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Social Jesus Podcast

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Fishing For People and Speaking Truth to Power

by Herb Montgomery

Our reading this week is from the gospel of Luke:

One day as Jesus was standing by the Lake of Gennesaret, the people were crowding around him and listening to the word of God. He saw at the water's edge two boats, left there by the fishermen, who were washing their nets. He got into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, and asked him to put out a little from shore. Then he sat down and taught the people from the boat.

When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into deep water, and let down the nets for a catch."

Simon answered, "Master, we've worked hard all night and haven't caught anything. But because you say so, I will let down the nets."

When they had done so, they caught such a large number of fish that their nets began to break. So they signaled their partners in the other boat to come and help them, and they came and filled both boats so full that they began to sink.

When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at Jesus' knees and said, "Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!" For he and all his companions were astonished at the catch of fish they had taken, and so were James and John, the sons of Zebedee, Simon's partners.

Then Jesus said to Simon, "Don't be afraid; from now on you will fish for people." So they pulled their boats up on shore, left everything and followed him. (Luke 5:1-11)

I took me a long time to be able to read this passage without automatically rejecting how the passage would have been heard within its own time and context and defaulting to the way contemporary Christianity has interpreted it, in terms of missions, evangelism, and ultimately colonialism.

Every time I share what I'm about to this week, I always get pushback from those for whom the original context is new. Yet the most popular interpretation of our passage this week is actually the newest way to read it. If we go back to the way the original audience would have heard this passage, the implications are quite different.

Even though I was used to interpreting fishing as a metaphor for evangelism, I've never felt comfortable with it. Fishing never works out well for the fish! and fishing for people instead doesn't fix that. Even today, when someone is trying to obtain your personal data, we refer to the attempt as phishing. It's a bad connotation.

So how would the original audience have heard this metaphor?



Thank You!

We want to take this moment to express our heartfelt gratitude to all of our supporters for your support of Renewed Heart Ministry's work of love, justice, and compassion. At a time when ministries like ours are being asked to achieve more with fewer resources, your support is so deeply appreciated, 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. From all of us here at Renewed Heart Ministries, thank you for your generous support. **We deeply appreciate 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
PO Box 1211
Lewisburg, WV 24901

From all of us here at Renewed Heart Ministry,

THANK YOU.

continued on page 2

Front cover artwork by Ali Montgomery.

I first learned an alternative interpretation of this metaphor from Ched Myers of Bartimaeus Cooperative Ministries. I believe that if Jesus' followers had chosen this interpretation, Christians would not have harmed or been complicit in the harm of Indigenous people through colonialism or Christianity:

"There is perhaps no expression more traditionally misunderstood than Jesus' invitation to these workers to become 'fishers of men.' This metaphor, despite the grand old tradition of missionary interpretation, does not refer to the 'saving of souls,' as if Jesus were conferring on these men instant evangelist status. Rather the image is carefully chosen from Jeremiah 16:16, where it is used as a symbol of Yahweh's censure of Israel. Elsewhere the 'hooking of fish' is a euphemism for judgment upon the rich (Amos 4:2) and powerful (Ezekiel 29:4). Taking this mandate for his own, Jesus is inviting common folk to join him in the struggle to overturn the existing order of power and privilege." (Ched Myers, in *Binding the Strong Man: A Political Reading of Mark's Story of Jesus*, p. 132)

"In the Hebrew Bible, the metaphor of 'people like fish' appears in prophetic censures of apostate Israel and of the rich and powerful: 'I am now sending for many fishermen, says God, and they shall catch [the people of Israel]...' (Jeremiah 16:16) 'The time is surely coming upon you when they shall take you away with fishhooks...' (Amos 4:2) 'Thus says God: I am against you, Pharaoh king of Egypt... I will put hooks in your jaws, and make the fish of your channels stick to your scales...' (Ezekiel 29:3f) Jesus is, in other words, summoning working folk to join him in overturning the structures of power and privilege in the world!" (Ched Myers, Marie Dennis, Joseph Nangle, Cynthia Moe-Lobeda & Stuart Taylor, in *Say to This Mountain: Mark's Story of Discipleship*, p. 10)

As Myers and other theologians explain here, in several Hebrew scriptures, fishing for people was about hooking or catching a powerful and unjust person, and removing them from the position of power from where they were wielding harm. This wasn't about saving souls so they could enjoy postmortem bliss, but about changing systemic injustice in the here and now.

The examples in Jeremiah, Amos, and Ezekiel, give Jesus' call to the disciples a very different context. These were common fishermen who had failed in the past but now were experiencing immense, overwhelming success. They had fished all night on their own and caught nothing. But with Jesus, they'd caught so many fish they needed to ask for help with the net. What might this have meant for the original audience, people who had failed to remove harmful people from their places of power to abuse? What hope might this story have given early Jesus followers, whose past efforts to change harmful systems had had discouraging results?

In this story, Jesus is inviting these working class folk take up the justice work spoken of by the Hebrew prophets, to take up fishing for people as Jeremiah, Amos, and Ezekiel would have defined it. Speaking of those who do harm from positions of power, Jeremiah reads:

"But now I will send for many fishermen," declares the LORD, "and they will catch them. After that I will send for many hunters, and they will hunt them down on every mountain and hill and from the crevices of the rocks. (Jeremiah 16:16)

Speaking of those who "oppress the poor and crush the needy," Amos reads:

The Sovereign LORD has sworn by his holiness: "The time will surely come when you will be taken away with hooks, the last of you with fishhooks." (Amos 4:2)

And speaking of the abusive king of Egypt, Ezekiel reads:

In the tenth year, in the tenth month on the twelfth day, the word of the LORD came to me: "Son of man, set your face against Pharaoh king of Egypt and prophesy against him and against all Egypt. Speak to him and say: 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says:

"I am against you, Pharaoh king of Egypt, you great monster lying among your streams. You say, 'The Nile belongs to me; I made it for myself.'"

Quotable Quotes

"On some positions, Cowardice asks the question, 'Is it safe?' Expediency asks the question, 'Is it politic?' And Vanity comes along and asks the question, 'Is it popular?' But Conscience asks the question 'Is it right?' And there comes a time when one must take a position that is neither safe, nor politic, nor popular, but he must do it because Conscience tells him it is right. I believe today that there is a need for all people of good will to come together with a massive act of conscience and say in the words of the old Negro spiritual, 'We ain't goin' study war no more.' This is the challenge facing modern man."

– Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Remaining Awake Through a Great Revolution (March 31, 1968)

"Great spirits have always encountered violent opposition from mediocre minds. The mediocre mind is incapable of understanding the man who refuses to bow blindly to conventional prejudices and chooses instead to express his opinions courageously and honestly."

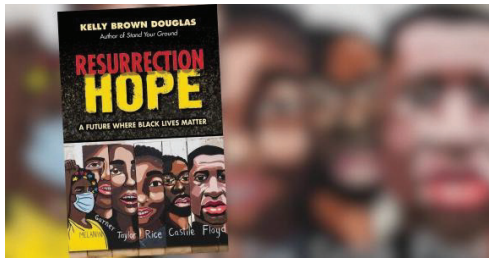
– Albert Einstein

The World As I See It

"It's about how we show up in this world in the limited time we have."

– Michelle Alexander

Spirit of Justice with Michelle Alexander & Angela Davis

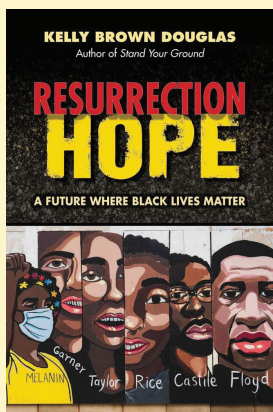


February's Recommended Reading

Resurrection Hope: A Future Where Black Lives Matter

by Kelly Brown Douglas

How do we really know that God cares when Black people are still getting killed? How long do we have to wait for the justice of God? I get it, that Christ is Black, but that doesn't seem to be helping us right now. These questions from her son prompted theologian Kelly Brown Douglas to undertake this soul-searching reflection. The killing of George Floyd and the ongoing litany of Black victims raised questions about the persistence of white supremacy in this nation, leading her to reflect on how a "white way of knowing" has come to dominate American identity and even to shape the consciousness of Christians. In exploring the message of Confederate monuments and the "Make America Great Again" slogan, she examines the failures of even "good white Christians" and struggles with the hope that "Black Lives Matter," before reaching deep into her own experience and the faith of Black folks to find her way back to *Resurrection Hope*.



Fishing for People... continued from page 3

But I will put hooks in your jaws
and make the fish of your streams stick to your scales.
I will pull you out from among your streams,
with all the fish sticking to your scales.
I will leave you in the desert,
you and all the fish of your streams.
You will fall on the open field
and not be gathered or picked up.
I will give you as food
to the beasts of the earth and the birds of the sky.
Then all who live in Egypt will know that I am the LORD. (Ezekiel 29:1-6)

This way of understanding what it means to fish for powerful people who do harm resonates with me.

What does speaking truth to power look like for us today?

American prelate of the Episcopal Church and Bishop of Washington Right, Reverend Mariann Edgar Budde, recently made a choice to fish for the powerful. She asked for mercy, one of her three pillars of unity, from the man who holds one of the highest positions of power in our world. In that moment, she was choosing to speak truth to power, specifically the truth in regards to false narratives spread about migrants and the LGBTQ community. I encourage you to read the entire transcript of Right Reverend Mariann Edgar Budde's address. Here are her closing remarks:

"Let me make one final plea, Mr. President. Millions have put their trust in you and, as you told the nation yesterday, you have felt the providential hand of a loving God. In the name of our God, I ask you to have mercy upon the people in our country who are scared now. There are gay, lesbian, and transgender children in Democratic, Republican and Independent families, some who fear for their lives. And the people, the people who pick our crops and clean our office buildings, who labor in poultry farms and meat packing plants, who wash the dishes after we eat in restaurants and work the night shifts in hospitals. They, they may not be citizens or have the proper documentation, but the vast majority of immigrants are not criminals. They pay taxes and are good neighbors. They are faithful members of our churches and mosques, synagogues, gurdwara, and temples. I ask you to have mercy, Mr. President, on those in our communities whose children fear that their parents will be taken away, and that you help those who are fleeing war zones and persecution in their own lands to find compassion and welcome here. Our God teaches us that we are to be merciful to the stranger for we were all once strangers in this land. May God grant us the strength and courage to honor the dignity of every human being, to speak the truth to one another in love, and walk humbly with each other and our God for the good of all people. The good of all people in this nation and the world. Amen."
(January 21, 2025 sermon by The Right Rev. Mariann Edgar Budde)

Oh that we all would heed Jesus' call to be fishers of people in solidarity with those being made vulnerable today! ■



SOCIAL JESUS

A Blog Exploring the Intersection of Faith and Societal Justice



Recent Social Jesus Blog Posts on Patheos:



The Discomfort of Our History

(Part 1 of *Confronting the Discomfort of Our History and Our Present*)

Our reading this week offers us an openness to addressing the parts of our own history that we may find uncomfortable.

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2025/01/discomfort-of-our-history/

A Modern Example of Uncomfortable History

(Part 2 of *Confronting the Discomfort of Our History and Our Present*)

In our story this week, merely referring to a community's history evokes a response of immediate, vitriolic, and even murderous rage.

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2025/01/modern-example-uncomfortable-history/

Rejecting the Rage Against Justice and Equity

(Part 3 of *Confronting the Discomfort of Our History and Our Present*)

Today we need to pay attention to responses that answer justice movements with rage and responses that define these movements as good news.

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2025/01/learning-reject-present-rage-against-justice/



A Gospel for Those in Poverty

(Part 1 of *A Gospel of Economic Justice*)

Considering how many times Luke's gospel mentions those living in poverty, it is no wonder that many consider Luke to be the gospel of economic justice.

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2025/01/gospel-people-poverty/

A Gospel of Wealth Redistribution

(Part 2 of *A Gospel of Economic Justice*)

The poor and economic justice were one of those themes. The kind of wealth redistribution our reading calls for actually makes sense.

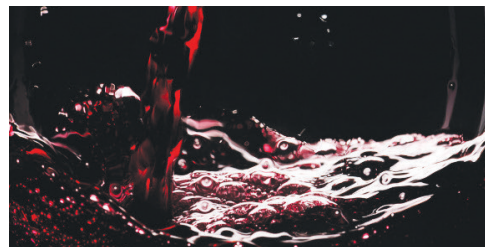
patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2025/01/wealth-redistribution/

A Gospel of a New Social Order

(Part 3 of *A Gospel of Economic Justice*)

So central was this call to create a new social order that the first generation was purported to have eliminated poverty altogether.

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2025/01/gospel-new-social-order/



Water Into Wine

(Part 1 of *Water, Wine and Human Beings Fully Alive*)

John's version and many of its themes are quite unique. That includes this week's story of turning water into wine at the wedding in Cana.

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2025/01/water-into-wine/

A Way Out of No Way

(Part 2 of *Water, Wine and Human Beings Fully Alive*)

The image of turning water into wine reminds us of the saying in the womanist tradition of making a way out of no way.

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2025/01/way-out-of-no-way/

Human Beings Fully Alive

(Part 3 of *Water, Wine and Human Beings Fully Alive*)

Our reading this weeks reminds us that the goal is human beings not marginalized, oppressed, or subjugated, but able to be fully alive.

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2025/01/human-beings-fully-alive/



Justice And The Spirit Of Love

(Part 1 of *Spirit, Love, Justice, and Truth*)

So many prophetic voices throughout the centuries have called for justice. This week's reading calls attention to them.

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2025/01/spirit-love-justice-truth/

Justice and the Prophets

(Part 2 of *Spirit, Love, Justice and Truth*)

We are called to work for justice in our contexts in the same way. What does the justice of the prophets look like in our context today?

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2025/01/justice-prophets/

The Justice of the Prophets in Our Context Today

(Part 3 of *Spirit, Love, Justice and Truth*)

May we renew our commitments to justice today and our dedication to taking care of each other as we embark on all this year holds.

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2025/01/justice-prophets-context-today/



Upcoming Events

FEBRUARY 15, 2025

Good News Fellowship

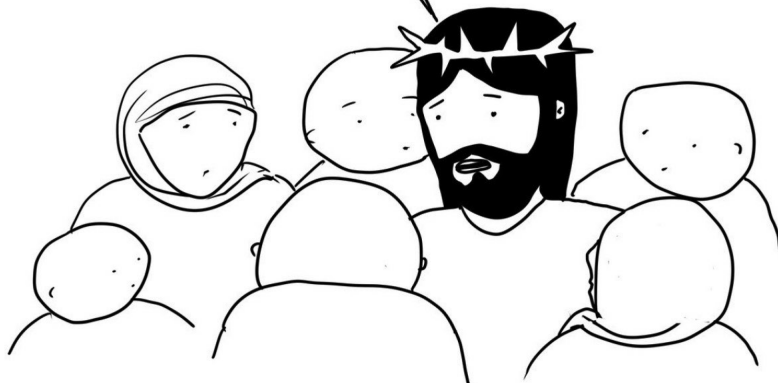
Toronto, Ontario Canada

For info or Zoom link, email us at:

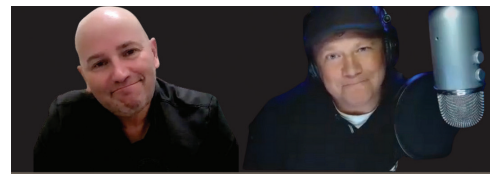
info@renewedheartministries.com

or call: 304-520-0030

HAVE YOU EVER NOTICED THAT WHEN THEY ARE HATEFUL, SO IS THEIR GOD, AND IF THEY ARE LOVING, SO IS THEIR GOD, TOO?



nakedpastor



JUST TALKING

TODD
LEONARD

HERB
MONTGOMERY

LECTIONARY READINGS IN THE CONTEXT OF LOVE, INCLUSION, & SOCIAL JUSTICE

[YOUTUBE.COM/@HERBANDTODDJUSTTALKING](https://www.youtube.com/@herbandtoddjusttalking)

Weekly YouTube Show!

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 social 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](https://www.youtube.com/@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 people are saying about *Just Talking* –

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

–Commenter



ZOOM HEART GROUP
GLENDALE CITY CHURCH &
RENEWED HEART
MINISTRIES



EVERY WEDNESDAY NIGHT
10 PM EASTERN / 7 PM PACIFIC

Weekly HeartGroup on Zoom Every Wednesday Night!

Each Wednesday evening, Glendale City Church hosts a Zoom HeartGroup led by Herb Montgomery. Our discussion each week will focus on the content in Renewed Heart Ministries weekly eSight articles and the *Jesus For Everyone* podcast published each Friday. The time of each Zoom session will be on Wednesdays at 7:00 p.m. Pacific/ 10:00 p.m. Eastern.

To receive the link for the Zoom meeting, email us at:
info@renewedheartministries.com

The work of helping people find life-giving ways to live out their faith through love, compassion, and justice are needed now more than ever. At Renewed Heart Ministries, we provide resources of faith and healing with the aim of renewing hope and inspiring action as we allow the Jesus story to inform each of us as we work together to shape our world into a compassionate, just and safe home for everyone.



Renewed Heart Ministries is a 501(c)3, grassroots ministry on the margins that prioritizes the needs of marginalized communities, especially those who have been the recipients of misinformed, faith-based harm. Your support enables us to be a life-giving, healing light in our faith communities and continue to be a voice for desperately needed change.

You get to decide what shape our faith communities take and what voices get to be heard.

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

Renewed Heart Ministries
PO Box 1211, Lewisburg, WV 24901

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

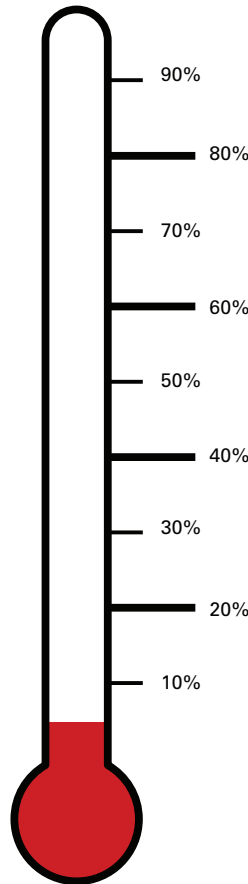
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**2024 Projected Budget Goal:
\$150,000.00**

**Donations Received as of
end of January 2025:
\$4,971.92**

Thank You!



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- [herbandtoddjusttalking](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC-herbandtoddjusttalking)
- renewedheartministries.com

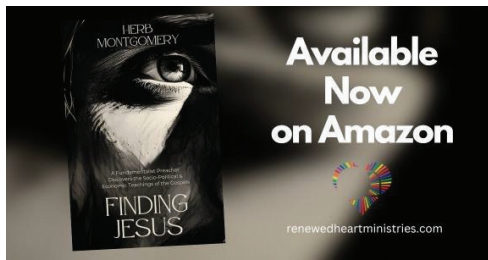


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Finding Jesus: A Fundamentalist Preacher Discovers the Socio-Political & Economic Teachings of the Gospels

by Herb Montgomery

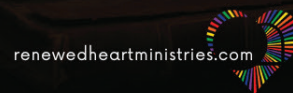
Available now on Amazon!

In *Finding Jesus*, author Herb Montgomery delves into the profound and often overlooked political dimensions of the gospels. Through meticulous analysis of biblical texts, historical context, and social discourse, this thought-provoking book unveils the gospels' socio-political, economic teachings as rooted in a profound concern for justice, compassion, and the well-being of the marginalized. The book navigates the intersections between faith and societal justice, presenting a compelling argument for a more socially engaged and transformative Christianity.

Finding Jesus is not just a scholarly exploration; it is a call to action. It challenges readers to reevaluate their understanding of Christianity's role in public life and to consider how the radical teachings of the gospels can inspire a renewed commitment to justice, equality, and compassion. This book is a must-read for those seeking a deeper understanding of the social implications of Christian faith and a blueprint for building a more just and inclusive society.



“This rage against equity and inclusive justice today is the same rage that placed the central figure of our gospel stories on a Roman cross.”



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.



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You can find *The Social Jesus Podcast* on your favorite podcast platform or at: the-social-jesus-podcast.simplecast.com/