in some sectors of Christianity.

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2024/10/bartimaeus-christians-privilege-part1/

Bartimaeus and Christians of Privilege, Part 2

I can't help but see a critique of Christian nationalism in the contrast between James, John and Bartimaeus in this story.

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2024/10/bartimaeus-christians-privilege-part2/

Bartimaeus and Christians of Privilege, Part 3

Proximity doesn't guarantee change. But it does provide the opportunity for change, through crossing lines that we have created.

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2024/10/bartimaeus-christians-privilege-part3/



Participation Not Substitution, Part 1

Elements that Christianity has typically viewed through the lens of substitution, Mark's gospel frames in terms of participation.

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2024/10/participation-not-substitution-part1/

Participation Not Substitution, Part 2

In Mark, these stories aren't about a Jesus doing things for or instead of his disciples. He calls his disciples to participate in them, too.

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2024/10/participation-not-substitution-part2/

Participation Not Substitution, Part 3

Standing up for love and justice sometimes involves drinking the same cup and fiery baptism. In those moments we are participating.

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2024/10/participation-not-substitution-part3/



God and Money, Part 1

This week's reading gets to the heart of one of the central teachings of the synoptic gospels—the gospel Jesus himself teaches in the story.

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2024/10/god-money-part1/

God and Money, Part 2

The human dilemma in regards to most everything including money is, in large part, that we are each other's fate.

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2024/10/god-money-part2/

God and Money, Part 3

No one can serve two masters. You will hate the one and love the other. You cannot serve both justice and money.

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2024/10/god-money-part3/



Divorce Just Ain't What It Used To Be, Part 1

These directives written about divorce were not written with the same cultural practices and assumptions within marriage that we practice today.

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2024/10/divorce-just-aint-what-it-used-to-be-part1/

Divorce Just Ain't What It Used To Be, Part 2

The culture wherein these ancient divorce laws were written was predominantly heterosexual and deeply patriarchal.

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2024/10/divorce-just-aint-what-it-used-to-be-part2/

Divorce Just Ain't What It Used To Be, Part 3

Justice and that which was life-giving were the concerns in our reading. That which is just and life-giving should be our concern, too.

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2024/10/divorce-just-aint-what-it-used-to-be-part3/



JUST TALKING

TODD
LEONARD

HERB
MONTGOMERY

LECTIONARY READINGS IN THE CONTEXT OF LOVE, INCLUSION, & SOCIAL JUSTICE

[YOUTUBE.COM/@HERBANDTODDJUSTALKING](https://www.youtube.com/@herbandtoddjustalking)

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 social 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** @[herbandtoddjustalking](https://www.youtube.com/@herbandtoddjustalking).

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!

...*Harm* continued from page 4

the widow's dedication to giving but a story that critiques how the widow was being exploited. The widow is not an example for the poor to follow but the system that exploits her is an example for the wealthy and powerful not to follow.

"The story does not provide a pious contrast to the conduct of the scribes in the preceding section (as is the customary view); rather it provides a further illustration of the ills of official devotion. Jesus' saying is not a penetrating insight on the measuring of gifts; it is a lament.... Jesus condemns the value system that motivates her action, and he condemns the people who conditioned her to do it." (A. Wright, 1982, "The Widow's Mite: Praise or Lament? A Matter of Context." *CBQ*, 44, pp. 256ff, quoted by Ched Myers, *Binding the Strong Man: A Political Reading of Mark's Story of Jesus*, p. 321).

The teachings of the Temple-State have robbed this woman of her means of livelihood. Those who were to protect the vulnerable are no longer protecting widows but exploiting them and others in their social and economic position. Jesus, in disgust, departs from the temple for the final time.

What does this mean for us today?

Do our religious teachings today cause political and social harm and death or bring healing, life, renewal, restoration, and liberation? Is our religious teaching politically and socially death-dealing or life-giving? I can't help but think of the way certain Christians are pro-birth but oppose state programs that ensure that same child, once born, is fed, housed, educated, and raised in a home where their parents can afford to live. I can't help but think of the life-saving healthcare for women who have either died or almost died since the loss of Roe here in the U.S., a loss that some Christians are so proud of. I can't help but think of how our trans community and immigrants are being scapegoated right now in our political debates. I'm not saying that Christians are the only ones engaging in such harmful misrepresentations, or that all Christians are. What I am saying is that I'm shocked that anyone, even one person, who claims to be following Jesus and his teachings is. History will not be kind to the way Evangelicalism has embraced the politics of harm. With Jesus' critique of the teachers of the law as our backdrop, what critique might this same Jesus make of American Christians today?

Discussion Group Questions

1. Share something that spoke to you from this week's eSight/Podcast episode with your discussion group.
2. What societal healing do you believe your faith can be channelled toward? 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**.

My latest book *Finding Jesus: A Fundamentalist Preacher Discovers the Socio-Political and Economic Teachings of the Gospels* is available now on Amazon in paperback, Kindle, and also on Audible in audio book format.

As always, you can find Renewed Heart Ministries each week on X (or Twitter),

Facebook, Instagram and Meta's Threads. If you haven't done so already, please follow us on your chosen social media platforms for our daily posts.

Thank you for listening to *The Social Jesus* Podcast. If you enjoyed this podcast please take a moment to like and subscribe and if the podcast platform you're using offers this option, please leave us a positive review. This helps others find our podcast as well.

And if you'd like to reach us here at Renewed Heart Ministries 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.

I love each of you dearly. ■

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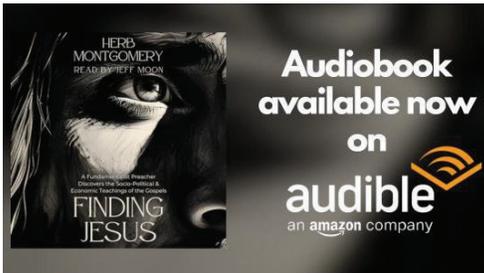
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Finding Jesus: A Fundamentalist Preacher Discovers the Socio-Political & Economic Teachings of the Gospels (2nd Edition)

by Herb Montgomery



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:

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or by mail at:

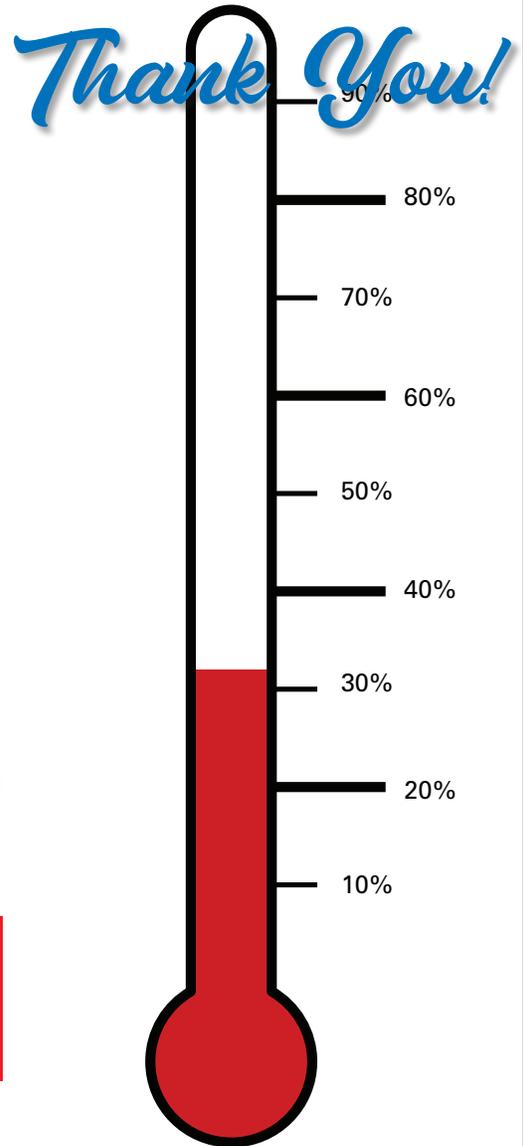
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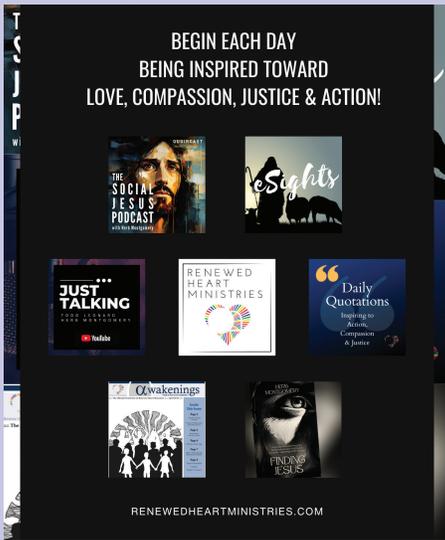
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Whether you give \$5 or \$5,000, every amount helps us to continue our work.

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.

2024 Projected Budget Goal: \$150,000.00
Donations Received as of end of Oct. 2024: \$47,661.41





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Upcoming Events

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Good News Fellowship
 Toronto, Ontario Canada

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Front cover artwork by Ali Montgomery.

