
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 — t

B: And I'm Brian G. Murphy.

FS: Hello hello! Welcome back. This week, we're taking a look at the lectionary text for November 12th. We're going to take a look at Amos 5:18-24. I'm going to go ahead and read it because it's fairly short, and this is from the Common English Bible.

Doom to those who desire the day of the Lord!
Why do you want the day of the Lord?
It is darkness, not light;
as if someone fled from a lion,
and was met by a bear;
or sought refuge in a house,
rested a hand against the wall,
and was bitten by a snake.
Isn't the day of the Lord darkness, not light;
all dark with no brightness in it?
I hate, I reject your festivals;
I don't enjoy your joyous assemblies.
If you bring me your entirely burned offerings and gifts of
food—
I won't be pleased;
I won't even look at your offerings of well-fed animals.
Take away the noise of your songs;
I won't listen to the melody of your harps.
But let justice roll down like waters,
and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream. [CEB]

Alright Brian. I know that this is one of your very very favorite passages, so. What do you do with this?

B: I just *love* it. [laughs] Oh, I just love it. So, I grew up, surprise surprise, as I say like every week – I grew up evangelical Christian, and so much of that placed this

emphasis on a personal relationship with Jesus. They also would say, it's not enough just to go to church. So I think their interpretation of this would be like, you could go to church every week, but that doesn't make you a real Christian. But I think this passage takes it a step further – that like, progressive Christians who are inspired by their faith to make the world a better place are not twisting scripture, they're not setting aside God, they're not being arrogant. What God desires is justice to roll down like water. I'm so over, especially in America, these sort of public displays of religiosity. From the president saying "God bless America," to making a big deal about praying in schools, to Christians who go out of their way to make a production over praying at meals at restaurants – so much of American Christianity, and in particular American evangelical Christianity, which says that it's not about earning your salvation... there's a lot of pageantry involved with American evangelical Christianity. That all is disgusting to God if there is not justice present, that's all repulsive and indulgent. If I ever am feeling like a quote-unquote social justice warrior in a derogatory sort of way, I'm like, no man, Amos says that what God wants is for justice to roll down like water! And so, I think that is our call. If you're – we say this all the time – gospel means good news. If your theology is not good news, it's not the gospel. If your theology doesn't lead you to pursue justice for people, then it's not from God. That includes justice for LGBTQ Christians, for LGBTQ people, right? As long as trans people are more likely to be discriminated against in housing and employment, more likely to be victims of violence in general, including violent death, there's a lack of justice there. And God wants justice to roll for trans people. We're talking about trans stuff all month long here at Queer Theology, so if your faith isn't moving you to work for justice for everyone, then it's not of God. And I'm not here for it! What about you, Shay?

FS: I remember this time when I was thinking about doing kind of this Christian Americorps year. It was with a Christian organization, and I told my pastor about it – and this was still when I was on my way out of the evangelical church – and he said, "Yeah, you know, I think that that organization really cares more about social justice than about getting people saved." And I remember having this moment where I was like, yeah... right. And it should. Because if people don't have housing and enough to eat... then like... what good does it do them to go to your church? Something is missing here. So I always think about that story when I read this passage. But then I also think about, you know, I've been in a lot of mainline progressive churches in my last decade. I think that they would read this passage and say, yeah, see, all of those rock band evangelicals, God hates that. And yet, these are people that will not give up their fricken organ [Brian laughs] and care more about the Bach-whatever as their prelude. They talk a big game about justice, but if anything actually messes with their worship service, like if a

poor person entered and wasn't wearing the right clothes, or if someone with mental illness was disruptive of their hymn singing, they would be really really pissed. There is, in this passage, kind of an indictment of both kinds of Christianity – possibly of the glitz and glamour of the evangelical church, possibly of the priority of order and control of the mainline church. Like you, I think this passage is telling us that the call of God is towards justice. Sometimes the call to justice is messy and it messes up our Sunday morning worship services and it messes up our polite and calm and clean and orderly lives, and that's what it's about. We have to remember what's really important, which is justice rolling down like water, and righteousness like an everflowing stream. Everything else, *everything else* is secondary to that call.

B: When we talk about getting saved, or salvation, salvation can mean different things to different people. But I think it's not that organization – your church said to you, Shay, that they cared more about getting people saved than about social justice. I think that you can't quote-unquote get people saved without social justice. Amos says that here, and you can intellectually rationally understand that. The call of Jesus, and not just of Jesus but of God throughout the Hebrew and Christian scriptures, is one of justice and liberation. God's love for us is just so overwhelming. That spirit of God moves in God's people to build the kingdom of God on earth as it is in heaven. That is just so irresistible and inviting, that people want to be like – "I want to taste some more of that." And for some folks that path is through Christianity, and for some folks that path is through another source of accessing the divine, but that, as Christians, we're called to live this peculiar way. To take care of folks and in doing so, bring about salvation into the world and invite others into that process. You can't find salvation separate from justice.

[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

November 12, 2017

Faith and Justice

Amos 5:18-24

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Transcript by Taylor Walker

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