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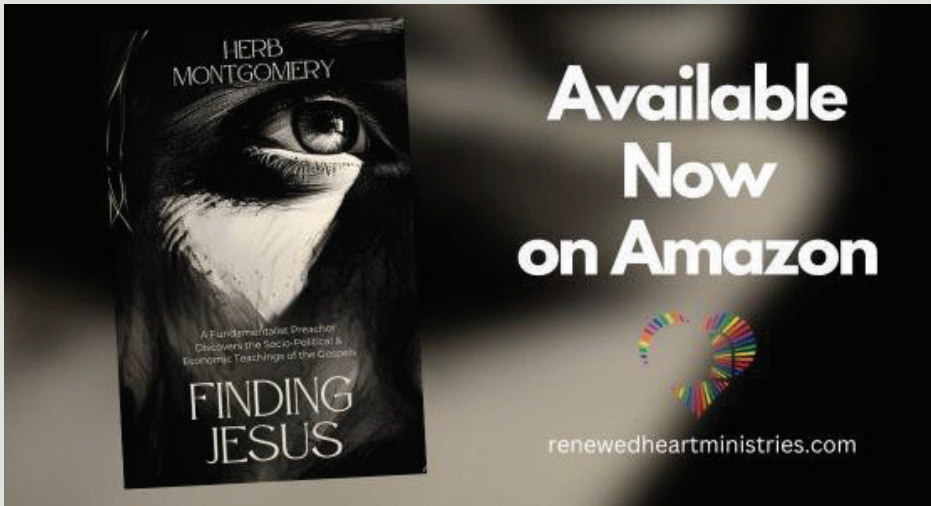
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## ***Finding Jesus: A Fundamentalist Preacher Discovers the Socio-Political & Economic Teachings of the Gospels***

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.

## **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](mailto:info@renewedheartministries.com)



## **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](https://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.**

*Front cover artwork by Ali Montgomery.*

# Justice Work is Holy Work

by Herb Montgomery

Our reading is from the gospel of John:

“Afterward Jesus appeared again to his disciples, by the Sea of Galilee. It happened this way: Simon Peter, Thomas (also known as Didymus), Nathanael from Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two other disciples were together. “I’m going out to fish,” Simon Peter told them, and they said, “We’ll go with you.” So they went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing. Early in the morning, Jesus stood on the shore, but the disciples did not realize that it was Jesus. He called out to them, “Friends, haven’t you any fish?” “No,” they answered. He said, “Throw your net on the right side of the boat and you will find some.” When they did, they were unable to haul the net in because of the large number of fish. Then the disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, “It is the Lord!” As soon as Simon Peter heard him say, “It is the Lord,” he wrapped his outer garment around him (for he had taken it off) and jumped into the water. The other disciples followed in the boat, towing the net full of fish, for they were not far from shore, about a hundred yards. When they landed, they saw a fire of burning coals there with fish on it, and some bread. Jesus said to them, “Bring some of the fish you have just caught.” So Simon Peter climbed back into the boat and dragged the net ashore. It was full of large fish, 153, but even with so many the net was not torn. Jesus said to them, “Come and have breakfast.” None of the disciples dared ask him, “Who are you?” They knew it was the Lord. Jesus came, took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish. This was now the third time Jesus appeared to his disciples after he was raised from the dead...” (John 21:1-19)

In the synoptic gospels, a fishing scene is the setting for the calling of the disciples. The author of the gospel of John uses this same setting as a post-resurrection narrative. This story is a call to remember, post-crucifixion, what following Jesus is about, and it harkens back to earlier stories, calling the disciples to follow Jesus once again. This time though, the call is not to return to their previous occupations but to continue the work Jesus left them to do.

Let’s consider how this imagery was used in the synoptics for the disciples’ first call.

Here is Mark’s version:

As Jesus walked beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. “Come, follow me,” Jesus said, “and I will send you out to fish for people.” At once they left their nets and followed him. When he had gone a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John in a boat, preparing their nets. Without delay he called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men and followed him. (Mark 1:16-20, cf Matthew 4:18-22)

Luke builds on the story:

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.” (Luke 5:4-10)

Our reading this week is very similar to Luke’s, but again, in John, this is happening after the crucifixion and resurrection. The timing in John is intentional. It was to remind his disciples that even though Rome’s crucifixion of Jesus and the resurrection rumors now circulating among the Jesus community had turned their worlds upside down, the work of fishing for people hadn’t changed. I have written at length about how the original audience would have

*continued on page 4*



## The Social Jesus Podcast

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/>



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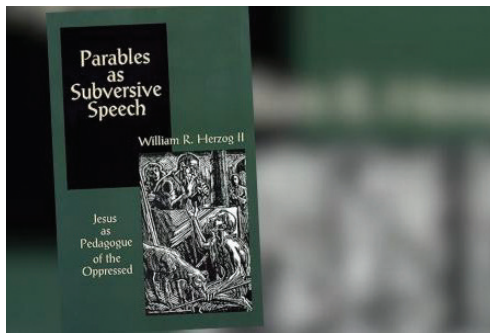


## Upcoming Events

**MAY 24, 2025**

**Good News Fellowship**  
Toronto, Ontario Canada

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



## Recommended Reading for May

### *Parables as Subversive Speech: Jesus as Pedagogue of the Oppressed*

by William R. Herzog II

William Herzog shows that the focus of the parables was not on a vision of the glory of the reign of God, but on the gory details of the way oppression served the interests of the ruling class. The parables were a form of social analysis, as well as a form of theological reflection. Herzog scrutinizes their canonical form to show the distinction between its purpose for Jesus and for evangelists. To do this, he uses the tools of historical criticism, including form criticism and redaction criticism.



### Justice Work... continued from page 3

understood this imagery of fishing (see *Fishing for People and Speaking Truth to Power*). Ched Myers gives us some insight on that:

“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)

The passages the disciples would have associated with Jesus’ call to be fishers of people were rooted in the Hebrew prophetic justice tradition about catching and removing those in positions of power who use their authority unjustly:

“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.”

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)

John’s placement of this story after the crucifixion was a reminder to the post resurrection Jesus community that the nature of what it means to follow Jesus hadn’t changed. Everything

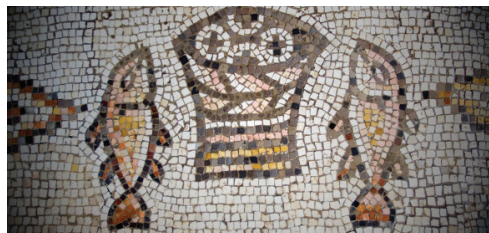
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# SOCIAL JESUS

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



## Recent Social Jesus Blog Posts on Patheos:



### **Justice Lessons from Post-Resurrection Bread and Fish**

(Part 1 of *Justice Work is Holy Work*)

Uniquely, this version of a bread and fish story is placed after the resurrection. Bread and fish are tied to justice.

[patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2025/04/bread-fish/](https://patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2025/04/bread-fish/)



### **Fishing for People and Overturning Systems of Injustice**

(Part 2 of *Justice Work is Holy Work*)

Fishing for people was a summons to working folk to join him in overturning the unjust structures of power and privilege in their world.

[patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2025/04/fishing-for-people/](https://patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2025/04/fishing-for-people/)

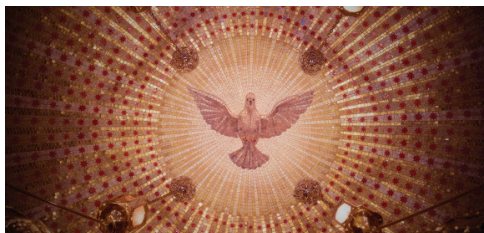


### **Feeding People is Holy Work**

(Part 3 of *Justice Work is Holy Work*)

Working for people's material, physical, concrete daily needs (such as feeding people and other justice works) is sacred, holy work.

[patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2025/05/feeding-people-is-holy-work](https://patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2025/05/feeding-people-is-holy-work)

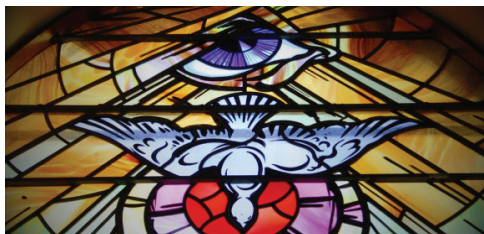


### **Lessons from John's Post Resurrection Stories**

(Part 1 of *So Send I You*)

The post resurrection appearance stories of the Jesus tradition were very important to the early church, and they served a purpose.

[patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2025/04/post-resurrection-stories/](https://patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2025/04/post-resurrection-stories/)

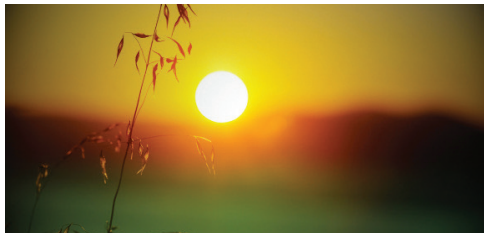


### **Lessons from the Different Great Commissions**

(Part 2 of *So Send I You*)

In Luke the commission is about justice for the oppressed. In John it includes binding and releasing, forgiving and not.

[patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2025/04/great-commission/](https://patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2025/04/great-commission/)



### **Sent for Liberation, Justice and Love**

(Part 3 of *So Send I You*)

As Jesus was sent into our world, so we have been sent. But our sending has often born a different kind of result.

[patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2025/04/sent-liberation-justice-love/](https://patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2025/04/sent-liberation-justice-love/)

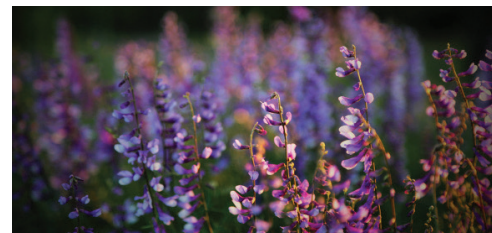


### **Original Good News Was About a Resurrection Not a Cross**

(Part 1 of *The Original Good News of Easter*)

The cross has been the symbol of salvation in Christianity for two millennia. The original good news was not a cross but a resurrection.

[patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2025/04/original-good-news-resurrection-cross/](https://patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2025/04/original-good-news-resurrection-cross/)



### **Life and Living Not Death and Dying**

(Part 2 of *The Original Good News of Easter*)

Marginalized communities have spent years critiquing theologies that center on death rather than how life triumphed in undoing that death.

[patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2025/04/life-living-death-dying/](https://patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2025/04/life-living-death-dying/)



### **Death Doesn't Bring Life**

(Part 3 of *The Original Good News of Easter*)

The earliest form of the good news, that we still need today, is not that death brings life. But that injustice doesn't have the last word.

[patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2025/04/death-bring-life/](https://patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2025/04/death-bring-life/)



## 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

## Justice Work... continued from page 4

the enemies of that work had sought to accomplish through Jesus' murder had been undone, reversed, and triumphed over through the resurrection. And now the life-giving work of the kingdom must continue in the lives and teaching of Jesus' followers. It was now time for them to take up Jesus' ministry themselves. What was meant to permanently stop Jesus' work had, through the resurrection, proven to only temporarily interrupt it. What happens next is also meaningful.

Next, Jesus feeds them. This part of our post-resurrection story is almost identical to the early story in John of the feeding of the multitude: Jesus once again breaks and blesses bread and fish. This is the earlier story:

When Jesus looked up and saw a great crowd coming toward him, he said to Philip, "Where shall we buy bread for these people to eat?" He asked this only to test him, for he already had in mind what he was going to do. Philip answered him, "It would take more than half a year's wages to buy enough bread for each one to have a bite!" Another of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, spoke up, "Here is a boy with five small barley loaves and two small fish, but how far will they go among so many?" Jesus said, "Have the people sit down." There was plenty of grass in that place, and they sat down (about five thousand men were there). Jesus then took the loaves, gave thanks, and distributed to those who were seated as much as they wanted. He did the same with the fish. When they had all had enough to eat, he said to his disciples, "Gather the pieces that are left over. Let nothing be wasted." So they gathered them and filled twelve baskets with the pieces of the five barley loaves left over by those who had eaten. (John 6:5-13)

When Jesus recreates the same imagery after the resurrection, the disciples can't help but recognize who Jesus is. It is in this moment that the story says, "None of the disciples dared ask him, 'Who are you?' They knew it was the Lord."

Then, after they finished eating we have this exchange with Peter:

...When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?"

"Yes, Lord," he said, "you know that I love you."

Jesus said, "Feed my lambs."

Again Jesus said, "Simon son of John, do you love me?"

He answered, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you."

Jesus said, "Take care of my sheep."

The third time he said to him, "Simon son of John, do you love me?"

Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, "Do you love me?" He said, "Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you."

Jesus said, "Feed my sheep."

Very truly I tell you, when you were younger you dressed yourself and went where you wanted; but when you are old you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go." Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God. Then he said to him, "Follow me!" (John 21:1-19)

So much ink has been spent on the differing Greek words used for "love" here. That's not what I want us to focus on this week. What matters more is Jesus' response to Peter's declarations each time. We must be careful not to miss this gospel's point. As Jesus has fed the disciples, so they must feed others. It's important not to spiritualize this story but to read it as it is, materially. Jesus says, "Feed my lambs, take care of my sheep. Feed. My. Sheep."

The needs of the people are holy. Their needs were holy for Jesus and they must be holy for Jesus followers today, too. Working for people's material, physical, concrete daily needs (like bread and fish) is sacred, holy work. Others may call it a social gospel, but it is the same work Jesus engages in the gospel stories and the same work he calls each of his followers to engage as well.

I'm reminded of the words of Bonhoeffer in his letters from a German prison cell. It's good

*continued on page 7*

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  
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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) or by mail at:

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**Whether you give \$5 or \$5,000,  
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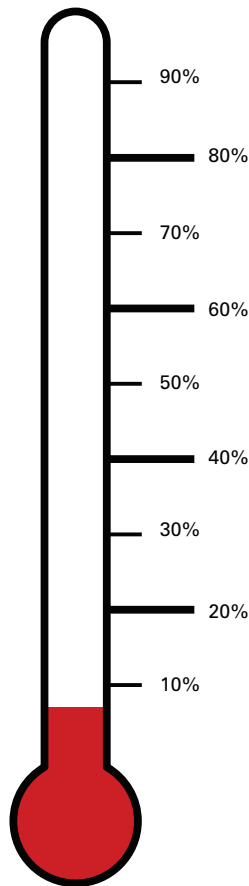
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And **THANK YOU** for reading, listening to, sharing and supporting RHM's work. Thank you for the decisions you make every day to make our world a safer, compassionate, just home for everyone. Thank you for your dedication to engaging our world and the care you demonstrate, and for being such an important part of our community.

**2025 Projected Budget Goal:  
\$150,000.00**

**YTD Budget \$50,000  
YTD Donations Received:  
\$16,741.33**

*Thank You!*



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

*Justice Work...* continued from page 6

place to end our contemplation this week:

"There remains an experience of incomparable value...to see the great events of world history from below; from the perspective of the outcast, the suspects, the maltreated, the powerless, the oppressed, the reviled — in short, from the perspective of those who suffer." (Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison*)

The needs of the people are holy. Feeding the people is sacred work. Justice work is holy work.

### Discussion Group Questions

1. Share something that spoke to you from this week's podcast episode with your discussion group.
2. What does the commission "feed my sheep" look like for you? 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?

Thank you for taking the time to read this article.

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

# Quotable Quotes

“The traditional way of understanding discipleship as one of taking people out of the world because it is a hostile place, promising them a better place in God’s heavenly kingdom, has been radically transformed by this insight. Jesus call us rather to change the world in such a way that it will cease to be the hostile place it is, as we construct the way for God’s reign on earth.”

– Sam Wells, Introduction to  
*Binding the Strong Man: a political  
reading of Mark’s story of Jesus*  
by Ched Myers

“The issue is not, ‘What must I do in order to secure my salvation?’ but rather, ‘What does God require of me in response to the needs of others?’ It is not, ‘How can I be virtuous?’ But ‘How can I participate in the struggle of the oppressed for a more just world?’

– Walter Wink  
*Jesus and Nonviolence:  
A Third Way (Facets)*

“Since in the Old Testament [sic] the idea of catching fish with hooks is used metaphorically to represent the divine judgment upon the rich and the powerful, the call to be ‘fishers of people’ is not a call to save people from their sins but rather an invitation to join Jesus ‘in his struggle to overturn the existing order of power and privilege.’

– Ched Myers  
*Binding the Strong Man: a political  
reading of Mark’s story of Jesus*

**"There remains an experience of incomparable value . . . to see the great events of world history from below; from the perspective of the outcast, the suspects, the maltreated, the powerless, the oppressed, the reviled – in short, from the perspective of those who suffer."**

**Dietrich Bonhoeffer**  
**Letters and Papers from Prison**

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