



# Awakenings

*"Only by love is love awakened."*

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## Jesus, The Prophets, and Social Justice

by Herb Montgomery

### Quotable Quotes

We tell you the good news: What God promised our ancestors he has fulfilled for us, their children, by raising up Jesus.

—Paul; Acts 13:32-33

*“You are the salt of the earth; but if salt has lost its taste, how can its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything, but is thrown out and trampled under foot.”*  
—Matthew 5:13

Salt-less salt. Stop and think about that for a minute. When salt was harvested from the ancient salt sea, the rocks of salt would be gathered with various and sundry other white colored rocks. They would then be placed in a cloth and used during cooking. Over time, the salt would dissolve through the cloth and only the non-water-soluble rocks would remain. Eventually the salt sack would lose its saltiness and be good for nothing more than common road gravel.

For those who claim to be followers of Jesus, what does it mean to lose their salt?

In referring to the Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, Ron Dart, professor of Political Science at the University of the Fraser Valley in Abbotsford, British Columbia, says: *“This text represents the distillation of the entire Jewish prophetic vision and supplies the ethical core and center for all Christianity. We must not ignore, domesticate, sanitize, or censure this Magna Carta of our faith.”*

Dart is absolutely right to connect Jesus' words in Matthew 5-7 with the ancient Jewish prophets. Jesus came to usher in the age that all the prophets looked forward to. Remember, as we shared last week, the hope of the Hebrew people was not of gaining some Hellenistic postmortem heaven or escaping “Hell.” The Hebrew people looked forward with hope to a time when the Messiah would come and put an end to all injustice, oppression,

and violence. The prophets pointed to a time when politics would no longer be dependent upon violence (The lion would lay down with the lamb), economics would no longer be driven by greed (Justice would roll down like a river), and religion would no longer be rooted in fear (You will call me your Husband and no longer your Master).

Notice the following words from the early Church:

Acts 13:32, 33: *“We tell you the good news: What God promised our ancestors he has fulfilled for us, their children, by raising up Jesus.”*

Romans 15:8: *“For I tell you that Christ has become a servant of the circumcised on behalf of the truth of God in order that he might confirm the promises given to the patriarchs...”*

2 Corinthians 1:20: *“For in him every one of God's promises is a ‘Yes.’ For this reason it is through him that we say the ‘Amen,’ to the glory of God.”*

Abraham Heschel wrote: *“What is history? Wars, victories, and wars. So many dead. So many tears. So little regret. So many fears... The world is drenched in blood, and the guilt is endless. Should not all hope be abandoned? What saved the prophets from despair was their messianic vision and the idea of man's capacity for repentance... History is not a blind alley, and guilt is not an abyss. There is always a way that leads out of guilt... The prophet is a person who, living in dismay, has the power to transcend his dismay. Over all the darkness of experience hovers the vision of a different day.”*

Last January, as my mother was passing away in a hospital in Virginia, I was stuck in British Columbia

cont'd on page 3

# Testimonies

“Thank you so much for helping me to see my God in a new way!” - **HS**

“Herb, thank you for your ministry and for answering so many of the questions I’ve been having. I feel like you get me! Thank you.” - **K**

“I’ve been through a lot Herb, and I just want to say thank you for helping me regain a beautiful picture of Jesus and our Father. I

really appreciate all you do and for Renewed Heart Ministries’ influence in my life. It’s been a life saver.” - **TW**

“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**

“I appreciate RHM so much. It is vital that we see a God who looks like Jesus because we become the God we see. Thank you Herb!” - **E**

## *Jesus, The Prophets...cont’d from page 2*

trying desperately to get home. God, knowing my emotional state, arranged for my path to cross with Brad Jersak’s. Brad is an Eastern Orthodox friend of mine whom I met when God sent him to sit and pray with me at a coffee shop in Abbotsford while I was losing my mom. Needless to say, Brad will personally and forever hold a special place in my heart over and above the theological contributions I feel he most definitely has to offer with his insights about the Kingdom. In his book, *Can You Hear Me? Tuning In to the God Who Speaks*, Brad makes a thrilling comment about the prophets, when he writes: *“The prophets have dirty hands (and mouths too sometimes), because you’ll find them wading without apology through the mess of life. Their target audience begins with the church and its religious leaders but extends to nations and heads of state and to corporations with their economic power brokers. They have unabashed social agendas and are not afraid of being perceived as political. Their concern is for the oppressed, the poor, the widow, the orphan, and the*

*enslaved. The mature prophets call for both personal righteousness and social justice. They retreat inward in contemplation then explode onto the public scene as spokespersons for God’s heart and as advocates for the downtrodden.”*

What I love about that statement is that Brad (and I don’t know whether he does it intentionally or by inspired accident) taps into the three sacrificial systems we looked at this past Easter season:

- 1) political systems dependent upon violence,
- 2) economics driven by greed, and
- 3) religion driven by fear.

Go back and reread the quote from Brad presented in the previous paragraph. The prophets (in harmony with Jesus) confronted the Caiaphases (religious leaders), the Pilates (nations and heads of state) and Herods (corporations and their economic power brokers) of their day, announcing that a new age was coming. A new age that has arrived in Jesus.

Isaiah 1:12-17: *“When you come to appear before me, who has asked this*

*of you, this trampling of my courts? Stop bringing meaningless offerings! Your incense is detestable to me. New Moons, Sabbaths and convocations—I cannot bear your evil assemblies. Your New Moon feasts and your appointed festivals I hate with all my being. They have become a burden to me; I am weary of bearing them. When you spread out your hands in prayer, I will hide my eyes from you; even if you offer many prayers, I will not listen. Your hands are full of blood; wash and make yourselves clean. Take your evil deeds out of my sight! Stop doing wrong, learn to do right! Seek justice [restorative], encourage the oppressed. Defend the cause of the fatherless, plead the case of the widow.”* (emphasis added).

Micah 6:8: *“He has shown all you people what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.”*

Amos 5:23-24: *“Away with the noise of your songs! I will not listen to the music of your harps. But let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream!”*

Those who follow Jesus as the culmination of this prophetic tradition must, like the prophets of old, find their own hearts beating for justice for the oppressed, and mercy, rather than sacrifice, expressing itself daily through humble servant love. As the prophets pointed to an age here on Earth that would commence with the coming of the Messiah, we point backwards, if you will, saying Jesus is that Messiah, and the New Age promised by the prophets has already begun! If the prophets tell us anything, they tell us that you cannot authentically listen to God for long without also sensing that justice, mercy, and compassion

**cont’d on page 5**

# MINISTRY UPDATE

**Christian Men's Retreat**  
**Leoni Meadows Retreat Center**  
**Grizzly Flats, CA**  
**May 2-4, 2014**

To each of you who were praying for this event, I want to say a huge heartfelt thank-you to you. Some beautiful things took place over the weekend as the lights came on for some for the very first time. It was good to see old friends again as well as getting the opportunity to make some new friends.

Here is a run down of the presentations I shared.

### ***Does God Really Look Like Jesus?***

What does it mean to say God looks like Jesus when Jesus forbid retaliation and violence, which if we practice, Jesus said we would look like our Father in Heaven.

### ***The Embrace of God***

Whenever we draw a line in the sand and differentiate between ourselves and others for the purpose of coming together against others, in that moment, whether for political, economic or religious reasons, according to the Jesus story, we have just placed Jesus on the other side of that line than ours. If a person is left in outer darkness in the end, it will not be because they could not accept God's love for themselves, but because they could not accept God's love for someone else they feel should be excluded.

### ***The Day Love Died***

In this first part of a two part presentation we spent time asking ourselves what it means to place ourselves among the crowd that was satisfied by unjust execution of Jesus rather than looking at this event as something that somehow satisfied God. Both have a very distinct result in our daily lives.

### ***The Dawn of a New Day***

To have its salvific effect, our theories concerning Jesus' death must adequately understand the relevance of His resurrection as well. As is covered in part one, yes, WE are the people who don't see what we are doing, even when our intentions are religiously motivated. WE are the people who always turn to violent means for removing the tensions within our culture, whether political, economic or religious. It was WE who crucified The Lord of Glory. AND it is GOD who, through the resurrection, decisively declared that He who we scapegoated (politically-Pilate, economically-Herod, and religiously-Caiaphas), that we crucified... was innocent.

That identification of Jesus as our victim moves us from persecutor now desiring to stand in solidarity with Him whom we were previously persecuting. This identifying Jesus as the one we were persecuting "converts" us to also stand with ALL those we once persecuted, seeing that God is with "them" and I am with God when I too am with "them."

### ***On Earth as it is in Heaven***

The Story of this Resurrected One marks the end of Sacrificial-Systems that demand the death of those who are innocent, whether

Political relying on violence, Religious based on fear, or Economic driven by greed. It puts on display that the Presence of God is not found within the most exclusive holy places belonging to those systems. The true dwelling place of The Presence is found in the One shamefully suspended on a cursed tree at the orders of those Powers that Be (political, religious and economic). The Resurrection is the start of a whole new world where we need not fear the consequences our engagement against those Powers. We stand in the Victory of the Christ over all injustice. A Victory which has already been won.

Each of these presentations you can find on our website at: [renewedheartministries.com/](http://renewedheartministries.com/)

For those of you where were not able to attend (either because of where your are located or your gender, after all it was a "men's" retreat) I want to encourage you with every fiber of my being to give these presentation a contemplative listen. The Jesus movement of the first century was turning the world upside down (or right side up again, depending on your perspective) and it has the power to do the same in our world today!

*"May Your Kingdom Come!"* Till the only world that remains is a world where love reigns. The revolution starts now!

Thank you to each of you for your support and prayers for this event. I pray that as you listen, you too will feel yourself moving further up and further in to what Jesus called "the Kingdom."

are central to Him and His Kingdom. This past week, a friend of mine on Facebook, a man named Andrew Rester, whom I feel I have traded places with (he actually used to be a student of mine when I taught school, but now I am learning from him), posted this insightful question on his wall:

*"How different would Christianity and even the world be if Christ-followers started taking Matthew 5-7 as seriously as we try to make unbelievers take the first 3 chapters of Genesis?"*

Brad Jersak goes on to say in the same chapter, "Don't look for the mature prophets in the third heaven. (See 2 Corinthians 12.) You won't find them there. You'll find them here, ministering mercy to those overwhelmed by grief."

And I would be quick to add to that Jersak's words apply not only prophets, but to all followers of Jesus.

Bono, lead singer of U2, the Irish rock group from Dublin, said it best: "To me, faith in Jesus Christ that is not aligned with social justice, that is not aligned with the poor—it's nothing."

What group of people is Jesus placing on your heart this week?

Let's be salt that hasn't lost its saltiness.

I want to ask you do to something special. I want you to find some quiet time to simply sit with Jesus and ask Him to share with you about His love for this world. Give Jesus permission to share with you His own grief about the misery and injustice He sees in this world. But when He does, remember, He is not sharing it with you to lay a guilt trip on you. It's not

all about you. Friendship with Jesus must go both ways. Don't take what He shares in such a way that it will paralyze you with guilt. I want you to feel Jesus' grief, experience Jesus' comfort, share Jesus' hope, and follow Jesus into action.

Pray this way:

*"Jesus, would you please take me deep enough into your heart to sense your concern for justice, mercy, and peace? As I tune in to those themes, is there some grief in your heart about*



*an area or group of people or issue that you would like to share with me today? Let me see it how you see it. Let me feel how you feel. What is the darkness that is prevailing there? Why is it there? What needs to happen there? And what would you ask me to do?"*

Get somewhere quiet and spend some time asking God to show you His heart for a particular group of people, and then ask yourself:

- What aspects of their experience do you find troubling?
- What stirs your heart to compassion?

- What does Jesus want to show you about His perspective?
- How would He have you advocate for them?

The Hebrews, the people that Jesus originally came from, have a phrase: Tikkun Olam. It means "the repairing (or healing) of the world." Jesus also said that God had not sent Him to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be healed. Jesus came showing us the way, in perfect harmony with the Hebrew prophets.

Jesus came showing us the way of *Hesed* (Mercy), *Tsadaq* (Restorative Justice), and *Shalom* (Peace). In other words:

*Hesed + Tsadaq + Shalom = Tikkun Olam*

This week, pray that Jesus will enable you to take His Mercy teachings, His Justice teachings, and His Peace teachings more seriously. Let our union with Jesus truly be just that. May we join Him in His work, rather than simply inviting Him into our own

agendas. We spend so much time asking Him to bless what we are up to; what would happen if we stopped to notice what He is up to in this world?

Unless you're following of Jesus passes through the cleansing water of the Sermon on the Mount, at the very minimum it will be ineffective and, at the worst, it will be the fundamentalist terrorism of zealots.

Let's follow Jesus further up and further in.

Wherever this finds you, keep living in love as Jesus defines it in Matthew 5-7, until the only world that remains is a world where love reigns. ■

# HeartGroups

## Testimony

### REMEMBER THE POOR

By Keith Giles

*"All they asked was that we should continue to remember the poor, the very thing I had been eager to do all along." (Galatians 2:10)*

A few years ago I threw a small party at my house. One of my friends wanted to make something for everyone but we were out of a few special ingredients. So, my friend hopped in the car to go and buy what we needed at a nearby grocery store.

When my friend returned I met him at the door. *"What took you so long?"* I asked, and then I noticed that my friend wasn't wearing any shoes.

*"Did you run out of here and forget your shoes?"*

My friend came into the house and set the grocery bags on the floor. *"No,"* he said.

I was confused. *"How did you end up losing your shoes at the grocery store?"*

My friend explained, *"When I came out of the store I saw a homeless man digging through the trash outside in the parking lot, but I was in a hurry because I knew everyone was waiting for me to get back. I jumped in the car and made it almost to the street*

*before I heard the Lord tell me to turn around. So, I backed up and parked the car and walked over to the man. I asked him if he was hungry and if he wanted me to buy him some food. He said, no thanks. So, I asked him why he was digging through the trash and he said he was looking for some shoes. I looked down at his feet and his shoes were ragged and torn. That's when I noticed, standing there beside him, that my feet were the same size as his. So, I took off my shoes and gave them to the man."*

As my friend told this story to me, my eyes filled with tears of amazement. I couldn't help but wonder, "Would I have done that? Would I have taken off my shoes and given them to a stranger?"

The followers of Jesus are held to a higher standard of love than others. We're commanded not only to love God, and to love our neighbors, but to love those who don't love us, and to care for the poor, the orphan, the widow, and the stranger all the same.

My family has been reading through the book of Acts together in the morning before we start our day. It's been fascinating to see how people who were filled with the Holy Spirit of God and overjoyed about the coming of the Messiah couldn't help but share all that they had with one another out of love. When the scriptures tell us, that *"...there was*

*no needy person among them"* (Acts 4:33-34) it doesn't mean that they didn't have any poor people in their church. Can we say the same of our churches today?

The word "Compassion" means "to suffer with". It means that when we see the pain of others, we are also in pain. We must care for them as we would care for ourselves.

This is why Jesus warns us that, at the Judgment seat of Christ, our love will be measured by how we responded to the poor God placed in our path. If we gave them food when they were hungry, or water when they were thirsty, or clothing when they were naked, or love when they were lonely, then it is counted as if we had done it unto our Lord Jesus Himself.

I've never given away my shoes to a homeless person. But, one day, I do hope that the Lord gives me an opportunity to put my shoes on His feet like this. Or perhaps, soon, I can buy him a cheeseburger, or something cool to drink the next time I see one of His representatives in the streets.

*"Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?' The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.' - (Matthew 25:37-40) ■*

*Keith Giles is an author, blogger and freelance copywriter in Orange County, California. His blog can be found at: [subversive1.blogspot.com](http://subversive1.blogspot.com) Keith, in addition to being a friend of Renewed Heart Ministries, is also one of our HeartGroup coaches.*





## Schedule

### **JULY 11-13, 2014**

West Lenexa Adventist Church  
Kansas City, Kansas  
913.422.7282

### **JULY 15-20, 2014**

Kinship Campmeeting  
Atlanta, GA  
info@sdakinship.org

### **JULY 25-26, 2014**

Illinois Family Camp Meeting  
Galesburg, IL  
630.856.2880

### **AUGUST 15-17, 2014**

Kapolei HeartGroup  
Kapolei, HI  
808.224.7873

### **SEPTEMBER 7, 2014**

Rhema Christian Center  
Lewisburg, WV  
304.645.6999

### **SEPTEMBER 12-21, 2014**

Arden Adventist Church  
Arden, NC  
828.684.6700

## Testimonies

I love Herb and the way he puts things and ideas into a perspective you really haven't heard before. And is really quite eye opening and refreshing - **S**

I've seen the light! So real so good so God! Thanks, my friend, listen to this [RHM's weekly podcasts] if there is any doubt! - **DE**

RHM's podcasts teach me about God's extravagant love like no other teaching has. So thankful! - **HB**

Herb helps you move from fear to trust. These messages and their counterparts at renewedheartministries.com have revolutionized my relationship with God. I have rarely found anyone with Herb's ability to get to the heart of why do many fear, hate or reject God. And he presents solid scriptural evidence that God is more wonderful and loving than any of us could have ever hoped or imagined. I thank God for this brother and his ministry! - **R & CC**

When Herb came to my school it changed the way I saw God. Awesome! - **F**

Real meat for hungry people. I praise God and thank Him for this anointed brother. - **C**

I'm in process! I love Herb...you can feel the Lord through him. His passion makes me feel again after all these years! - **JS**

I have a love/hate relationship with Herb and RHM. I love this ministry because it shows me God like I've never seen Him before, but I hate it at the same time because it challenges me to my core and calls to me to rethink things and ultimately to change. I totally get why Herb says that in his following Jesus, some days, he is just white knuckled. But no matter how much I'm challenged, I want to thank you, Herb, truly for all you risk for the Kingdom. It has challenged and yet changed my view of God and my life forever. - **KG**

# Renewed Heart Ministries' Weekly Podcasts available freely on iTunes.

"Excellent podcast!!!! It has become a welcome part of my D.C. Commute." - *D.C. Diplomat*



## Featured Presentation

Anytime we draw a line in the sand, making a demarcation between "us" and "them" for the purpose of uniting ourselves against "them," according to the Jesus story, we have just placed Jesus on the their side of our line. The Pharisees called them "Sinners." Today we have a multitude of labels for them. The moment we determine whom God should exclude we have just become the "older brother," and Jesus clearly warns that if any are left in outer darkness, it will not be because they could not accept God's love for themselves, but because they could not accept God's love for



someone else they felt should be excluded. The moment it becomes clearly defined who should be included and who should be excluded, we have our marching orders from Jesus, the friend of the marginalized. According to Jesus, God is with them, and we are with God when we too are with them. If you would like to experience more fully the radically, sometimes dangerous, inclusive embrace of God's kingdom more fully, we cannot recommend this month's presentation more highly. ***The Embrace of God*** by Herb Montgomery.

Renewed Heart Ministries provides its resources free of charge. Jesus commanded, "Freely you have received, freely give." We at RHM take this command very seriously. Philosophically we have a difficult time charging money to people for things God has given us for free.

In order to do this, we are entirely dependent on the contributions of our supporters. If you would like to make a one-time gift or offer monthly support, please send your contributions to the following address:

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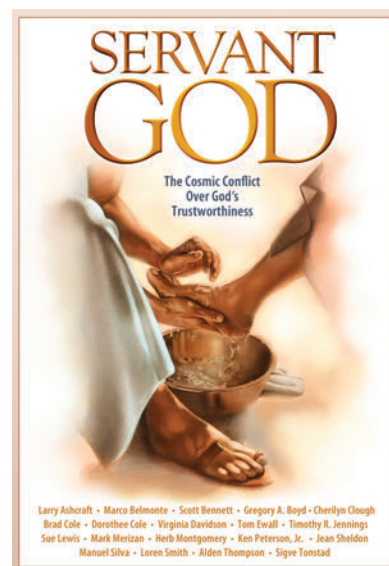
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