**PODCAST START:**

[intro music]

Brian: Welcome to the Queer Theology podcast!

Fr. Shay: Where each episode, we take a queer look at the week’s lectionary readings. We’re the cofounders of QueerTheology.com and the hosts for this podcast. I’m Father Shay Kearns —

B: And I’m Brian G. Murphy. Hello there! Today we’re taking a look at the text for Sunday, February 5th. We’re going to take a look at Isaiah 58:7-10. Here we go.

“… Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter—when you see the naked, to clothe them, and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood? Then your light will break forth like the dawn, and your healing will quickly appear;

then your righteousness will go before you, and the glory of the Lord will be your rear guard. Then you will call, and the Lord will answer; you will cry for help, and he will say: Here am I.

“If you do away with the yoke of oppression, with the pointing finger and malicious talk, and if you spend yourselves in behalf of the hungry and satisfy the needs of the oppressed, then your light will rise in the darkness, and your night will become like the noonday.” [NIV]

*Ooh!* Shay! What are your thoughts on this one?

FS: *Yeah*.

B: I can’t imagine you have very many. [laughs]

FS: Man. I have so many. And I have to – okay, I need to also back us up a little bit and read some of this. This whole section, right, is huge. There’s a part in verse 3 that says, “yet on the day of your fasting, you do as you please and you exploit all of your workers.” Which is just— [Brian *mhm*’s] it seems really striking to me. And then this last verse, too – “Your people will rebuild the ancient ruins and will raise up the age-old foundations; you will be called Repairer of Broken Walls, Restorer of Streets with Dwellings.” And I think about the narrative in the United States, kind of amongst the religious right. And we’ve seen it – the comment section on the Queer Theology blog [Brian sighs] got a little bit out of control a couple weeks ago, and we weren’t getting notifications, so we didn’t realize it was happening. This person, who basically came to the blog to pick a fight, wrote these long, long posts, like, cherry-picking verses of scripture and trying to school the LGBT Christians who were talking to them. Their big thing was, right, ‘God has called me to confront you people with your sin.’ There’s this narrative that to be a good Christian means that you oppose abortion and gay people and maybe divorce, so long as it’s not yours. [Brian laughs] And that’s how we will be quote-unquote ‘light to the nations.’

And it’s *so* *striking* to me because those are things that are not mentioned in scripture, and yet, over and over and over again there’s stuff like *this* passage. “If you do away with the yoke of oppression, with the pointing finger and malicious talk; if you spend yourselves in behalf of the hungry and satisfy the needs of the oppressed, *then* your light will shine in darkness.” [Brian *mhm*’s] Right? Like, there is a clear thing. If you do these things, *then* people will know that there is a loving God. That’s it!

And it makes sense, too, right? What is more beautiful and enlightening, someone who rails against gay people and people who’ve had abortions and people who get divorced, or someone who, like, does good shit on behalf of the hungry and the oppressed? That is much more indicative of who God is, and is much more enticing to people who maybe are not a part of the Christian movement. So I’m just – I’m really struck by this passage, and I’m struck by this last verse, “You will be called Repairers of Broken Walls and Restorers of Streets with Dwellings.” I’m just wondering what it would look like for that to be the image that people have of Christians.

B: Right? Yeah.

FS: Repairers of broken walls and restorers of streets with dwellings. That’s beautiful! And that’s a hell of a lot better than what we’re currently known as, which is like, bigots who yell things on street corners. It seems like such a bastardization of what it really means to be a follower of God and a follower of Jesus.

B: Oh, so I’m tempted to just say, like, ‘what Shay said’ and call it a day [Shay laughs] because you’re just so eloquent. But what I do want to add, just quickly, is that I – even still all these years later, I still need to read passages like this, because for so long, Christians told me that I was just justifying my sin by being progressive. Or that I was twisting scripture. That I was bastardizing Christianity. And like, right here, like you were saying, “If you do away with the yoke of oppression…” The Bible says that! The Bible says that, the Bible says that.

And so, progressive Christians, liberal Christians – we’re not distorting our faith or justifying our sin. It’s right there in the text. And so, I’m so glad that this passage came up for us, and that I get to be reminded of that. Every now and then I just need a reminder that this justice work is holy work, God-sent work. We need you, out there listening, to do this work as well – and to know that you are loved, and you are whole, and you are worthy, and that the work that you do for liberation is part of God’s work.

[outro music]

B: The Queer Theology podcast is just one of many things that we do at QueerTheology.com, which provides resources, community and inspiration for LGBTQ Christians and straight cisgender supporters.

FS: To dive into more of the action, visit us at QueerTheology.com. You can also connect with us online on Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr and Instagram.

B: We’ll see you next week.

**PODCAST END**

Transcript by Taylor Walker