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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 and click on "Donate."

Or you can mail your support to:

Renewed Heart Ministries
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Lewisburg WV, 24901



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.

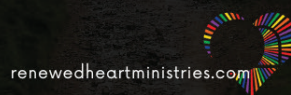
Find The *Social Jesus* Podcast at:

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



Listen & Subscribe

When hopes fall short, we
can grieve together, stay
present, and lean into
community where hope is
renewed, vision is reborn,
and simply walking
alongside one another
becomes a new beginning.





The Promise of the Holy Spirit

by Herb Montgomery

Our reading this week is from the gospel of John.

“If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever. This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, because he abides with you, and he will be in you.

“I will not leave you orphaned; I am coming to you. In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me; because I live, you also will live. On that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. They who have my commandments and keep them are those who love me; and those who love me will be loved by my Father, and I will love them and reveal myself to them.” (John 14:15-21)

Our reading this week begins with Jesus’ words, “If you love me, you will keep my commandments.” I can appreciate the intent of this saying. It attempts to shift the idea of love from sentiment into lived, embodied practice and intentional choices. Love is not reduced to belief, personal devotion, or worship but demonstrated through action. In the context of Jesus’ teachings on justice, this statement takes on a deeply communal and ethical dimension. To love Jesus is to align oneself with the values that shaped his life: compassion, inclusion, honoring the humanity of the other, and restoring those pushed to the margins.

So Jesus’ commandments are not abstract rules but expressions of relational justice. They call for feeding the hungry, welcoming the stranger, confronting systems that dehumanize, and standing in solidarity with the oppressed. In this sense, obedience is not about rigid moralism but about participating in the healing of the world. Love becomes visible in how we treat the most vulnerable among us.

Following Jesus, then, makes justice more than an optional extension of faith. Practicing justice is one of faith’s clearest expressions. When communities organize for living wages in the midst of dramatic inflation, when communities challenge racial or gender inequities, when communities advocate for LGBTQ inclusion or to protect our environment, they are enacting the kind of love Jesus describes. They are “keeping” his commandments in ways that transform both individuals and systems.

Importantly, this kind of love requires courage. It often places people at odds with dominant cultural or religious norms, just as Jesus himself was. Yet the call remains. Love that is faithful to Jesus cannot remain passive in the face of injustice. It must move, speak,

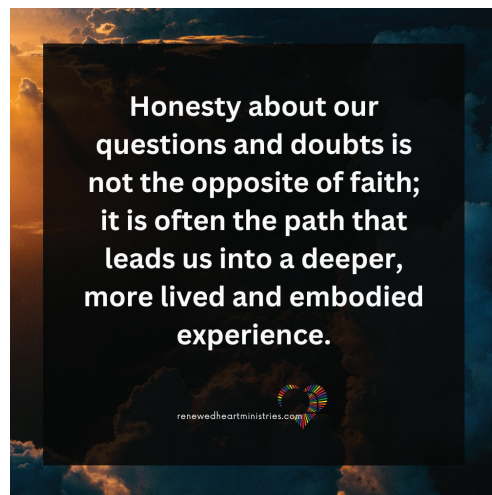
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Weekly HeartGroup on Zoom Every Wednesday Night!

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



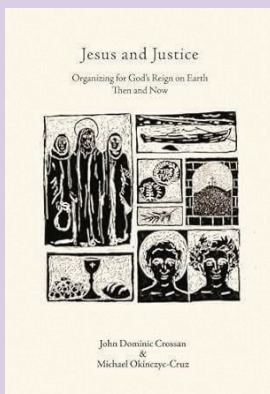
Recommended Reading for May

Jesus and Justice: Organizing for God's Reign on Earth Then and Now

by John Dominic Crossan and Michael Okinczyc-Cruz

Jesus and Justice presents the life of the historical Jesus as a bold and transformative call to action, inviting readers to actively follow his nonviolent and revolutionary example. Grounded in rigorous historical analysis, the authors show how Jesus organized a grassroots movement of poor and marginalized peasants to confront the Roman Empire's economic, political, and ideological domination—an imperial system with striking parallels to today's corporate-driven global order.

The book reveals Jesus' message as a radically anti-imperial vision of God's Reign: a collaborative, egalitarian and justice-centered alternative to systems built on scarcity and oppression. Drawing connections to modern movements led by figures like Martin Luther King Jr. and Dolores Huerta, Crossan and Okinczyc-Cruz offer a powerful spiritual and theological framework for confronting contemporary injustice. *Jesus and Justice* challenges readers to embrace Jesus' original revolutionary program of love, mercy and nonviolent action and equips them to respond to God's call for participatory protagonism through committed, organized action for God's Reign on Earth.



...*Hope for Liberation* continued from page 3

and act. Ultimately, Jesus' words invite us to redefine devotion, belief, and worship. To love him is not merely to affirm him, but to live as he lived, participating in the work of justice, mercy, and collective liberation.

Next in our reading, Jesus promises that the Father will send the Spirit as an Advocate to be with his followers. The word "Advocate" (*paraklētōs*) carries legal, relational, and communal meaning. It means one who stands alongside, speaks on behalf of, defends, and strengthens. In the context of social justice, this image becomes profoundly relevant.

An advocate is most needed where there is injustice—where voices are silenced, where systems marginalize, where truth is distorted. Jesus' promise of the Spirit signals that the work of confronting injustice does not end with him; it continues through a community empowered to embody the Divine's solidarity with the oppressed in an unjust world. The Spirit is not distant or abstract but present in the struggle, aligning with those who are oppressed and equipping others to stand with them.

This reframes justice as more than human effort or moral aspiration and as participation in the ongoing work of the Spirit. When communities organize for equity, when they tell hard truths about injustice, when they defend the dignity of those excluded, they echo the role of the Advocate. The Spirit leads into truth, not only personal truth, but also social truth that exposes systems that harm and calls for transformation.

At the same time, the Spirit as Advocate challenges comfort. Advocacy is rarely neutral; it involves taking sides, often at a cost. Advocacy is standing on the side of those being marginalized, excluded, and harmed. To receive the Spirit is to be drawn into courageous action, to speak when silence would be easier, and to remain present when others turn away.

Lastly, the Advocate sustains hope. Justice work can be exhausting, marked by setbacks and resistance. The promise of the Spirit assures that this work is not carried alone. There is a sustaining presence that renews our courage, deepens our compassion, and continually calls us back to love expressed through justice.

In this way, the Spirit as Advocate is both comfort and commission. As Jesus followers, the Spirit as Advocate empowers a faithful, justice-seeking community to stand alongside the vulnerable and to persist in the work of social transformation as we work together to shape our world into a safe, compassionate, just home for all.

Next, in our reading, Jesus promises, "I will not leave you orphaned." This speaks directly to experiences of abandonment, vulnerability, and disconnection that the early Jesus community had to face. To be "orphaned" is not only a personal condition but also a social one. Communities pushed to the margins, stripped of power, and denied belonging often live in a state of systemic orphanhood. Jesus' words resist this reality and declare that abandonment is not the final truth.

"I am coming to you" refers to how much Jesus' presence meant to the Johannine community of John's gospel. To them, Jesus was not a distant, abstract presence, but One who stood in solidarity with them. This challenged any spirituality that was tempted to withdraw from others who are also suffering. Jesus' promise calls us to a solidarity that, as Jesus modeled, draws near to those who are excluded and vulnerable. Justice begins not with detached solutions, but with incarnational proximity.

Then, when Jesus says, "because I live, you also will live," he ties our life to his own resurrection. This is a vision of flourishing that stands in contrast to systems that crucify. Jesus' resurrection was not simply about coming back to life but a response to an imperial cross. We are called to participate in this resurrection life, to dismantle structures that produce death-dealing conditions, and to cultivate systems where all can truly live and thrive.

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Social Jesus

Recent Social Jesus Blog Posts on Patheos:

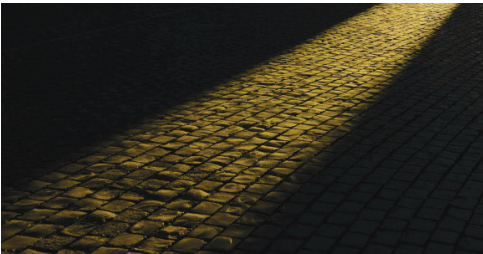


Lessons from John's Post Resurrection Stories

(Part 1 of *When Doubt Leads to a More Tangible Experience*)

The post resurrection narratives in the Gospel of John are some of the most interesting in the four gospels.

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2026/04/lessons-johns-post-resurrection-stories/



Honesty About Doubt: Lessons from Thomas

(Part 2 of *When Doubt Leads to a More Tangible Experience*)

Doubt is not the opposite of faith, but often a pathway into a deeper, more embodied experience when we are being honest.

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2026/04/honesty-doubt-lessons-thomas/



The Double Ending of the Gospel of John

(Part 3 of *When Doubt Leads to a More Tangible Experience*)

The presence of a second ending in chapter 21 does not diminish the ending in chapter 20 but could supplement it.

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2026/04/double-ending-gospel-john/



What Emmaus Teaches About Hope, Disappointment and Justice

(Part 1 of *The Road We Walk When Our Hopes Have Been Deeply Disappointed*)

Emmaus echoes the grief familiar to many in justice work today who face the loss of hope in the wake of disappointing outcomes.

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2026/04/when-things-dont-turn-out-way-we-hope/



Emmaus and the Sacred Work of Listening

(Part 2 of *The Road We Walk When Our Hopes Have Been Deeply Disappointed*)

Action is essential. Yet, listening is itself a form of sacred work. The stranger does not interrupt their lament; he invites it.

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2026/04/emmaus-sacred-work-listening/



Emmaus and Rekindled Hope

(Part 3 of *The Road We Walk When Our Hopes Have Been Deeply Disappointed*)

Encounters that rekindle hope don't lead us from justice work; they send us back into it. They empower us to take up the work again.

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2026/04/emmaus-rekindled-hope/



The Good Shepherd As Systemic Critique

(Part 1 of *The Imagery of a Good Shepherd*)

In contrast to exploitative systems that prioritize profit, control, or power, the Good Shepherd stands as a critique.

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2026/04/good-shepherd-systemic-critique/



Gated Grace: When Protection Becomes Exclusion

(Part 2 of *The Imagery of a Good Shepherd*)

A gate can a safeguard against forces that exploit, harm, and dehumanize and gates can also be a barrier designed to exclude.

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2026/04/gate-grace-protection-exclusion/



A Shift In Imagery From Shepherd to Crucified

(Part 3 of *The Imagery of a Good Shepherd*)

As Christianity became intertwined with empire, the cross became reframed while the Good Shepherd imagery receded in prominence.

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2026/04/shift-imagery-shepherd-crucified/

continued on page 6



A Vision of Radical Belonging

(Part 1 of Justice Lessons from the Gospel of John)

In a world structured by exclusion, where systems determine who is in and out, this imagery disrupts with a vision of radical inclusion.

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2026/04/vision-radical-belonging/



A Path of Justice

(Part 2 of Justice Lessons from the Gospel of John)

The path is more than a set of steps. It is relational, embodied, and lived. It is not only about outcomes, but about how we walk.

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2026/04/path-justice/



Justice Lessons from the Gospel of John

(Part 3 of Justice Lessons from the Gospel of John)

In the gospel of John, belief is tied to actions of tangible, concrete healing, restoration, and liberation.

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2026/04/justice-lessons-gospel-john/

Finally, Jesus' words, "you in me, and I in you" reveals a profound interconnectedness. This mutual connection dismantles our tendencies to separate and dehumanize. If Jesus is present within each person, then injustice against anyone is a violation of Jesus too. "Inasmuch as you have done it to the least of these, you have done it to me." In John's gospel, following this connected Jesus calls us to see Jesus in every person. Each of us is connected to one another and in a shared life.

As we wrap up our discussion on this week's reading we are once again brought to love being framed not as sentiment or belief alone but as embodied practice: "They who have my commandments and keep them are those who love me" shifts the focus from internal devotion to lived commitment. In the context of following Jesus in the work of justice in our world today, this becomes a powerful ethical lens: love is measured by what we do, how we respond to injustice, how we treat the marginalized, and how we participate in repairing the things that are broken in our world.

Keeping these commandments is not about rigid rule-following but about aligning one's life with the values we see the Jesus of our gospel stories consistently taught, values such as compassion, solidarity, mercy, and justice. To "keep" these is to enact them in real, material, concrete ways. It means advocating for those whose humanity is denied, confronting systems that perpetuate harm, and building communities rooted in equity and care for one another. Love, in this sense, becomes public and political, and not confined to private spirituality.

The promise that "those who love me will be loved by my Father, and I will love them and reveal myself to them" is a paradigm within the Johannine community that suggests a reciprocal, relational dynamic. As people engage in justice work are grounded in love, they come to experience a deeper awareness of the Divine. This revelation is encountered in the faces of those we work alongside in solidarity with, in acts of courage, and in collective movements for liberation. The presence of Jesus takes form in the struggle for justice itself.

This passage also challenges performative or superficial approaches to justice. It is not enough to claim love or alignment with a cause. The call is to sustained, faithful action. Love that keeps commandments is persistent, even when the work is difficult, slow, or costly. It resists apathy and refuses neutrality in the face of oppression. And the promise of being loved and accompanied also offers sustenance. Justice work can be exhausting and disheartening, but this passage roots that labor in deeper relationship. It reminds practitioners that they are not alone; their work participates in a larger movement of Divine love unfolding in the world.

Ultimately, this teaching in the gospel of John reframes justice work as a spiritual practice. To love is to act, and to act in love is to encounter the Divine. The work of justice is not separate from faith. It is one of the primary ways that love becomes visible, transformative, and real.

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

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.

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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.

You can support Renewed Heart Ministries with a one-time gift or by becoming one of our monthly contributors. Your donation can be made online at: **renewedheartministries.com** or by mail at:

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

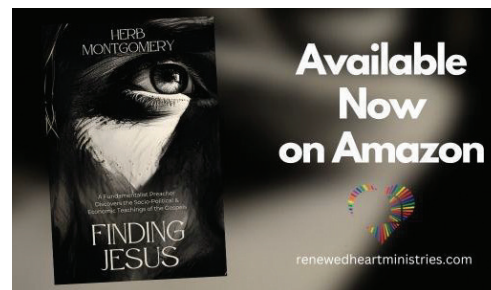
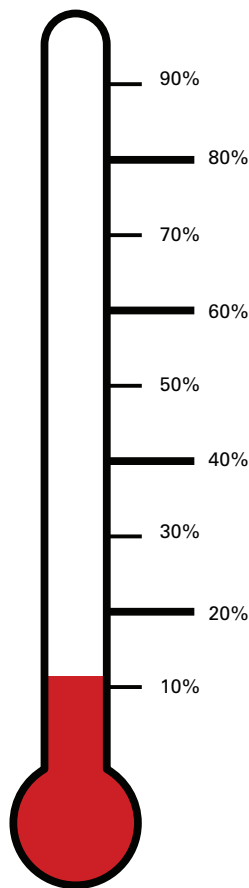
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And **THANK YOU** for reading, listening to, sharing and supporting RHM's work. Thank you for the decisions you make every day to make our world a safer, compassionate, just home for everyone. Thank you for your dedication to engaging our world and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

2026 Projected Budget Goal:
\$150,000.00

2026 Donations Received:
\$17,131.63

Thank You!



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.

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Testimonies

"I looooooove your ministry and your passion for fairness, equality, and justice!! That's the 'Jesus message'." – RP

"I continue to be inspired and empowered by your messages. The shoe leather that you place on the directives given by Jesus are equally relevant and critical here in Canada. Blessings to you as you continue to challenge each person who is committed to following Jesus." – D, Toronto

"Thanks for spreading the truth of Jesus' teachings. Your perspectives have changed my world view and I am so grateful." – SB

Active participation in mending the world means standing with those pushed to the margins, challenging systems that diminish human dignity, and practicing a love that is public, courageous, and transformative.

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