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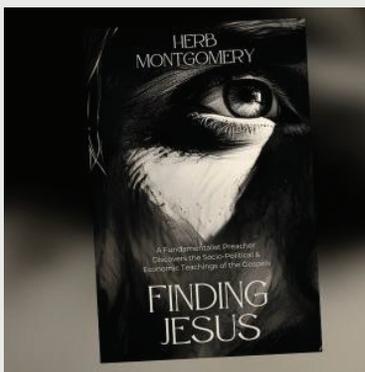
Finding Jesus: A Fundamentalist Preacher Discovers the Socio-Political & Economic Teachings of the Gospels

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.



Thank You!

We want to take a moment to express our heartfelt gratitude to each and every one of you who supports the work of Renewed Heart Ministries. Your generosity makes it possible for us to continue our mission of love, justice, and compassion—even in a time when ministries like ours are being called to do more with less.

Your support means the world to us. Whether we're speaking into the broader society or engaging within our faith communities, we remain committed to advocating for a world that is inclusive, just, and safe for all. Your partnership helps keep that vision alive.

From all of us at Renewed Heart Ministries, thank you. We are so deeply grateful for you—and **we couldn't do this work without you.**

If you'd like to join them in supporting our work, please go to: renewedheartministries.com and click "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.

"True peace is the harvest that follows the planting of justice in soil made rich with compassion and empathy for all. But before that seed can grow, the ground must be broken up, tilled, turned, and courageously disrupted."

renewedheartministries.com



Front cover artwork by Ali Montgomery.



Sheep, Coins, and a Preferential Option for the Marginalized

by Herb Montgomery

Our reading this month is from the gospel of Luke:

Now all the tax collectors and sinners were coming near to listen to him. And the Pharisees and the scribes were grumbling and saying, “This fellow welcomes sinners and eats with them.” So he told them this parable: “Which one of you, having a hundred sheep and losing one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness and go after the one that is lost until he finds it? When he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders and rejoices. And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbors, saying to them, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost.’ Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance. Or what woman having ten silver coins, if she loses one of them, does not light a lamp, sweep the house, and search carefully until she finds it? When she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbors, saying, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin that I had lost.’ Just so, I tell you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents. (Luke 15:1-10)

The imagery in the first part of our reading this week is found in both the canonical gospel of Matthew and the non-canonical gospel of Thomas. The lost coin image is unique to Luke.

In Matthew’s gospel we read:

If a shepherd has a hundred sheep, and one of them has gone astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine on the mountains and go in search of the one that went astray? And if he finds it, truly I tell you, he rejoices over it more than over the ninety-nine that never went astray. So it is not the will of your Father in heaven that one of these little ones should be lost. (Matthew 18:12-14)

In Thomas, we find a little different flavor:

Jesus said, “The kingdom can be compared to a shepherd who had a hundred sheep. The largest one strayed. He left the ninety-nine and looked for that one until he found it. Having gone through the trouble, he said to the sheep: ‘I love you more than the ninety-nine.’” (Gospel of Thomas 107:1-3)

In Matthew’s gospel, this imagery answers the question “Who is the greatest” in the kingdom of heaven. Matthew’s Jesus centers one of the most vulnerable and marginalized populations in his society, children, and then tells the story of a lost sheep. In Luke’s gospel, Jesus tells a slightly different story. Luke uses this story to justify Jesus’ fellowship with those whom the powerful, propertied, and privileged felt were inferior: tax collectors and others labelled sinners.

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Upcoming Events

SEPTEMBER 20, 2025

Good News Fellowship
Toronto, Ontario Canada

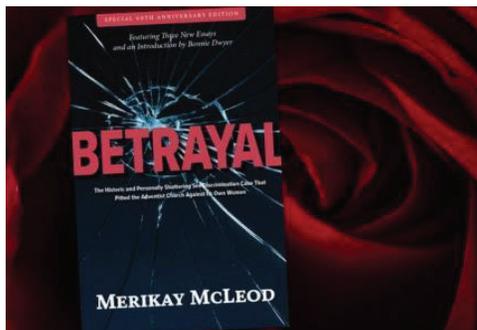
For info or Zoom link, email us at:
info@renewedheartministries.com
or call: 304.520.0030



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



September's Recommended Reading

Betrayal: The historic and personally challenging sex discrimination case that pitted the Adventist Church against its own women.

by Merikay McLeod

As a young assistant editor at Pacific Press Publishing Association, owned by the Seventh-day Adventist Church, Merikay McLeod asked manager in 1972 for wages comparable to those paid to a man doing the same work. Her husband was out of work and wanted to go to school; their car was in bad repair; and they were reduced to returning groceries for change to do the laundry. But the manager not only said, "No"; he said, "Never!" And the consequences of that "Never!" are the struggle for justice recounted in *Betrayal*.

For this 40th anniversary edition, that story last published in 1985 as *BETRAYAL: The Shattering Sex Discrimination Case of Silver vs Pacific Press Publishing Association* (Mars Hill Publications) is revised, updated, and contextualized by a colleague, an attorney, and a historian.

"Merikay's *Betrayal* is very moving, very honest, very haunting, and well written. I could not put it down. The book shows us what the pursuit of sweet justice feels like, day after day; and tells us what the price of survival is for women. Merikay is one of the heroines." – Phyllis Chesler, PhD, author of *Women & Madness*

Available now at:

<https://app.etapestry.com/onlineforms/AssociationforAdventistForums/merikaybook-1.html>

The term "sinner" is used quite differently in the gospel stories than in Paul's epistles. I grew up in a very Pauline-flavored expression of the Christian faith. It was drilled into me that we are all, without exception, sinners. But in the gospels, the term "sinner" is not universal but used by those in positions of power and privilege to define someone else as living outside their interpretations of Torah, as outside of the covenantal community's moral expectations, or simply as their moral inferior. In certain cases, the person was simply someone who disagreed with how Torah was being interpreted in a specific situation. The term was used to label, define and then marginalize others. In many cases, innocent people were being labelled as sinners while those in power, who were exploiting the poor and marginalized and were therefore the real sinners in the story, were deemed righteous, holy, or morally superior.

Using religion and claims of moral superiority to exclude people is, I believe, a misuse of both religious beliefs and ethical principles. At its core, most religions teach compassion, humility, and acceptance, yet individuals and institutions sometimes distort these teachings to justify exclusion. Just like in our story this week, by positioning oneself as morally superior, people succeed in creating an "us vs. them" dynamic, labeling others as sinful, impure, or unworthy. This approach fosters judgment and exclusion rather than an openness to understanding and perceiving our world from different perspectives. It fosters a conformity aligned with power. It then enables discrimination under the guise of righteousness. Such behavior can lead to the marginalization of those who are different, whether those differences are due to race, sexuality, gender, or a difference of belief, all while absolving the perpetrators of responsibility. In fact, it often makes the perpetrators look more holy because they are mistaken as standing up for morality. Ultimately, using religion as a tool for exclusion betrays the inclusive and compassionate values many faiths

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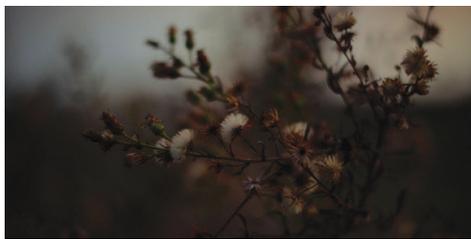


SOCIAL JESUS

A Blog Exploring the Intersection of Faith and Societal Justice



Recent Social Jesus Blog Posts on Patheos:



When Coming Out as LGBTQ Means Losing One's Family

(Part 1 of *Hating One's Family*)

For LGBTQ youth, acceptance at home is crucial. Rejection has devastating effects on a child's mental health and well being.

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2025/09/lgbtq-losing-ones-family/



The Politics of Humility: When Virtue Masks Control

(Part 1 of *Humility, Inclusion, Power and Privilege*)

Humility can be weaponized by oppressors to keep the oppressed submissive. It can also be used by the oppressed to confront their oppressors.

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2025/08/politics-humility



Sabbath and Social Justice

(Part 1 of *Christianity, Liberation and Justice*)

Sabbath is a sacred day of rest and spiritual renewal that is also deeply connected to labor justice and liberation.

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2025/08/sabbath-social-justice/



When Solidarity Causes Division

(Part 2 of *Hating One's Family*)

These passages describe division, the kind caused when standing with the vulnerable and marginalized and the resulting pushback.

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2025/09/solidarity-causes-division/



A Moral Compass Within

(Part 2 of *Humility, Inclusion, Power and Privilege*)

For some people, their own moral compass is all they need to navigate life. It's equally true that not everyone is guided in the same way.

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2025/08/moral-compass/



Sabbath as Labor Justice

(Part 2 of *Christianity, Liberation and Justice*)

The Sabbath commandment also had a history in a kind of labor justice. In its original context, it wasn't aimed at employees but employers.

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2025/08/sabbath-labor-justice/



Hating One's Family and a More Equitable World for All

(Part 3 of *Hating One's Family*)

In the linguistic context of the time, "hating one's family" was often used hyperbolically to emphasize priority, not emotional hostility.

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2025/09/hating-ones-family/



Jesus, Equity and Inclusion

(Part 3 of *Humility, Inclusion, Power and Privilege*)

What is really triggering modern-day opponents is how equity and inclusion challenges long-standing imbalances of power and privilege.

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2025/08/jesus-equity-inclusion/



When Religious Institutions Obstruct Justice

(Part 3 of *Christianity, Liberation and Justice*)

Our reading this week is about tension between liberation and the way a religious institution was interpreted to oppose that liberation.

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2025/08/religious-institutions-obstruct-justice/

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Unity Against Justice

(Part 1 of *When Justice Means Division*)

We cannot build real unity on the denial of justice. Authentic unity emerges not from avoiding conflict but from walking through it together.

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2025/08/unity-against-justice/

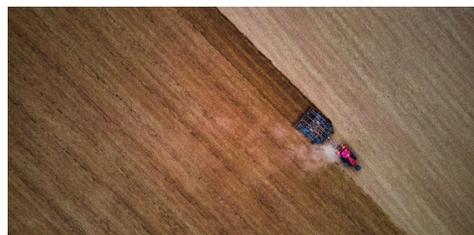


Injustice and a Negative Peace

(Part 2 of *When Justice Means Division*)

Negative peace is created when we prioritize unity over speaking out and taking action for what is right and for those being harmed.

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2025/08/injustice-negative-peace/



Injustice and Keeping our Hands on the Plow

(Part 3 of *When Justice Means Division*)

With hands on the plow, peacemakers are breaking up and preparing our social soil for the seeds of justice.

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2025/08/hands-plow/

promote. True moral strength lies in empathy, not in self-righteous condemnation or the gatekeeping of worthiness based on personal biases or prejudices cloaked in religious justification.

In context, the lost sheep story that Jesus tells in Luke’s gospel sparks curiosity about the value of the people whom those in power were pushing to the edges of their world. In a language most of the wealthy elites would understand (livestock then equalled net worth), Jesus taught the value going in search of a lost sheep. In Thomas’ gospel, the lost sheep was also the fattest sheep. While yes, the other sheep had value, in that moment, they were not in danger. The one sheep was. To insist that the other sheep mattered too would dismiss the systemic harm committed against the marginalized people Jesus was identifying with, ignore the specific struggles of those living on the edges of their society and undermine Jesus’ calls for justice for the “least of these.”

We experience this social phenomenon any time we focus on one specific sector of our diverse society because of systemic harm being done to them. In that moment, the one “lost sheep” is the focus because of their need. One example is the “All Lives Matter” response to calls for racial equality.

The phrase “All Lives Matter” emerged to counter the Black Lives Matter movement, which advocates for justice and equality for Black people facing systemic racism and violence. While the assertion “all lives matter” is fundamentally true, its use in this context often serves to undermine and dismiss the specific struggles Black and marginalized communities face. The response fails to recognize the unique historical and social contexts that contribute to these groups’ disproportionate suffering.

The fallacy of focusing on the 99 sheep rather than the 1 sheep that is in danger can be understood through the lens of selective attention to issues of inequality. When individuals assert that all lives matter in response to calls for justice for a specific group, they divert attention away from the systemic inequalities that make those justice movements necessary to begin with. It is akin to saying, “All houses matter” when a particular house is on fire; it ignores the urgent need for intervention in a specific instance of crisis. As a result, it perpetuates a status quo that keeps certain injustices unaddressed.

In contrast, and in harmony with this week’s parables of the lost sheep and the lost coin, liberation theologies offer frameworks that prioritize the needs of marginalized communities. Rooted in Christian teachings, liberation theologies emphasize the preferential option for communities that are marginalized and oppressed. These theological perspectives assert that God’s love and justice are particularly directed toward those who are suffering due to social, economic, and political injustices. Rather than adopting a universalist stance that diminishes the unique experiences of marginalized groups, liberation theologies call for a focused commitment to those who have historically been or are presently being silenced and oppressed.

The preferential option for the marginalized acknowledges that while all lives are inherently valuable, those who have been subjected to systemic injustice require special attention and immediate, focused advocacy. This approach is not about elevating one group over another but about recognizing disparities and actively working to change them. We are called to solidarity with those who are suffering and to demand justice in light of their specific circumstances.

The parables of the lost sheep and the lost coin in our reading this week both challenge the notion that social justice can be achieved without addressing the root causes of oppression and focusing on communities who suffer harm from inequities. Jesus’ teachings here call us to confront the structures that perpetuate inequality, advocating for systemic change for people being harmed now rather than mere charity or superficial solutions. This way of reading the parables of the lost sheep and lost coin align with principles of social justice: true equality cannot exist without addressing the historical injustices against specific communities that have led to disparities.

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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.**

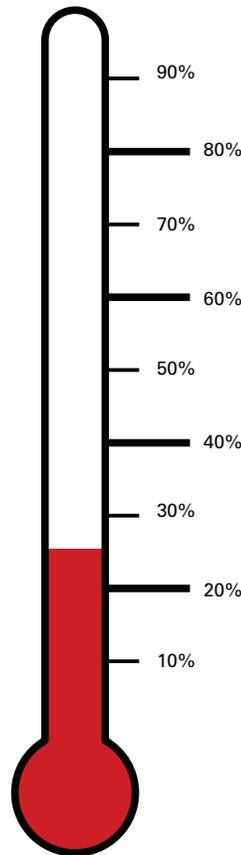
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And **THANK YOU** for reading, listening to, sharing and supporting RHM's work. Thank you for the decisions you make every day to make our world a safer, compassionate, just home for everyone. Thank you for your dedication to engaging our world and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

2025 Projected Budget Goal:
\$150,000.00

YTD Donations Received:
\$36,305.22

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Find the latest show on YouTube
[@herbandtoddjustalking](https://www.youtube.com/@herbandtoddjustalking).

Thanks in advance for watching!

Sheep, Coins,... continued from page 6

Focusing on the ninety-nine sheep that need no rescue and saying “they matter too” neglects the importance of context and the specific struggles that the specific communities represented by the sheep or coin in our reading face. Universal approaches to the gospel often oversimplify the realities of systemic oppression and what certain communities uniquely need. In contrast, the lens of a preferential option for the marginalized (temporarily focusing on the lost sheep or the lost coin rather than the rest) provides a nuanced understanding that prioritizes those who are suffering. True justice for all requires acknowledging injustice that may be only affecting certain communities, and focusing on those being harmed acknowledges that injustice to any is a threat to injustice to all.

Our society can work toward a more equitable and just world where the dignity and worth of every individual are upheld. At times, the ninety-nine must be left, and the other nine coins not focused on. In order to restore the whole, our parables call us to practice a preferential option for certain ones: the one sheep, the one coin. And when that which threatens the “ones” has been corrected, the rest will be brought back into the narrative.

Thanks for checking in with us today.

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



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

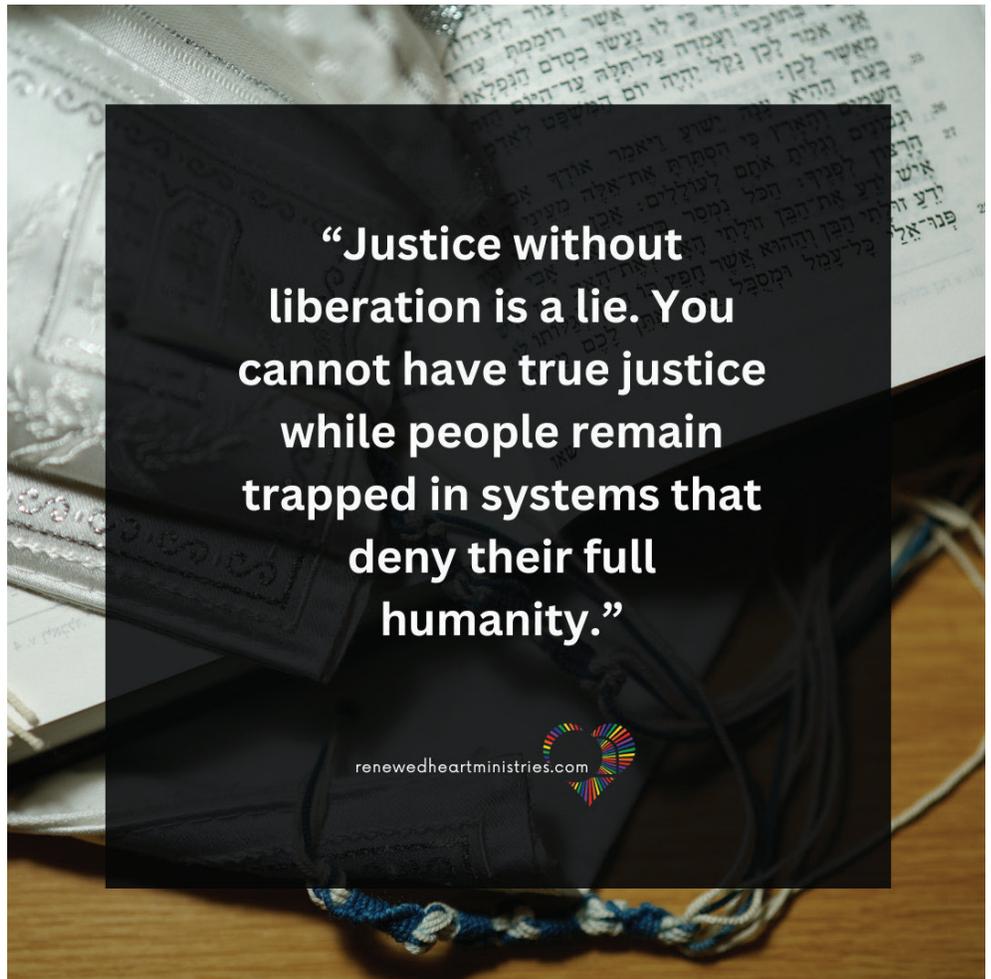
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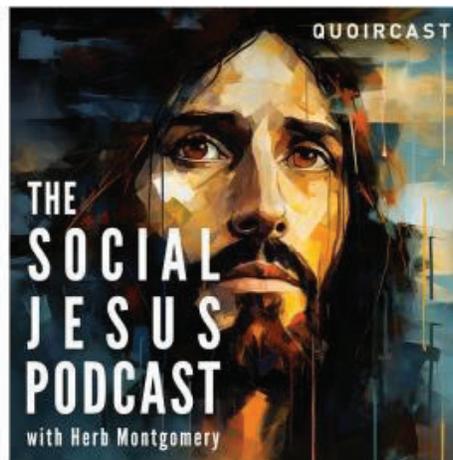
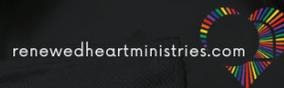
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-  renewedheartministries.com



“Justice without liberation is a lie. You cannot have true justice while people remain trapped in systems that deny their full humanity.”



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.

Find The Social Jesus Podcast at:

<https://the-social-jesus-podcast.simplecast.com/>



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