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“I was a stranger and you welcomed me in”


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## 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, engaging within our faith communities, or working one on one alongside others endeavoring to follow Jesus' teachings of love and justice, we remain committed to advocating for a world that is inclusive, just, and safe for all. **Your partnership helps keep our work 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](https://renewedheartministries.com) and click on "Donate."

Or you can mail your support to:

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Front cover artwork by Ali Montgomery.

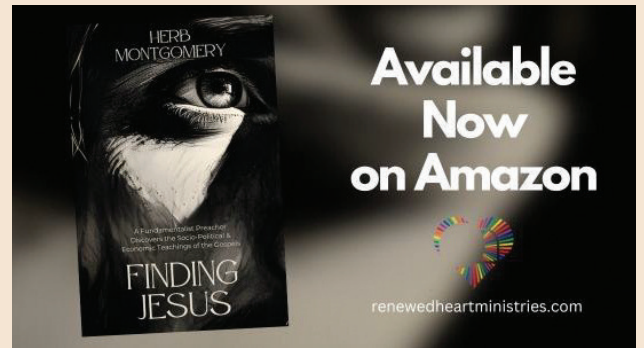
## *Finding Jesus: A Fundamentalist Preacher Discovers the Socio-Political & Economic Teachings of the Gospels*

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.

*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.





# The Beatitudes in the Context of Social Justice

by Herb Montgomery

Our reading this month is from the gospel of Matthew:

Now when Jesus saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, and he began to teach them.

He said:

“Blessed are the poor in spirit,  
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are those who mourn,  
for they will be comforted.

Blessed are the meek,  
for they will inherit the earth.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,  
for they will be filled.

Blessed are the merciful,  
for they will be shown mercy.

Blessed are the pure in heart,  
for they will see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers,  
for they will be called children of God.

Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness,  
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

(Matthew 5:1-12)


I can't think of a better way to begin our new year than looking at the gospels and the Beatitudes. Jesus' sermon "on a mountainside" has shifted the focus of Jesus-followers throughout history. The Beatitudes shift people's focus from individual piety or personal reward to the social realities of suffering and injustice. By blessing the poor, the grieving, the meek, and those who hunger and thirst for justice, Jesus centers God's concern for those harmed by unequal systems rather than for those who benefit from them. These sayings redefine "blessedness" not as comfort or success, but as solidarity with the marginalized. The Beatitudes call communities to evaluate their faith by how they respond to poverty, violence, exclusion, and oppression, and how they shape a vision of justice rooted in


*continued on page 4*


## RHM on Socials


You can find Renewed Heart Ministries on Blusky, Facebook, Instagram, Youtube and Meta's Threads.

If you haven't done so already, please follow us on your chosen social media platforms for our daily posts.


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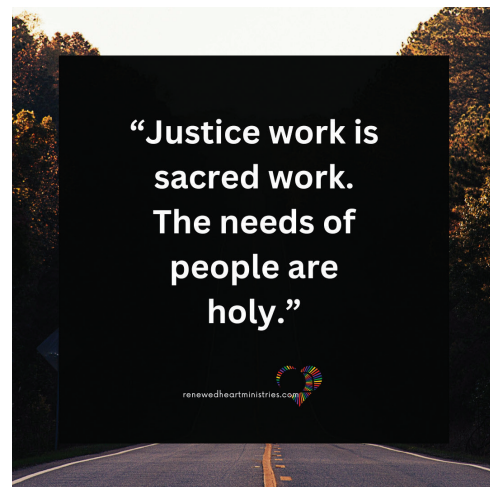
## Upcoming Events

**FEBRUARY 21, 2026**

**Good News Fellowship**

Toronto, Ontario Canada

**For info or Zoom link, email:**  
[info@renewedheartministries.com](mailto:info@renewedheartministries.com)



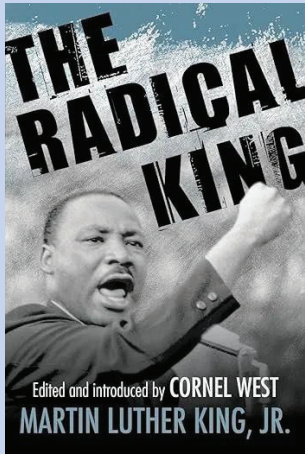
**“Justice work is sacred work.  
The needs of people are holy.”**



# February's Recommended Reading

## *The Radical King*

by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.  
(Author), Cornel West (Editor)



A revealing collection that restores Dr. King as being every bit as radical as Malcolm X.

“The radical King was a democratic socialist who sided with poor and working people in the class struggle taking place in capitalist societies... The response of the radical King to our catastrophic moment can be put in one word: revolution—a revolution in our priorities, a reevaluation of our values, a reinvigoration of our public life, and a fundamental transformation of our way of thinking and living that promotes a transfer of power from oligarchs and plutocrats to everyday people and ordinary citizens... Could it be that we know so little of the radical King because such courage defies our market-driven world?” —Cornel West, from the Introduction

Every year, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., is celebrated as one of the greatest orators in US history, an ambassador for nonviolence who became perhaps the most recognizable leader of the civil rights movement. But after more than forty years, few people appreciate how truly radical he was.

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*The Beatitudes...* continued from page 3

compassion, humility, and active peacemaking.

Let's launch right in at the beginning of the Beatitudes.

Reading through a social justice lens, “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” is not a call to passive humility or inward spirituality detached from material realities. Rather, it names those whom the system has made vulnerable because they live without power, security, or privilege. “Poor in spirit” is the opposite of those who are strong in spirit. This is a people for whom the status quo isn't working. These are the disinherited whose spirits have been beaten down by unjust systems. This can also refer to those who choose to be poor in spirit by refusing the illusion of superiority and hierarchy of value that our present system creates. Jesus announces that God's reign belongs to those who are excluded by economic and political hierarchies. The saying challenges societies that equate worth with wealth and power, and it invites communities to dismantle structures that produce poverty, replacing them with relationships of shared humanity, mutual care, resource-sharing, and justice.

In the context of social justice, “Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted” speaks not to private grief alone, but to a shared lament over suffering caused by injustice. To mourn is to refuse indifference. It is to grieve poverty, racism, violence, and exclusion as violations of God's intent for human community. This mourning is an act of moral clarity. It names harm rather than normalizing it. It refuses to be silent and channels that mourning into speaking out and taking action. Those who mourn stand in solidarity with the wounded and acknowledge their own participation in broken systems. The promised comfort is not escapist consolation, but the hope born from God's restorative work, healing relationships, dismantling oppressive structures, and renewing community. Comfort comes as justice takes root, as truth is spoken, and as love reshapes the world through collective repentance and action.

“Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth” is often misunderstood as praising passivity, but in the context of social justice, meekness is closer to disciplined strength. The meek are those who refuse domination, violence, and exploitation, yet persistently resist injustice. They do not grasp for power the way empires do. Instead, they practice solidarity, humility, and nonviolent struggle. In our biblical tradition, the “meek” are the oppressed who trust God rather than resorting to violence, and the promise of inheriting the earth is a reversal of unjust systems where the powerful of that time (and today, too) seized properties and resources. This beatitude specifically affirms that a just world will not belong to the ruthless, arrogant, and aggressive, but to those committed to justice, restraint, and the flourishing of all. There are two types of people in the world: those who look out for themselves at the cost of everyone around them and those who see themselves as part of the collective and seek to improve the lives of all of us together. The second group loves their neighbors as themselves. This is a much meeker way of navigating society.

“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled” names justice as a deep, bodily need, not a polite moral preference. Hunger and thirst describe an ache that refuses to be ignored. They are longings born from witnessing such things as exploitation, poverty, racism, xenophobia, patriarchy, transphobia, and violence. In the context of social justice, righteousness is not private virtue alone but right relationships within society. Humanity is protected and resources are shared fairly in a way where everyone thrives. Jesus blesses those who cannot make peace with injustice, whose discomfort drives them to action, solidarity, and risk. The promise of being “filled” does not suggest passive reward, but the deep fulfillment that comes from participating in the work of liberation. In striving for justice, communities experience glimpses of wholeness, healing, and hope, even when the work they are engaging is for future generations.

“Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy” frames mercy not as weakness, but as a radical practice that disrupts cycles of harm. In the context of social justice, mercy

*continued on page 6*

# Social Jesus

## Recent Social Jesus Blog Posts on Patheos:



### **John's Baptism as a Call for Justice** (Part 1 of *Jesus' Baptism as Alignment with a Movement for Justice*)

As the social location of Christianity changed and became united with the empire the justice associated with John's baptism became lost.

[patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2026/01/johns-baptism-call-justice/](https://patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2026/01/johns-baptism-call-justice/)



### **Constantine and the Eclipse of Justice** (Part 2 of *Jesus' Baptism as Alignment with a Movement for Justice*)

This union with empire under Constantinian continues to this day to shape Christian theology, ethics, and politics.

[patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2026/01/constantine-eclipse-justice/](https://patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2026/01/constantine-eclipse-justice/)



### **Jesus' Baptism and a Movement for Social Change** (Part 3 of *Jesus' Baptism as Alignment with a Movement for Justice*)

John's message also had explicit social and economic dimensions. John the Baptist called his listeners in Luke to social change.

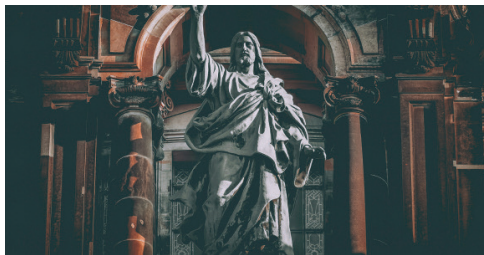
[patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2026/01/jesus-baptism-movement-social-change/](https://patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2026/01/jesus-baptism-movement-social-change/)



### **Darkness Has Become A Harmful Metaphor** (Part 1 of *Another World is Possible*)

The use of familiar forms of imperial birth legends and filling them with radically different content is a theological critique of empire.

[patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2025/12/christmas-theological-critique-empire/](https://patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2025/12/christmas-theological-critique-empire/)



### **The Gospel Jesus Preached and Justice** (Part 2 of *Another World is Possible*)

In the gospel Jesus preached within the stories, faithfulness to God is inseparable from justice toward our fellow human beings.

[patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2026/01/gospel-jesus-preached-justice/](https://patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2026/01/gospel-jesus-preached-justice/)



### **Fishing for Societal Justice** (Part 3 of *Another World is Possible*)

Fishing here is not about rescuing the fish but about dragging predatory rulers grown fat on injustice out of the waters of power.

[patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2026/01/fishing-societal-justice/](https://patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2026/01/fishing-societal-justice/)



### **Fidelity Defined as Practicing Justice** (Part 1 of *Following the Way of Love and Justice in this New Year*)

This defined religious fidelity not as private piety but as concrete social justice rooted in communal responsibility.

[patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2026/01/fidelity-defined-practicing-justice/](https://patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2026/01/fidelity-defined-practicing-justice/)



### **Love of Neighbor as Enacted Social Justice** (Part 2 of *Following the Way of Love and Justice in this New Year*)

The gospel stories define fidelity to God not by religious performance, but by love of neighbor enacted as social justice.

[patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2025/12/johns-repentance-societal-justice/](https://patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2025/12/johns-repentance-societal-justice/)



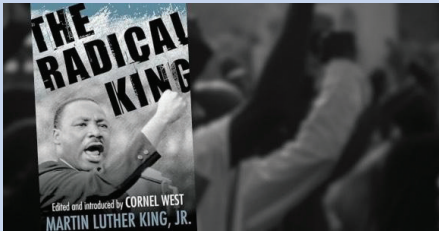
### **What Lies Ahead** (Part 3 of *Following the Way of Love and Justice in this New Year*)

As we step ahead into this new year, this means choosing justice over comfort, compassion over indifference, and action over silence.

[patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2026/01/what-lies-ahead/](https://patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2026/01/what-lies-ahead/)

February's Reading continued from page 4

Arranged thematically in four parts, *The Radical King* includes twenty-three selections, curated and introduced by Dr. Cornel West, that illustrate King's revolutionary vision, underscoring his identification with the poor, his unapologetic opposition to the Vietnam War, and his crusade against global imperialism. As West writes, "Although much of America did not know the radical King—and too few know today—the FBI and US government did. They called him 'the most dangerous man in America.'... This book unearths a radical King that we can no longer sanitize."



*The Beatitudes...* continued from page 4

means refusing to reduce people to their worst actions or social location even while naming and confronting injustice. It calls for active compassion. It calls for seeking restoration, accountability, and healing rather than mere retributive punishment. Mercy stands with those crushed by systems of inequality and resists policies rooted in cruelty, exclusion, or indifference.

Jesus blesses those who choose solidarity over scapegoating and care over fear and condemnation. The promise of mercy received is communal and transformative. Societies shaped by mercy create space for repair, dignity, and starting anew. In practicing mercy, we help build a world where justice is not retributive, but deeply restorative and distributive.

"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God" is not a call to private moral perfection, but to undivided commitment. In the context of social justice, purity of heart means refusing double loyalties (loyalty to God and the marginalized on one hand and to systems of domination, profit, or exclusion on the other). A pure heart chooses clearly, without the distortions of self-interest, fear, or ideology. A pure heart recognizes God's presence in the oppressed, the exploited, and those pushed to the edges and undersides of our communities. Such pureness of heart exposes injustice for what it is and unmasks narratives that justify harm. Pureness of heart and purpose also enables one to "see God" in those they work alongside in solidarity with, to perceive the divine image in every person, especially those whose humanity is being lessened or denied entirely, and to recognize or "see" God wherever liberation, healing, and solidarity is at work. Purity of heart leads not to withdrawal, but to courageous, compassionate action and a way of perceiving God in the world that empowers us to keep working toward a world that is a safe, compassionate, just home for everyone.

"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God" reframes peace as active justice rather than passive calm. In the context of social justice, peacemakers are not those who preserve the status quo or silence conflict, but those who confront the conditions that produce violence: poverty, racism, patriarchy, LGBTQ phobias, exploitation, and oppression. Biblical peace (referred to in the Hebrew Scriptures as shalom) is rooted in right relationships, justice, and the restoration of humanity. Peacemaking often disrupts unjust systems, challenging power and risking backlash, because true peace cannot exist where people are harmed or excluded. To be called children of God is to reflect God's character as revealed in the Jesus of the gospels stories by healing what is broken and reconciling what has been divided. Peacemakers stand with the wounded, speak truth to power, and labor for communities where justice becomes the soil out of which peace grows.

"Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" names the cost of faithfulness in a world structured by injustice. In the context of social justice, righteousness is right relationship that challenges systems that exploit, exclude, and dehumanize. Those who confront entrenched power often face backlash, misrepresentation, and punishment, not because they are wrong, but because they threaten the status quo. Jesus acknowledges this suffering without glorifying it, locating meaning not in persecution itself but in the justice being pursued. The promise of the kingdom of heaven here on earth affirms the hope of God's just future here. It suggests that God stands with those who resist oppression and work for liberation. Their struggle already participates in God's reign or just future, a time and place where power is overturned, humanity is embraced and restored, and justice, not violence, has the final word.

And this is closely related to the last Beatitude. "Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you, and falsely accuse you because of me" speaks to the reality that justice work often provokes hostility. I can't help but think of all the propaganda presently at work to falsely accuse Renee Good and Alex Pretti in an effort to justify their murders by ICE agents. Commitments to stand with the marginalized and challenge systems that benefit the powerful are frequently met with ridicule, character attacks, and distorted narratives



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/>



Listen & Subscribe

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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



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.***

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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.

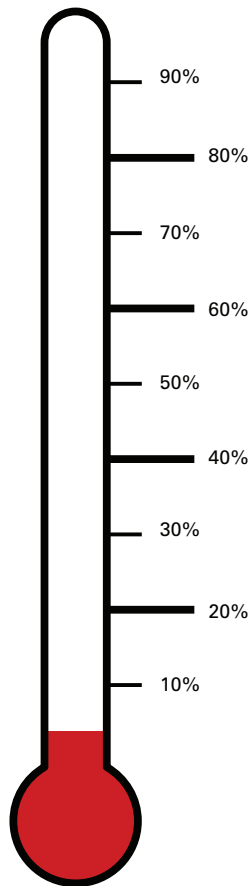
**2026 Projected Budget Goal:**

**\$150,000.00**

**2026 Donations Received:**

**\$5,056.00**

*Thank You!*



*The Beatitudes...* continued from page 6

meant to discredit and silence. Jesus names this resistance as part of a long prophetic tradition: those who expose injustice are treated as threats. The call to rejoice is not denial of pain, but a reminder that opposition does not mean failure. "Great is your reward in heaven" affirms that God's measure of faithfulness differs from public approval. To endure in love and truth places justice-seekers in continuity with the prophets and firmly within a movement in history toward God's just future.

To follow the Jesus of the Beatitudes today is to embrace a faith rooted in justice, compassion, and solidarity with those on the margins. The Beatitudes bless the poor, the grieving, the meek, the peacemakers, and those who hunger for justice, revealing a God who stands with the oppressed rather than the powerful. This way of Jesus calls for inner transformation that leads to public action and to challenging systems that cause harm, resisting violence, and restoring the humanity of all involved. It also acknowledges the cost of discipleship, including misunderstanding and opposition. Following Jesus means living into God's just future here and now, where love, justice, and liberation shape our response to an unjust world and our work to shape our world into a safe home for everyone.

**Discussion Group Questions**

1. Share something that spoke to you from this week's podcast episode with your discussion group.
2. What area of our justice work today are the Beatitudes speaking to you about this week? 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.

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



## Weekly HeartGroup on Zoom Every Wednesday Night!

Each Wednesday evening, Renewed Heart Ministries hosts a Zoom-HeartGroup led by Herb Montgomery. Our discussion each week will focus on the content in RHM's weekly eSight articles and the *Social Jesus* podcast. 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](mailto:info@renewedheartministries.com)



**A just world will not belong to the ruthless, arrogant, and aggressive, but to those committed to justice, compassion, and the flourishing of all.**



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## Quotable Quotes

“Open your mouth for the voiceless, for the rights of all who are destitute. Open your mouth, judge righteously, defend the rights of the poor and needy.”

—Wisdom ; Proverbs 31:8-9

“The opposition to those who work for social change does not come only from those who are the guarantors of the status quo. Again and again it has been demonstrated that the lines are held by those whose hold on security is sure only as long as the status quo remains intact.”

— Howard Thurman;  
*Jesus and the Disinherited*



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