
PODCAST START:

[intro music]

Fr. Shay: Welcome to the Reading Queerly queer theology podcast, where each week, your hosts Brian Murphy and Shay Kearns will offer a reflection on the week's lectionary readings. This week we are taking a look at the lectionary text for January 10th, and we're going to look at Isaiah 42:1-9. It's kinda short, so I'm going to go ahead and read it.

But here is my servant, the one I uphold; my chosen, who brings me delight. I've put my spirit upon him; he will bring justice to the nations. He won't cry out or shout aloud or make his voice heard in public. He won't break a bruised reed; he won't extinguish a faint wick, but he will surely bring justice. He won't be extinguished or broken until he has established justice in the land. The coastlands await his teaching.

God the Lord says—the one who created the heavens, the one who stretched them out, the one who spread out the earth and its offspring, the one who gave breath to its people and life to those who walk on it—

I, the Lord, have called you for a good reason. I will grasp your hand and guard you, and give you as a covenant to the people, as a light to the nations, to open blind eyes, to lead the prisoners from prison, and those who sit in darkness from the dungeon.

I am the Lord; that is my name; I don't hand out my glory to others or my praise to idols. The things announced in the past—look—they've already happened, but I'm declaring new things. Before they even appear, I tell you about them. [CEB]

Alright. What do we do with this?

Brian: This week, one particular part of this passage *really* jumped out to me, and that's the part that says, "He won't cry out or shout aloud or make his voice heard

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in public. He won't break a bruised reed; he won't extinguish a faint wick, but he will surely bring justice." And then it goes on to say, "He won't be extinguished or broken until he has established justice in the land."

You know, you and I live our lives in one way. We run QueerTheology.com, we're pretty active on Twitter and Facebook, we write articles, we speak at colleges and conferences, we have an online course. I think it's tempting for folks to look at quote-unquote LGBT activism or social justice activism or faith-based activism and say like, oh, well it looks this one way. Sojourners, folks getting arrested in the street to protest immigration, you know. And to say, I don't have that in me. I can't do that. That makes me anxious. I have an anxiety attack. I'm not safe going to the prison system. Any number of reasons – I don't feel called to public activism or public preaching.

And there's two sides to that. There's one side that looks at it like, 'I feel bad for not doing that.' And I think that that doesn't need to be true. And then there's another side of that which is like, 'Well, I can't do that.' Or, I'm not called to do that, so I don't have to worry about activism because activism is only a thing that a select few people do and they do it very publically. What I take from this is that there's different ways of proclaiming the goods news. And at the end of the day, here, you know, this passage is still very classic Isaiah. [laughs] "Lead the prisoners from prison." I think that, no matter where your strengths and your skills are, there's a way to live out a prophetic Christian faith.

FS: I really like that, because when I read that same part, I kind of had a nervous reaction to it, in that I worry that this type of passage is used to silence or to kind of try to tone down folks who are angry or who are in the streets protesting. This idea that like, oh, if you were *really* a good prophet, you wouldn't cry out or shout aloud or make your voice heard in public, right? You'd be quiet and kind and nice. That's the way that work gets done. And so it helps me to hear you say, like, maybe we can read this differently. Maybe we can read it as, there are lots of different ways to do justice work. That, to me, feels a lot more helpful than – you know, I'd listen to your cause if you weren't so loud, angry, blocking traffic, etc. etc. etc. [laughs]

B: Yeah, that's so real. People try and shut down – like, tone police you. And they actually wouldn't listen to you if you were being polite.

FS: Right. [laughs]

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B: It's total BS. And so I think, you know, that speaks to a larger issue when dealing with scripture. It's really tempting, you know – I love to quote me a good Bible passage. But it can be tempting to quote a passage from scripture and say like, the Bible says this, and this is the definitive take on xyz. And usually, the Bible doesn't say a thing, the Bible says *many* things, right? And so, if we hold this passage in concert with Jesus turning over tables at the Temple, and Amos talking about hating and despising religious feasts, but let justice roll down – this sort of really angry – the Prophets get angry sometimes too. And so if we hold this as one of many expressions of ways to live in scripture, there's something cool about that. There's diversity within scripture. The diversity that we see within people, in personalities and sexualities and genders, also exists within scripture. And so, this is just part of the diversity of scripture!

[outro music]

B: This has been Reading Queerly, the queer lectionary podcast. I'm Brian—

FS: And I'm Shay. And you can find out more at QueerTheology.com.

B: If you'd like to connect with us, send us an email to connect@queertheology.com.

FS: Thanks for listening.

PODCAST END

Transcript by Taylor Walker