
PODCAST START:

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 hello! This week, we're taking a look at one of the lectionary readings for Sunday, October 22nd. We're going to be looking at Matthew 22:15-22. I will read it for you from the Common English Bible.

Then the Pharisees met together to find a way to trap Jesus in his words. They sent their disciples, along with the supporters of Herod, to him. "Teacher," they said, "we know that you are genuine and that you teach God's way as it really is. We know that you are not swayed by people's opinions, because you don't show favoritism. So tell us what you think: Does the Law allow people to pay taxes to Caesar or not?"

Knowing their evil motives, Jesus replied, "Why do you test me, you hypocrites? Show me the coin used to pay the tax." And they brought him a denarion. "Whose image and inscription is this?" he asked.

"Caesar's," they replied.

Then he said, "Give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God." When they heard this they were astonished, and they departed.

Okay, Shay. Give me a queer take on this passage about Caesar and taxes.
[laughs]

FS: Yeah! I love this, because I think on the first hand, we get some more Snarky Jesus. Snarky Jesus is always kind of my favorite. There's this idea that, like, Jesus is always calm and nice and kind, and that we also need to be calm and kind and nice, and Jesus is like, "Why are you testing me, you hypocrites?" This month we're talking about sex at Queer Theology, and I feel like we get over and over and over and over again the same three questions. "Tell me why you think

it's okay to be gay." And then we answer, and it's like, "No, no, but I want you to tell me why you think it's okay to be gay, like tell me the verses and tell me why you think it's okay to have premarital sex." And all these different things. I feel like sometimes, those questions are coming from a genuine place, but I think other times, we've got a little bit of – "Knowing their evil motives, Jesus replied, 'Why do you test me, you hypocrites?'" It feels like there's a little bit of a... we already know what we think, and we don't believe that you can actually tell us anything different, but we're going to waste your time and ask anyway, because we don't really want to bother changing our minds. Nor do we want to bother reading the fifteen things you've already written about your answer to those questions... So I appreciate Jesus's snark here, and how he, in some ways, pushes the question back onto them. Like, whose image is on this? But I think also, there's a little bit of – I'm not going to give you a straight answer because you need to figure that out for yourselves. You need to do what you're going to do and I'm not going to let you trick me and trap me and waste my time. So I really appreciate Jesus's example here. I think it's constructive for the work that we do, and I find it helpful. What about you?

B: Yeah, you know, growing up – and even still today – I sometimes hear this verse used to excuse nationalism. [laughs] Oh, like, give to Caesar what is Caesar's. It's okay to be simultaneously part of the empire and part of the kingdom of God. Which, like, everywhere else in scripture it's clearly not. Somehow this verse is used to excuse that. But I see what you're saying here, that he's not actually *answering* the question. He's leaving it ambiguous and open-ended. It seems to have an answer, but is definitely up for interpretation. You know, I think a lot about what you were saying about all these conversations and questions about sex, in particular, and sexuality. I feel like – we can write a two sentence response or a twelve paragraph response, and there are still going to be people who come back and are like, "No, but I need more, I need more, I need more." There are always people wanting more, who are sort of never satisfied. I definitely feel this sort of like... for some people, it's an earnest question that is sort of on their journey of learning, but some people – even people who are queer themselves and want to accept it, there's just a mental block. There's nothing – no amount of explanation will ever be enough. And also, I think about conservative Christians – I mean, we talk about sometimes, the goalposts moving – who want to know, "Well, we like don't agree that it's okay to be queer, period, but like, we want to know, do you think it's okay to have sex before marriage, or do you think you have to be monogamous, or what do you think about divorce, is polyamory okay?" And sometimes even, like, "Well what about pedophilia or bestiality?" They have all these questions that are not really from a place of good faith. We talked about this recently, also – when questions

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Don't Get Trapped by Anti-LGBTQ Christians
Matthew 22:15-22

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don't come from good faith. They're designed to trick and to trap you. It's like, well, we can say that it's about you having premarital sex, so we don't have to say it's about you being queer, when really if you weren't having premarital sex there would be some other problem that would come up. You can never... it's one of the traps of respectability politics. You can never be good enough to sort of appease those who don't recognize the inherent dignity of LGBTQ people and our lives and our bodies. So, yeah – [laughs] if someone is asking you all these questions, just be like, “You're a hypocrite. Don't test me.”

FS: If you're interested in talking more about sex with us and kind of diving really deep into all things related to Queer Christian sex, we're going to be having a webinar on October 29th at 4 pm EST. You can sign up for that at QueerTheology.com/sextalk.

[outro music plays]

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