
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 lectionary text for Sunday, March 5th. We're going to be looking at Psalm 32 and I will read it out for you right now.

Blessed is the one
whose transgressions are forgiven,
whose sins are covered.

Blessed is the one
whose sin the Lord does not count against them
and in whose spirit is no deceit.

When I kept silent,
my bones wasted away
through my groaning all day long.

For day and night
your hand was heavy on me;
my strength was sapped
as in the heat of summer.

Then I acknowledged my sin to you
and did not cover up my iniquity.

I said, "I will confess
my transgressions to the Lord."

And you forgave
the guilt of my sin.

Therefore let all the faithful pray to you

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while you may be found;
surely the rising of the mighty waters
will not reach them.

You are my hiding place;
you will protect me from trouble
and surround me with songs of deliverance.

I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go;
I will counsel you with my loving eye on you.

Do not be like the horse or the mule,
which have no understanding
but must be controlled by bit and bridle
or they will not come to you.

Many are the woes of the wicked,
but the Lord's unfailing love
surrounds the one who trusts in him.

Rejoice in the Lord and be glad, you righteous;
sing, all you who are upright in heart! [NIV]

Okay, Shay, what does this bring up for you?

FS: I really like this passage. You know, this is for the first Sunday of Lent, so we enter into this time of penitence and making things right. I always used to struggle with that, especially as someone who spent so much of my younger religiosity in a shame spiral, right? [Brian laughs] Once I left that, I was like, I do *not* want to go back to that. I don't think it's helpful, or healthy. But what I love about this passage in particular is verse three. "When I kept quiet, my bones were out. I was groaning all day long, every day, every night." I think – this resonates to me in a couple different ways. One, I think for those of us who've had the experience of being closeted or who have been in a place where we couldn't be honest about who we were, we know the heaviness of that silence, and what that does to us, and the ways that it wears on us and wears us out. This is one of those moments where it's so great to look at scripture and see myself and my experience reflected in a way that's really meaningful. But I think, too, those of us who have done stuff that we're ashamed of, we also experience this kind of silencing and the ways that that silence and shame weigh on us. Whether it's something that we legitimately have done wrong, that we shouldn't

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have done, or something that we've just been made to feel shame about, I think that that shame acts in the same way. The first step toward healing is to be able to not be silent about it anymore. Whether that means owning up to something you've done wrong, or whether that means talking about an experience that you've been made to feel shame over that you shouldn't have been, I think that that's all wrapped up into this. That's really resonant for me, and it makes me think about, okay, where are the places where I've been keeping silent that I shouldn't be?

B: Yeah, for me, what popped in for me was the verse right after that one. "Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity." Sort of what you were saying, that in our silence, we are heavy. We feel sapped of our energy as in the heat of the summer, our bones waste, I'm groaning. It sucks to be in silence, whether that's something that's *actually* sinful or something that you've been made to feel ashamed about. I like this acknowledgement that when you acknowledge your sin, and when you take it out of the silence, out of the darkness, and shine a light on it – then you can move forward from there. And that also, sin isn't this thing that God said is a sin for no reason and then it'll catch up to you when you die and you're going to be sent to hell, right? Sin causes real strife and division and hurt and harm in the world. It's important to acknowledge that head-on and to begin to deal with that. And then what comes after that – "you forgave me, and you forgave the guilt of my sin." That there's nothing you can do that can separate you from God's love. That God will forgive you, that God has been in the business of forgiveness since the Psalms were written and continues to be in the business of forgiveness. No matter who you are, where you come from or where you've been, God loves you and accepts you and forgives you.

FS: And I think a reminder, too, as we enter into this season – that your queerness is not a sin that needs to be forgiven.

B: Mhm.

FS: That is not what we're talking about. The people who you love, who you are, how you need to make your body, right, none of those things are sins that need to be forgiven. That's not what we're talking about. [laughs] And I think the other piece, Brian, like you were saying, is that once your sins are forgiven... let it go.

B: Yeah!

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FS: Right? Like, that's the whole point. Let it go and move on. I think so often of people who are trying to work in solidarity with queer folks, who continually beat themselves up over mistakes that they've made in the past, and it's like – man, that is not helpful. What's helpful is you confess your sin, you acknowledge the real hurt that you caused, and then you stop doing the harmful behavior and you move on. Right? [laughs]

B: And you start doing something helpful. [laughs]

FS: Right, and you start doing something helpful. But like, you wallowing in guilt and shame actually doesn't do anyone any good, so like... accept that forgiveness and move it right along.

B: Yeah. So, Lent is starting, and we have a new resource coming out tomorrow, if you're listening to this on the day the podcast is released, or it's already out if you're listening to it a little bit late. Shay, can you tell us a little about *Walking Toward Resurrection* and what that is?

FS: *Walking Toward Resurrection* is an ebook and an audio book, and it's basically my journey of transition, but my journey put into conversation with Jesus's journey to the cross. It's a way of doing trans theology that both honors the scriptural text and also honors the lives of trans and queer people, and sees how these stories are not the same story, but how there are resonances between the two stories. I wrote this ebook, it's about seventy pages, as kind of a reflection on my own journey and as an invitation for other people to reflect on their journeys.

B: I did the layout for it and so I got to read it, and it's like – my mind was sort of blown by it. [laughs] It's like, new, vibrant, life-giving queer theology that I think will bless trans folks and cis folks alike. So if you want to get a copy of that, there's two ways that you can get a copy of that. If you're a member of Sanctuary Collective, it's included. Sanctuary Collective is our online community that comes with not only an online community component but also premium resources like Reading Queerly, and Spit & Spirit, our digital magazine, an LGBTQ Christian guide to self care, lots of cool stuff, and now, most recently, *Walking Toward Resurrection* is our newest premium resource that we're adding to Sanctuary Collective. You can get all that at QueerTheology.com/sanctuarycollective. And if you just want to check out this book, you can get that at QueerTheology.com/resurrection.

[outro music]

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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