



Inside This Issue:

Page 2

Thank You!

Upcoming Events

Spirit, Love, Justice and Truth

Page 3

Finding Jesus... Available on Amazon!

Page 4

Recommended Reading for January

Page 5

Social Jesus blog

Page 6

Just Talking with Herb and Todd

Page 7

RHM's Socials

Budget Thermometer

Testimonies

Page 8

RHM's Free Resources

Social Jesus Podcast

Weekly Zoom HeartGroup



Follow RHM!

 Renewed Heart Ministries

 renewedheartministries/

 renewedheartministries

 RenewedHeartMin

 herbandtoddjusttalking

 renewedheartministries.com



Spirit, Love, Justice and Truth

by Herb Montgomery

Happy New Year!

Our reading this first weekend after Epiphany is from the gospel of Luke:

The people were waiting expectantly and were all wondering in their hearts if John might possibly be the Messiah. John answered them all, "I baptize you with water. But one who is more powerful than I will come, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fork is in his hand to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his barn, but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire...When all the people were being baptized, Jesus was baptized too. And as he was praying, heaven was opened and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased." (Luke 3:15-17, 21-22, NIV)

We covered the first part of this reading during this most recent Advent season. I think the last part of it has a special insight for us as we consider what lies ahead in 2025.

The language in this last portion is rooted in two passages from the Hebrew scriptures, one in the book of Psalms and the other in Isaiah.

I will proclaim the LORD'S decree:

He said to me, "You are my son; today I have become your father. (Psalms 2:7, NIV)

The rest of Psalms 2 is abysmally violent and nationalistic. But as the author connects Jesus to this psalm, they don't only challenge the Roman claim that Caesar was the son of God, they also tie Jesus to David and the people's contemporary hopes for their own liberation and restoration.

In Isaiah we read:

"Here is my servant, whom I uphold,
my chosen one in whom I delight;
I will put my Spirit on him,
and he will bring justice to the nations...
A bruised reed he will not break,
and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out.
In faithfulness he will bring forth justice;
he will not falter or be discouraged
till he establishes justice on earth." (Isaiah 42:1, 3-4, NIV)

As we begin a new year, it's good to remind ourselves what following Jesus, that Galilean prophet of the poor ministering on the edges of his own society, should be all about. At the core of his message, the heart of Christianity, is the call to love our neighbor. And loving one's neighbor is what we call today social justice: making sure we and all of our neighbors have what they need to thrive, not just barely survive. Dedication and commitment to the ethic of loving our neighbor will, if consistently applied, ultimately bring "justice on earth." It would

continued on page 2



Thank You!

We want to take this moment to express our heartfelt gratitude to all of our supporters for your support of Renewed Heart Ministry's work of love, justice, and compassion. At a time when ministries like ours are being asked to achieve more with fewer resources, your support is so deeply appreciated, and we want to simply say thank you. Whether in our larger society or within our local faith communities, Renewed Heart Ministries remains committed to advocating for change, working towards a world that is inclusive, just, and safe for everyone, and being a source of love. From all of us here at Renewed Heart Ministries, thank you for your generous support. **We deeply appreciate you.**

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

From all of us here at Renewed Heart Ministry, THANK YOU.



Upcoming Events

JANUARY 18, 2025
Good News Fellowship
Toronto, Ontario Canada

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

...Justice and Truth continued from page 2

take participation from everyone, but that is the ultimate goal: establishing justice here.

Social justice is rooted in love, specifically love of one's neighbor. It calls us to engage our civic responsibility toward one another. It calls us to take inventory of how we are sharing space with others we live alongside with on our planet.

In Isaiah, "my chosen one in whom I delight" will establish justice on Earth as the fruit of the Spirit. In our reading, that Spirit descends in the bodily form of a dove, which many today take as the symbol of peace arrived at because universal distributive justice has been established. There is an interesting passage from the apocryphal book of the Wisdom of Solomon describing the Spirit/Wisdom and its result:

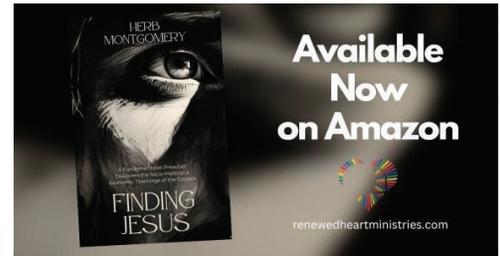
"She renews all things;
in every generation she passes into holy souls
and makes them *friends* of God, and prophets;"
(Wisdom of Solomon 7:27, NRSV, italics added.)

Wisdom makes those on whom her Spirit rests both friends of God and prophets. So many prophetic voices throughout the centuries have called for justice. Let's consider a sample from the Hebrew prophetic justice tradition. Look at how many times justice toward one another is the theme:

Justice and the Prophets

- Isaiah 1:17 Learn to do right; seek **justice**.
Defend the oppressed.
Take up the cause of the fatherless;
plead the case of the widow.
- Isaiah 9:7 Of the greatness of his government and peace
there will be no end.
He will reign on David's throne
and over his kingdom,
establishing and upholding it
with **justice** and righteousness
from that time on and forever.
The zeal of the LORD Almighty
will accomplish this.
- Isaiah 11:4 But with righteousness he will judge the needy,
with **justice** he will give decisions for the poor of the earth.
He will strike the earth with the rod of his mouth;
with the breath of his lips he will slay the wicked.
- Isaiah 16:5 In love a throne will be established;
in faithfulness a man will sit on it—
one from the house of David—
one who in judging seeks **justice**
and speeds the cause of righteousness.
- Isaiah 28:6 He will be a spirit of **justice**
to the one who sits in judgment,
a source of strength
to those who turn back the battle at the gate.
- Isaiah 28:17 I will make **justice** the measuring line
and righteousness the plumb line;
hail will sweep away your refuge, the lie,
and water will overflow your hiding place.
- Isaiah 30:18 Yet the LORD longs to be gracious to you;
therefore he will rise up to show you compassion.
For the LORD is a God of **justice**.
- Isaiah 32:1 See, a king will reign in righteousness
and rulers will rule with **justice**.

continued on page 4



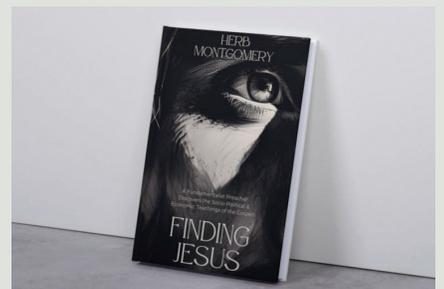
Finding Jesus: A Fundamentalist Preacher Discovers the Socio-Political & Economic Teachings of the Gospels

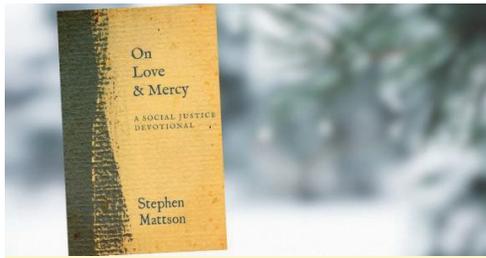
by Herb Montgomery

Available now on Amazon!

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.

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.





January's Recommended Reading

On Love & Mercy: A Social Justice Devotional

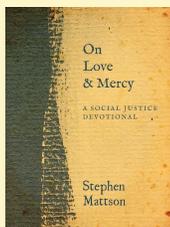
by Stephen Mattson

A perfect way to begin 2025!

A hopeful and Christ-centered devotional for Christians who know social justice to be a good and holy endeavor, *On Love and Mercy* is a 60-day devotional that invites readers to expand their vision of both personal faith in God and the redemptive and saving work of social action. Breaking down the premise that Christians must choose between being either socially conscious or theologically sound, author Stephen Mattson offers the hopeful message that Jesus—and Christianity—is both. Each day's entry offers Christians who long to see justice and equity within society with a much-needed source of affirmation, solidarity, and encouragement.

These heart-felt devotions bring readers hope and encouragement to embrace social justice as the Christ-like discipline that it always was and is meant to be. *On Love and Mercy* validates social justice practices within the Christian faith by centering the example of Jesus as the ultimate standard.

Although our religion will fail us, Jesus never will. He walks alongside us in living out God's commands us to love our neighbors to the best of our ability. Step into this journey and discover anew what it means to be devoted to Jesus and justice.



...*Justice and Truth* continued from page 3

Isaiah 51:4,5 “Listen to me, my people;
hear me, my nation:
Instruction will go out from me;
my **justice** will become a light to the nations.
My righteousness draws near speedily,
my salvation is on the way,
and my arm will bring justice to the nations.

Isaiah 51:4,5 “Listen to me, my people;
hear me, my nation:
Instruction will go out from me;
my **justice** will become a light to the nations.
My righteousness draws near speedily,
my salvation is on the way,
and my arm will bring justice to the nations.

Jeremiah 9:24 But let the one who boasts boast about this:
that they have the understanding to know me,
that I am the LORD, who exercises kindness,
justice and righteousness on earth,
for in these I delight,”
declares the LORD.

Jeremiah 21:12 This is what the LORD says to you, house of David:
“Administer **justice** every morning;
rescue from the hand of the oppressor
the one who has been robbed,
or my wrath will break out and burn like fire
because of the evil you have done—
burn with no one to quench it.

Note that the end of this passage from Jeremiah sounds a lot like John the Baptist from the first portion of this week's reading.]

Ezekiel 34:16 I will search for the lost and bring back the strays. I will bind up the injured
and strengthen the weak, but the sleek and the
strong I will destroy. I will shepherd the flock with **justice**.

Hosea 2:19 I will betroth you to me forever;
I will betroth you in righteousness and **justice**,
in love and compassion.

Amos 5:15 Hate evil, love good;
maintain **justice** in the courts.
Perhaps the LORD God Almighty will have mercy
on the remnant of Joseph.

Amos 5:24 But let **justice** roll on like a river,
righteousness like a never-failing stream!.

Micah 3:1 Then I said,
“Listen, you leaders of Jacob,
you rulers of Israel.
Should you not embrace **justice**,

Micah 3:8 But as for me, I am filled with power,
with the Spirit of the LORD,
and with **justice** and might,

Zechariah 7:9 “This is what the LORD Almighty said: ‘Administer true **justice**;
show mercy and compassion to one another.

Malachi 3:5 “So I will come to put you on trial. I will be quick to testify...against
those who defraud laborers of their wages, who oppress the
widows and the fatherless, and deprive the foreigners among
you of **justice**, but do not fear me,” says the LORD Almighty.

continued on page 6

SOCIAL JESUS

A Blog Exploring the Intersection of Faith and Societal Justice



Recent “Social Jesus” Blog on Patheos



Mary’s Magnificat, Faith and Social Justice Part 1

Few stories in the gospels’ narratives of Jesus’ birth demonstrate the intersection of faith and social justice as much as Mary’s Magnificat does.

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2024/12/marys-magnificat-intersection-faith-social-justice/



Social Locations In The Christmas Narratives (Part 2 of *Mary’s Magnificat and the Intersection of Faith and Social Justice*)

“The social locations of the characters in these Christmas stories matter. Pay attention to who is doing what.”

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2024/12/social-locations-christmas-narratives/



Reversing Injustice, Violence and Oppression (Part 3 of *Mary’s Magnificat and the Intersection of Faith and Social Justice*)

These stories are about the hope of change being born into our world, reversing injustice, violence and oppression here and now.

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2024/12/reversing-injustice-violence-oppression/



Advent and Justice Toward One Another Part 1

In our advent reading, for a society to repent of past wrongs, it must also change the where it still participates in those wrongs.

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2024/12/advent-justice-toward-one-another/



Justice Toward One Another (Part 2 of *Advent and Justice Toward One Another*)

Our reading critiques the social institutions of that time and calls for justice toward one another. The same could apply today.

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2024/12/justice-toward-one-another/



Advent and Justice (Part 3 of *Advent and Justice Toward One Another*)

Advent is about establishing justice on Earth and shaping our world into a just, safe, compassionate home for everyone.

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2024/12/advent-justice/



Salvation from the Margins, Part 1

This detail cannot be lost because it offers a bit of wisdom and salvation maybe for many of us who feel we too are in the wilderness.

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2024/12/salvation-from-margins-part1/



A Voice in the Wilderness (Part 2 of *Salvation from the Margins*)

Even in the face of deep social and economic devastation of vulnerable communities, a path toward change had begun on the margins.

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2024/12/voice-wilderness/



Preparing the Way (Part 3 of *Salvation from the Margins*)

The reminder in our reading this week is even when we are faced with the most daunting of challenges, we can be preparing the way for justice.

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2024/12/preparing-way/

...Justice and Truth continued from page 4

This is the tradition in which both John and Jesus ministered, applying the themes to the situational injustices of their day. We are called to work for justice in our contexts in the same way.

The Justice of the Prophets in Our Context Today

Our sacred texts sometimes spell out how to apply love of neighbor in practice:

It means practicing justice toward **migrants**:

“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. (Leviticus 19:33-34)

Loving our neighbor as ourself means loving even the “foreigner” as a “native-born,” and loving them, too, as ourselves.

It means practicing justice toward the **poor**:

Proverbs 14:31 Whoever oppresses the poor shows contempt for their Maker, but whoever is kind to the needy honors God.

It means practicing justice toward the **young**:

Matthew 19:14 Jesus said, “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.”
When he had placed his hands on them, he went on from there.

It means practicing justice toward the **elderly**:

Psalms 68:5 A father to the fatherless, a defender of widows, is God in his holy dwelling.

It means practicing justice toward those who live with **disabilities**.

Leviticus 19:14 “Do not curse the deaf or put a stumbling block in front of the blind, but fear your God. I am the LORD.

It means practicing **labor** justice:

James 5:4 Look! The wages you failed to pay the workers who mowed your fields are crying out against you. The cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord Almighty.

In our context today we could expand to include new areas of justice work: environmental justice, gender equity and justice, racial equity and justice, LGBTQ equity and justice, and more!

Justice is also deeply tied to truth-telling. It is difficult to practice justice as a society when we don't share the same reality, and when some have been misinformed and convinced through appeals to their own bigotries and fears that the reality is different from what is genuinely happening. One passage that gave me chills this week as I wrote this article is from Isaiah 59:

Isaiah 59:14,15 So justice is driven back,
and righteousness stands at a distance;
truth has stumbled in the streets,
honesty cannot enter.
Truth is nowhere to be found,
and whoever shuns evil becomes a prey.
The LORD looked and was displeased
that there was no justice.

This year in 2025, however we choose to be a Jesus follower, may we express truth-telling, love and justice for our neighbor, both foreign and domestic. May we renew our commitments to each other and our dedication to taking responsibility to ensure that not just us but also everyone around us has what they need to thrive. This year, more than any other in recent history, it is vital to keep our hand to the plow, continuing the work despite new obstacles of shaping our world into a safe, compassionate, just home for everyone. ■



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 [@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!

What people are saying about Just Talking –

“I'm definitely enjoying these discussions. Helps clearly bring the love and teachings of Jesus into focus for me.” –Commenter

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

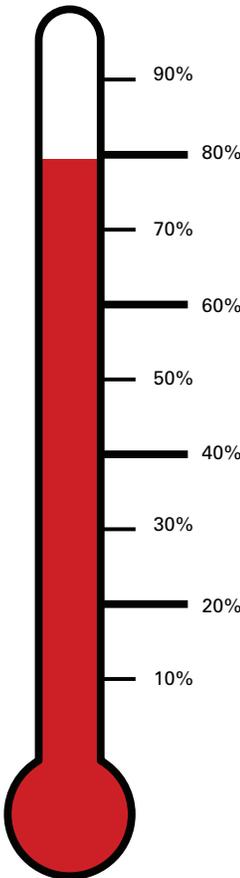
**Whether you give \$5 or \$5,000,
every amount helps us to continue our work.**

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

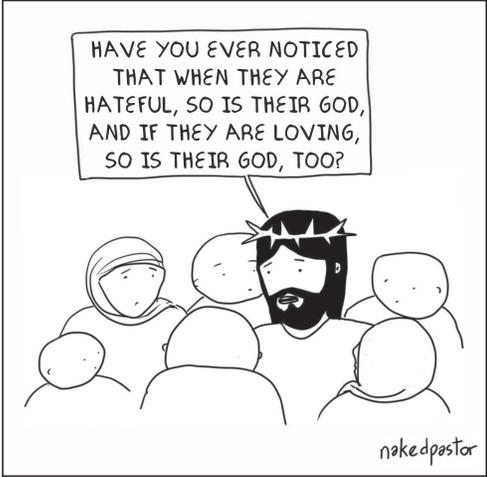
And **THANK YOU** for reading, listening to, sharing and supporting RHM's work. Thank you for the decisions you make every day to make our world a safer, compassionate, just home for everyone. Thank you for your dedication to engaging our world and the care you demonstrate, and for being such an important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

2024 Projected Budget Goal:
\$150,000.00

**Donations Received as of
end of December 2024:**
\$118,837.86



Thank You!



You can find RHM on X (formerly Twitter), Facebook, Instagram, Threads and YouTube. If you haven't done so already, please follow us on your chosen social media platforms for our daily posts.

- RenewedHeartMin
- Renewed Heart Ministries
- renewedheartministries/
- renewedheartministries
- herbandtoddjusttalking
- renewedheartministries.com

Testimonies

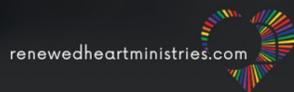
"Thank you for the strong focus on both liberation and survival and Jesus' call to resist even when threatened with death. THAT is continually enlarging in it's significance. May the gospel of Jesus and his "kingdom," be always foremost." –CC

"I love you and what you are doing! Thank you for speaking up." –KB

"Thank you Herb for redefining and clarifying what it means for me to be a follower of Jesus. You are also my kids' favorite to listen to." –NS

Front cover artwork by Ali Montgomery.

However much we profess to love, that love will manifest itself in caring for the material needs of our neighbors.



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

You can find Renewed Heart Ministries on X (Twitter), Facebook, Instagram and Threads for our daily posts. Our JFE podcast can be subscribed to through the podcast platform you use. You can also receive inspiration delivered to your email inbox daily or weekly.

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

Go to renewedheartministries.com and click "Sign Up!"



The Social Jesus Podcast

A podcast where we talk about the intersection of faith and social justice, and what a first-century, Jewish, prophet of the poor from Galilee offers us today in our work of love, compassion and justice.



Listen & Subscribe



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. The time of each Zoom session will be 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