
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. Merry almost Christmas from the Queer Theology podcast! This week we're taking a look at a lectionary text for Sunday, December 24th. We're going to be looking at Luke 1:47-55. I will read it to you now from the Common English Bible.

In the depths of who I am I rejoice in God my savior. He has looked with favor on the low status of his servant.

Look! From now on, everyone will consider me highly favored because the mighty one has done great things for me. Holy is his name.

He shows mercy to everyone, from one generation to the next, who honors him as God.

He has shown strength with his arm.

He has scattered those with arrogant thoughts and proud inclinations.

He has pulled the powerful down from their thrones and lifted up the lowly.

He has filled the hungry with good things and sent the rich away empty-handed.

He has come to the aid of his servant Israel, remembering his mercy, just as he promised to our ancestors, to Abraham and to Abraham's descendants forever. [CEB]

A-men.

FS: Amen indeed.

B: [laughs] Shay. Okay. How do we – what's queer about this passage?

FS: Oh – *all* of it. [both laugh] I love that this is the passage that is for Christmas Eve. This is Mary's song – this is part of the Magnificat. We have this hymn, basically, sung by a young woman, who is a person of color, a refugee, pregnant and unmarried, and basically she sings this badass song saying, "God is going to send the rich away empty-handed, pull the arrogant down from their thrones, and lift up the lowly and fill the hungry. If that isn't radical, I don't know what is. And yet—

B: Amen.

FS: —how rarely did I hear anything like this preached in my churches growing up. I have never heard a, like, eff-the-rich Christmas Eve sermon at the candlelight service before we sing Silent Night. Right? [Brian laughs] It's all about this sanitized, cute, baby being born. And maybe the baby does some good stuff in the world, but, like, I know in my churches growing up, that baby was on the cross before Christmas Eve even got over. He hadn't even been born, and we had skipped his entire ministry. So I love this passage. I love that this is set up. I love that Mary gets to speak and have this huge hymn that becomes this hymn of the church. And I think that it's queer because, a, women are still silent in our churches, especially young women. And b, this kind of upheaval of the order, where the hungry are fed and the poor are lifted up; that's such a radical thing, and I think that, when we talk about who are the most marginalized, we're *still* talking about – they're still hungry people. There are still people who are poor and lowly who need to be lifted up. I think that we have, in this passage, this vision of what Jesus is coming to do and who he's coming to be. I think that's really beautiful. I have to laugh a little bit, because Rachel Held Evans on twitter the other day quoted Luke, and someone commented – a dude, of course—

B: Duh.

FS: —commented back, "You know, I was really on board with you, but your line about 'the rich,' that's really offensive." And she was like, "I was literally quoting the gospel. I don't know what you want me to do." I think that so often we ignore what is literally written in the gospel in order to make something else into our

gospel. So, I love this passage of bringing this back, of like, 'this is what it's about.' It's uncomfortable sometimes. And that's probably as it should be.

B: You know, one of the sort of sayings that some folks bandy about about Christmas is like, a child came to save the world. For many people, that gets played out as like, this child came to grow up to get crucified on the cross to forgive us of our sins so we could get into Heaven. But here we have Mary, the mother of Jesus, being like, "No! This is what this means." All those things that you just said, that the hungry are filled with good things, that the rich are sent away empty-handed, that the powerful are pulled down from their thrones. This was said at a time when there was a powerful person sitting on a throne. And obviously the gospels were written after Jesus's ministry had concluded – he was no longer on earth anymore [laughs] but the movement was continuing on. To include this passage in what became the canon – not every single thing that was ever written about Jesus made it into our sacred text, our scripture. That could be a whole, multiple-episode look into why and what didn't. But this got in! That early Christians were like, no, this right here, this is critical to the gospel. And what it means is, at a time when we're being persecuted by the powerful, we're going to still include that part of this movement is to pull the powerful down from their thrones and to lift up the lonely. That this was included matters. We've had a few really great passages over the past few weeks, sort of getting at the heart of God, and what it means to encounter the divine, and what salvation means and looks like. And that these really radical texts are right in our sacred texts and our Bibles that are in every single church in America, that these passages are included in the lectionary – it's all sitting there, right in front of our faces, hiding in plain sight, just waiting for us to pay attention. So, if you're a queer person, a progressive person, a radical person, who's listening to this – who you are and the work that you're doing is integral to the story of God. We need you to stick around and keep doing that work, and continuing to be a badass like Mary. That's the Christmas story.

FS: We know that that kind of work does start to take its toll on people, and especially around the holidays, when many of us have to deal with unaffirming family or churches. That can be really tough. We also just really want to encourage you to take care of yourself during this holiday season, to do the things you need to do to make sure that you *can* continue to do this work, to make sure that you are connecting with people who care about you and love you just as you are, to shore you up to continue to do this work. We've created all sorts of resources around self-care and around self-care at the holidays in particular over at Queer Theology. Brian, where can they find those?

December 24, 2017

Mary's understanding of God
Luke 1:47-55

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B: You can just go to QueerTheology.com/selfcare and we'll send you over some videos and articles and worksheets, all about taking care of yourself, especially around the holidays, especially around unaffirming family and friends and churches.

FS: We're going to take next week off of the podcast to celebrate the holidays and to get ready for the new year ahead. We've got some really exciting stuff coming up, starting off right in January. We're going to take a week off to get ready for that. We hope you have a wonderful holiday. We'll be around if you need to reach out to us – you can always reach us at connect@queertheology.com. We're really grateful for you all and hope that you have a great holiday and head into the new year feeling rested and loved and ready to take on the world.

[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

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