

July 25, 2017

The Kingdom of Heaven is like...

Matthew 13:44-46

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## PODCAST START:

[intro music]

B: Welcome to the Queer Theology podcast!

FS: 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.

FS: Welcome back to the Queer Theology podcast! This week we're taking a look at the lectionary texts for July 30th. The texts are Matthew 13:31-33 and 44-52. We're just going to take a look at part of that, and I'm going to go ahead and read those verses for you. We're going to look at verses 44-46.

"The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure that somebody hid in a field, which someone else found and covered up. Full of joy, the finder sold everything and bought that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls. When he found one very precious pearl, he went and sold all that he owned and bought it."

B: Mm. Mm!

FS: Yeaah. So what do you do with this, Brian?

B: It just screams to me, "please queer me." It strikes me immediately, like - when I read this text, I think to myself: who's going to go out and sell everything that they have so that they can buy a lifetime of not being able to experience love and affection? Or who's going to go out and sell everything that they have so that they can not live into their calling of being a youth pastor because it's not safe for them to be around kids? We say this sometimes at Queer Theology. If the gospel isn't good news for queer people, it's not good news. This parable does what parables do, and puts it into such relatable terms - "the kingdom of heaven is like a treasure." If what you're being told is that God's goal for your life... if it doesn't feel like a treasure, like fine pearls, like something that you

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would sell everything for, then it's not the kingdom of God. It's not the gospel. It's just as simple as that. Case closed. Moving on. What about you, Shay?

FS: Yeah, I love all of what you just said. I think it's really important to remember, too, that the rest of this passage has all of this kind of really harsh language around people being thrown into the fire and being separated out, and I know that some people will say that our interpretation of the gospel's good news overlooks those pieces. I think again, it's really important to remember who it is that Jesus is talking to. Jesus is always preaching and ministering to people that are on the margins, people that are poor, people that are shut out and pushed out from society. Often when he's talking about people being thrown into the fire, he's talking about the ones who are wealthy and the ones with power and the ones with privilege. And so it's not just about us reading this passage and reading into it what we want to hear, it's also - when we talk about what is good news, it's *always* for the people that are marginalized and on the margins. It's *always* for the people that are pushed out and pushed aside. It's always for the people that most need to hear good news. And of course, it *has* to be good news if we're going to be the ones that are selling everything and buying a field, because we don't have that money to lose. Right? [laughs] If we're going out and selling everything that we have, that's probably not much to begin with - that treasure better be worth it. What we find in the gospel is Jesus saying that the kingdom of heaven is worth it. It's worth giving up everything that you have, because really you have nothing to lose. If you follow Jesus where Jesus is going, to the people on the margins, then you get to build this kingdom that has space for everyone.

B: I think it's really important, what you said, to remember who Jesus is speaking to. Sometimes churches will say, "You have to remember the context," and what that means is the verses before and the verses after, but I think there's more to context than just that. There's also the historical context in which Jesus was speaking. Today, conservative Christian churches have sort of painted themselves as the good guy in the story, and the evil-doers as people who are not evangelical Christians. I think that what you were saying is really important to remember. That first of all, when Jesus was speaking, there were no Christians. They were all either Jews or gentiles, not Christians. And he was speaking to folks who were living under occupation. The ones who were evil, who might be getting thrown into burning furnaces, would be, like, the Roman occupiers. I think that LGBTQ Christians are sometimes taught that we have to

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be these sort of like smiling, ever-suffering, patient people, but there's this part of me that sort of delights in the thought of my oppressors thrown into a burning furnace. People who run ex-gay conversion camps, people who preach homophobia from the pulpit, being thrown into burning furnaces... you could read the gospel and see that in it! You know, I want to believe in a communal God that's big enough for everyone, but I think that it's important to remember who Jesus was speaking to, and who Jesus might have seen as evil folks in his parables. And I don't think it would be queer Christians.

FS: Yeah, and I think when we talk about the kingdom being big enough for everyone, we're not saying kind of a lovey, "Hey, the table's wide enough." It's about like, "No, if you want to be a part of this, make reparations. Do *more* than just apologize; you can't just apologize and come get a seat at the table. You've got to make it right." When I think about the burning fire, I think about it as this refining fire, right? That burns away impurities and that kind of calcifies what really matters. When I think about the kingdom of God being big enough for everyone, I don't mean that in a shallow, acceptance way. I mean that in the, "Get your shit together and make it right"-

B: "Repent!"

FS: -kind of way. Like, repent and turn back and change your life. And then, and *then*, then you can be a part of what God has already been doing on the margins with queer folks all along, that you were just too much of an asshole to see."

B: Mm! Amen.

B: [cut] As you may know, we are in the midst of our first-ever summer fundraising campaign. Shay and I *love* doing this work, and also it's a little bit expensive and more than a little bit time consuming, and so we would love your help in making this work more sustainable. If you have any pennies or dollars or benjamins to give, we would treasure your support of this work. If you enjoy the podcast this is a really great way to show that support. It's especially great if you're straight and cisgender and appreciate that this work exists, and want to

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make sure that it reaches the queer folks who need it the most and maybe can't support it. You can go to [QueerTheology.com/support](http://QueerTheology.com/support). You can give once, or give monthly, and we would just be so, so grateful and humbled to have your support so we can continue to bring you through this podcast and through all of the resources at [QueerTheology.com](http://QueerTheology.com).

B: [outro music plays] The Queer Theology podcast is just one of many things that we do at [QueerTheology.com](http://QueerTheology.com), which provides resources, community and inspiration for LGBT Christians and straight cisgender supporters.

FS: To dive into more of the action, visit us at [QueerTheology.com](http://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