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NEW Podcast!


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## Thank You!

A sharp drop in giving is hurting nonprofits everywhere. Religious charities and small nonprofits are suffering the most from a historic dip in philanthropic giving presently in the U.S. We want to take this moment to express our heartfelt gratitude to all of our supporters for your invaluable role in the Renewed Heart Ministry community and for your dedication to our mission of fostering love, justice, compassion, and healing. Your support is the bedrock of our work. **Your support empowers us to do what we do.** At a time when ministries like ours are being asked to achieve more with fewer resources, **your support is incredibly important**, and we want to simply say **THANK YOU**. Whether in our larger society or within our local faith communities, Renewed Heart Ministries remains committed to advocating for change, working towards a world that is inclusive, just, and safe for everyone, and being a source of love in our world. From all of us here at Renewed Heart Ministries, thank

you for your generous support. We deeply appreciate each and every one of our supporters.

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: Renewed Heart Ministries, PO Box 1211, Lewisburg, WV 24901



## 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 *Social Jesus* podcast published each Friday.

Each Zoom session will be held 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)





## The Sabbath and Social Justice

by Herb Montgomery

Our gospel reading this weekend is from the gospel of Mark:

One Sabbath Jesus was going through the grainfields, and as his disciples walked along, they began to pick some heads of grain. The Pharisees said to him, "Look, why are they doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath?"

He answered, "Have you never read what David did when he and his companions were hungry and in need? In the days of Abiathar the high priest, he entered the house of God and ate the consecrated bread, which is lawful only for priests to eat. And he also gave some to his companions."

Then he said to them, "The Sabbath was made for humanity, not humanity for the Sabbath. So the Son of Man is Sovereign even of the Sabbath."

Another time Jesus went into the synagogue, and a man with a shriveled hand was there. Some of them were looking for a reason to accuse Jesus, so they watched him closely to see if he would heal him on the Sabbath. Jesus said to the man with the shriveled hand, "Stand up in front of everyone."

Then Jesus asked them, "Which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?" But they remained silent.

He looked around at them in anger and, deeply distressed at their stubborn

hearts, said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." He stretched it out, and his hand was completely restored. Then the Pharisees went out and began to plot with the Herodians how they might kill Jesus. (Mark 2:23-3:6)

Both stories in this week's reading revolve around how the Sabbath was practiced in Jesus' society. These stories also have deep social justice lessons for us today. Let's begin with the Sabbath commandment in Exodus:

"Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a sabbath to your Sovereign God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your male or female servant, nor your animals, nor any foreigner residing in your towns. For in six days your Sovereign made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore your Sovereign blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy. (Exodus 20:8-11)

This passage begins with the word "remember." The people in the story had been recently liberated from slavery in Egypt, and one of the very first lessons they learned in their wilderness travels was the Sabbath (Exodus 16). The text in Exodus 20 is reminding them of the lessons they had just learned and instructing them to not forget.

For our purposes, these Sabbath lessons were social justice lessons. They were about labor justice.

Everyone was entitled to time to rest and be restored. No one was to be forced to labor unceasingly. To put this in language that we might understand today, the Sabbath was a command directed toward employers, not employees. Employers were to remember that they were once slaves in Egypt. I do wish that the passage admonished them not to even have slaves because they knew what it was like themselves to be slaves. But instead it admonishes them make sure they give their labor force time off ("your son or daughter, nor your male or female servant, nor your animals, nor any foreigner residing in your towns"). It reminds them that they knew what it was like to be slaves.

This brings to mind the historical accomplishments of labor movements and labor unions in our society today. One of those accomplishments is the eight-hour work day, which U.S., labor movements worked for as early as 1836. Another of these accomplishments is the five-day work week. Where the Sabbath commandment limited the 7-day work week to 6 days, here in the U.S. we've been able to begin the work week on Monday and mark the end on Friday. We see the five-day work week adopted as early as 1926 by Henry Ford in his automobile factories. By 1940, the Fair Labor Standards Act established the 40-hour workweek and two-day weekend across the United States. This was a landmark labor justice accomplishment. This is the spirit in which we should consider the Sabbath of Exodus. The God of the Sabbath is on the side of labor justice. The God of the Sabbath commandment in Exodus is the liberator of slaves (Exodus 20:2), protector of labor (Exodus 20:8-11), and even rested themself once at the end of creation (vs. 11).

In our global economy today where capitalism reigns supreme, our economy depends on a never-ending, always-expanding growth. But eternal growth is not sustainable. Balance requires ebb and flow, action and rest, growth and contraction, tides going out and tides coming back in. We cannot always be producing. There must be

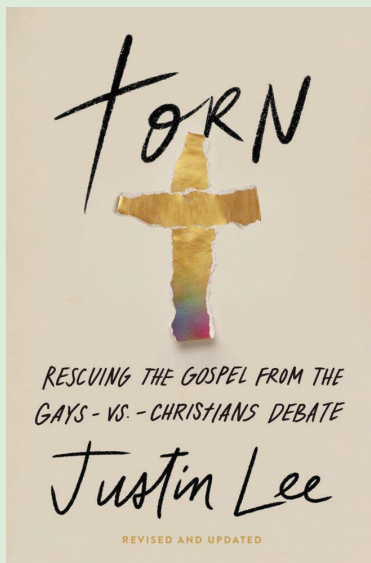
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# RHM's Recommended Reading for June

## *Torn: Rescuing the Gospel from the Gays-vs.-Christians Debate*

by Justin Lee

Newly revised and updated! An evangelical Christian examines the impact of sexuality, the LGBTQ+ movement, and the future of the church in this thoughtful, deeply researched guide to navigating and mending the social and political division in our families and churches. Nicknamed "God Boy" by his peers, Lee knew that he was called to a life in evangelical Christian ministry. But questions about his own sexuality forced him to rethink his "love the sinner, hate the sin" approach, sending him on a journey to better understand the Bible, the science, and the history of the church's gay debate—eventually leading him to become one of the most respected voices on the subject on both sides of the divide. Filled with personal stories and careful research, *Torn* provides insightful, practical guidance for all committed Christians who wonder how to relate to gay friends or family members—or who struggle



with their own sexuality. *Torn* has been a trusted resource for over a decade, and this updated edition features new material to address the impact and aftermath of the "ex-gay" movement, gender identity and the broader LGBTQ+ movement, and an updated and expanded look at where the overall affirming Christian movement is going. It also features new practical recommendations for combating the increased polarization that threatens to tear us apart. Convinced that God's grace is the key to loving one another without compromise, Lee charts a path for people on both sides of the debate to help mend Christianity's shattered reputation and bring peace to our families and churches.

of the Maccabean revolt: the book of Daniel and the Son of Man figure in chapter 7. In Daniel 7, the Son of Man is a symbol of liberation from oppressive, violent, and unjust empires. Mark's gospel repeatedly refers to Jesus as Daniel 7's Son of Man. It places the Sabbath under the Son of Man's resistance and liberation jurisdiction and restores the Sabbath to the liberation and labor justice purpose we read above in Exodus. We see the Sabbath's original intent even more when the commandments of Exodus 20 are repeated in Deuteronomy 5. Here the Sabbath is directly tied to liberation and justice:

"Observe the Sabbath day by keeping it holy, as your Sovereign God has commanded you. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a sabbath to your Sovereign God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your male or female servant, nor your ox, your donkey or any of your animals, nor any foreigner residing in your towns, so that your male and female servants may rest, as you do. Remember that you were slaves in Egypt and that your Sovereign God brought you out of there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. Therefore your Sovereign God has commanded you to observe the Sabbath day." (Deuteronomy 5:12-15)

The second story from our reading this week is about Jesus' encounter with the man with the withered hand. In Jesus' society, like today, there were ways of interpreting Sabbath observance that were life-giving and liberating, and that promoted and protected aspects of social justice. There were also ways of interpreting Sabbath observance that were oppressive and caused suffering. Mark's gospel introduces those interpretations as early as chapter 1: "That evening after sunset the people brought to Jesus all the sick and demon-possessed." (Mark 1:32)

In Mark 1, the people don't bring the sick to Jesus to be healed until the Sabbath is over. Rather than the Sabbath being a means of liberation, it is an obstacle to their liberation and they must wait until it's over to reach life. This contradicts

### *The Sabbath...* continued from page 3

time for rest, too.

In his book *Sabbath as Resistance*, Brueggemann writes,

"In our own contemporary context of the rat race of anxiety, the celebration of Sabbath is an act of both resistance and alternative. It is resistance because it is a visible insistence that our lives are not defined by the production and consumption of commodity goods." (*Sabbath as Resistance: Saying No to the Culture of Now*, p. 32)

In our reading from Mark this week,

Jesus' disciples pick some grain to eat as they walk on the Sabbath. This story establishes for Jesus' followers that Jesus views the Sabbath not as an end in itself but as means to an end. In other words, the Sabbath was not the priority. The person was the priority that the Sabbath was instituted to protect. The Sabbath was made for humanity, not humanity for the Sabbath. Whenever any practice, Sabbath included, become death-dealing, we must reassess it and give way to more life-giving interpretations of it.

This section ends with a reference to resistance literature from the time

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the Sabbath's original purpose in the Torah. We should read Jesus' question "Which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?" in that context. Jesus is asking what the Sabbath in the Torah is really about: giving life or dealing death?

He could have heard the man with the withered hand in private and not created a scene, but in public defiance and as an act of civil disobedience, Jesus uses this moment to not only heal the man, but to also confront the system and those complicit in keeping people subjugated. We cannot forget the contrast Mark is making here between the synagogue rulers complicit with the Roman empire and Mark's association of Jesus with Daniel's Son of Man, who would liberate the people from oppressive, violent, and unjust empires. In Mark's story, the Sabbath should not be an obstacle to people's liberation that keeps them suppressed. The Sabbath is a time for restoration, liberation, healing, and a reconnection with life and those things which are life giving.

How might this inform our own justice work as Jesus followers today? Are there times when we have interpreted our Jesus following in ways that have become death dealing for our society? Is our practice of Christianity socially life-giving? Are we obstacles to those around us working toward a more just, safer, compassionate society with room for everyone or are we, like Mark's Jesus, standing up to those obstacles and being conduits of love, life, and healing?

Where are we in the way? How can we get out of the way and come alongside, choosing to recognize those working to make our world a safer place for everyone, and adding our energy and effort to their work? Are we making it harder or easier to shape our world into a more socially just form? These Sabbath stories in Mark call each us to reassess our Jesus following and make sure we too, like the God of the Sabbath and like the Jesus in the gospel stories, are on the side of the oppressed, marginalized,

*continued on page 6*

## SOCIAL JESUS

*A Blog Exploring the Intersection of Faith and Societal Justice*



## Last month's "Social Jesus" Blog on Patheos



### ***The Sabbath and Social Justice, Part 1***

These were labor justice lessons. Everyone was entitled to time to rest and be restored. No one was to be forced to labor unceasingly.

[patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2024/05/sabbath-social-justice-part1/](https://patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2024/05/sabbath-social-justice-part1/)

### ***The Sabbath and Social Justice, Part 2***

Our economy depends on a never-ending, always-expanding growth. We cannot always be producing. There must be time for rest, too.

[patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2023/05/sabbath-and-socialjustice-part2/](https://patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2023/05/sabbath-and-socialjustice-part2/)

### ***The Sabbath and Social Justice, Part 3***

These Sabbath stories in Mark call each us to reassess our best practices to make sure we are not sources of suffering but justice and life.

[patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2023/05/sabbath-social-justice-part3/](https://patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2023/05/sabbath-social-justice-part3/)



### ***Reuniting the Material and the Spiritual, Part 1***

If we are going to reunite the material and the spiritual, we need to understand how they became separated in the first place.

[patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2023/05/reuniting-material-spiritual-part1/](https://patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2023/05/reuniting-material-spiritual-part1/)

### ***Reuniting the Material and the Spiritual, Part 2***

This division between the flesh and the spirit, between the physical, material world and the spiritual has born seriously destructive fruit.

[patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2023/05/reuniting-material-spiritual-part2/](https://patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2023/05/reuniting-material-spiritual-part2/)

### ***Reuniting the Material and the Spiritual, Part 3***

These stories define salvation as relating to both one's spiritual wellbeing and material liberation as well.

[patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2023/05/reuniting-material-spiritual-part3/](https://patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2023/05/reuniting-material-spiritual-part3/)



### ***Pentecost as Connectedness and Distributive Justice, Part 1***

This upcoming weekend is Pentecost in the Western Christian calendar. And these passages define that Spirit's work to include social justice.

[patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2023/05/pentecost-connectedness-distributive-justice-part1/](https://patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2023/05/pentecost-connectedness-distributive-justice-part1/)

### ***Pentecost as Connectedness and Distributive Justice, Part 2***

One of the first fruits of the Spirit (to borrow Paul's language) in the synoptic gospels and Acts' Pentecost is the restoration of social justice.

[patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2023/05/pentecost-connectedness-distributive-justice-part2/](https://patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2023/05/pentecost-connectedness-distributive-justice-part2/)

### ***Pentecost as Connectedness and Distributive Justice, Part 3***

The Spirit expressed itself in economic justice among them where everyone made sure their neighbor was taken care of.

[patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2023/05/pentecost-connectedness-distributive-justice-part3/](https://patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2023/05/pentecost-connectedness-distributive-justice-part3/)

# Just Talking

with Herb and Todd

Each week, we'll be talking about the gospel lectionary reading for the upcoming weekend. We'll be talking about each reading in the context of love, inclusion, and societal justice. Our hope is that our talking will be just talking (as in justice) and that during our brief conversations each week you'll be inspired to also do more than just talking.

If you teach from the lectionary each week, or if you're just looking for some thoughts on the Jesus story from a more progressive perspective within the context of social justice, check it out, you might like it.

You can find the latest show on **YouTube** @**herbandtoddjusttalking**.

Please Like, Subscribe, hit the Notification button, and leave us a comment. All of this will help us get this new YouTube channel off the ground. Thanks in advance for watching!



***What viewers are saying...***  
"I'm definitely enjoying these discussions. Helps clearly bring the love and teachings of Jesus into focus for me."

***The Sabbath...*** continued from page 5

and subjugated, working for a more just world.

## Discussion Group Questions

1. Share something that spoke to you from this week's eSight/Podcast episode with your HeartGroup.
2. Are there Christian practices today that you feel are obstacles to peoples liberation rather than a source of liberation and justice? How might these practices be reinterpreted in more life-giving ways? 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.

I want to say a special thank you to all of our supporters out there. And if you would like to join them in supporting Renewed Heart Ministries' work you can do so by going to

**renewedheartministries.com** and clicking **donate**.

As always, you can find Renewed Heart Ministries each week on X (or Twitter), Facebook, Instagram and Meta's Threads. If you haven't done so already, please follow us on your chosen social media platforms for our daily posts.

If you would like to listen to these articles each week in podcast form, you can find *The Social Jesus* podcast on all major podcast carriers. If you enjoy listening to *The Social Jesus* Podcast please take a moment to like and subscribe and if your podcast platform offers this option, consider taking some time to leave us a positive review. This helps others find our podcast as well.

And if you'd like to reach us here at Renewed Heart Ministries through email, you can reach us at [info@renewedheartministries.com](mailto:info@renewedheartministries.com).

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

I love each of you dearly. ■

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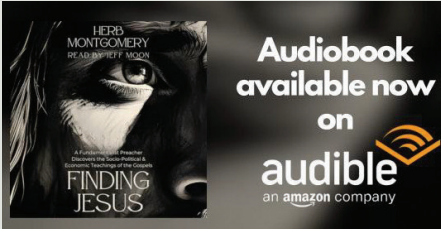


## Upcoming Events

**JUNE 15, 2024**

**Good News Fellowship**  
Toronto, Ontario Canada

**For more info or the Zoom link, email us at:**  
[info@renewedheartministries.com](mailto:info@renewedheartministries.com)  
**or call: 304.520.0030**



***Finding Jesus: A Fundamentalist Preacher Discovers the Socio-Political & Economic Teachings of the Gospels*** (2nd Edition)

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. Readers will journey through the Gospel narratives, discovering the ways in which the Jesus of these stories challenged the political and religious establishments of his time. Herb Montgomery draws parallels between the societal issues faced by the people of Jesus' era and the challenges of the present day, sparking reflection on the role of faith in addressing contemporary political and social issues. *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.

**Now available on Audible!**



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](http://renewedheartministries.com)**

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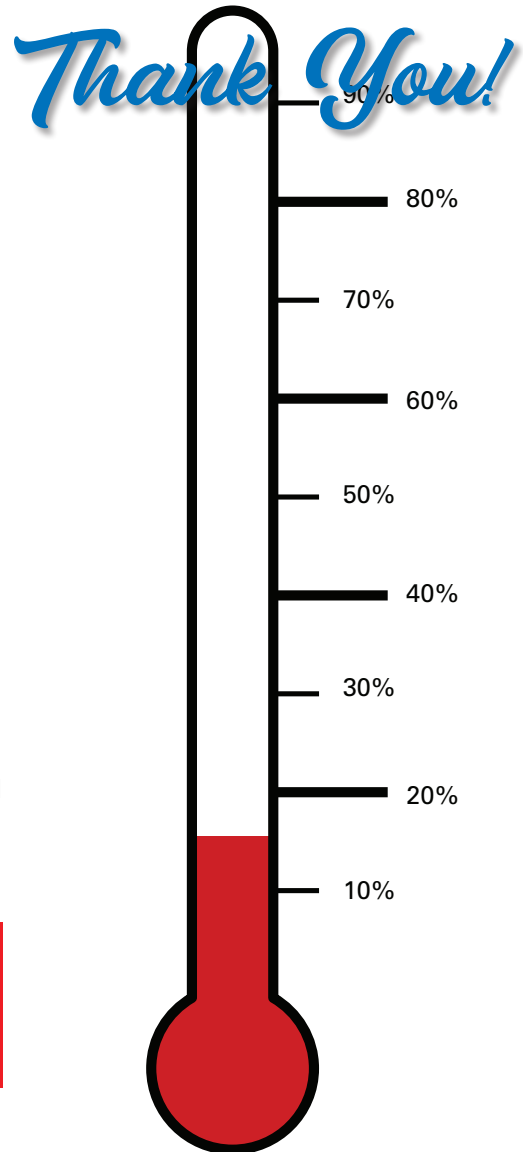
**Whether you give \$5 or \$5,000, every amount helps us to continue our work.**

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

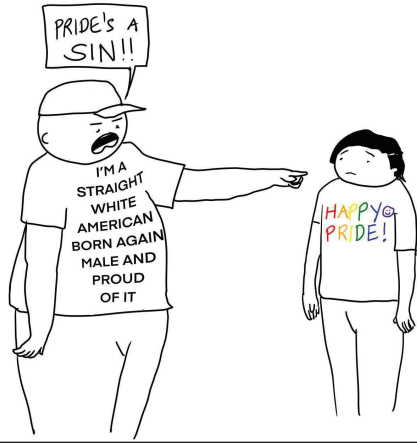
**2024 Projected Budget Goal: \$150,000.00**

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**Donations Received as of May 2024: \$26,105.68**

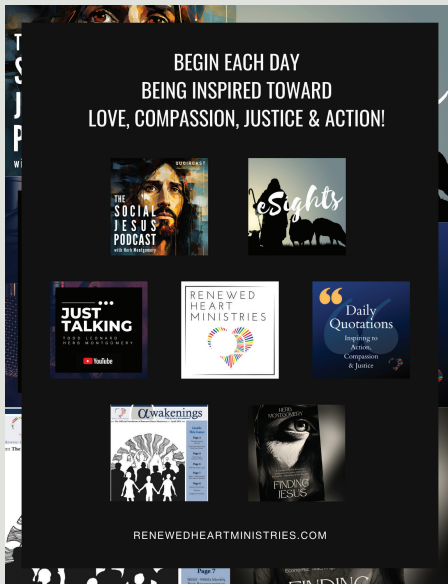


nakedpastor



“Is our practice of Christianity socially life-giving or are we obstacles to those around us working toward a more just, safer, compassionate society? Are we in the way or are we helping those working to make our world a safer place for everyone?”

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

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