
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 hello hello! Today we're taking a look at the lectionary reading for Sunday, May 13th. We're going to be looking at Psalm 1. I'm going to read it now from the Common English Bible.

The truly happy person doesn't follow wicked advice,
doesn't stand on the road of sinners, and doesn't sit
with the disrespectful.

Instead of doing those things, these persons love the
Lord's Instruction, and they recite God's Instruction day
and night!

They are like a tree replanted by streams of water,
which bears fruit at just the right time and whose leaves
don't fade. Whatever they do succeeds.

That's not true for the wicked! They are like dust that the
wind blows away.

And that's why the wicked will have no standing in the
court of justice—neither will sinners in the assembly of
the righteous.

The Lord is intimately acquainted with the way of the
righteous, but the way of the wicked is destroyed. [CEB]

Okay, Shay. What sort of queer theology-spin do you have for this passage?

FS: I remember this passage being taught a lot while I was growing up. It was this idea that like, you didn't hang out with bad people, or people who didn't

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The truly happy person

Psalm 1

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believe like you did. You didn't watch bad movies or read bad books or anything that wasn't Christian – instead, you really meditated on the Bible and memorized it and spent a lot of time in it, and that's how you would be a quote-unquote 'good person' and a happy person.

And it's just so fascinating for me to read this now, and to think about the fact that Jesus hung out with sinners and rabble-roused and ate good food and all of this stuff, and was this example. And I don't think that this is a, 'Jesus is better than the Hebrew scriptures moment,' but a 'my church really interpreted this passage in the wrong way' kind of moment. What I think this is really about is – the crux of it is verse three, "They are like a tree replanted by streams of water, which bears fruit at just the right time." And this idea that like, what it means to be truly happy, what it means to be in this life, to be a tree that can bear good fruit, is to make sure of where we're planted, and to know well where we're planted, and to know what feeds us and what keeps us alive and what gives us strength. And I think that that's something that the queer community actually is really good at, because we've had to be good at it, right? We've had to learn where we're safe, we've had to learn where our homes are, we've had to learn who our family is. And to me, that's a queer reading of this passage. Know who you are, know where you belong and know what feeds you, and really tap into that. What about you?

B: I think – all of what you're saying. And that, you know, it's really easy – I think it's human nature – to sort of fall into, 'Oh, I know what wicked advice is. It's anything I disagree with.' Or, I know who sinners are – the people who act in ways other than me. People who are disrespectful are those who are acting differently than I might act. And I think there is something to be said about like, in order to be happy – the people you surround yourself with affect your happiness, right? Like, that is true. There is some wisdom there in saying, "In order to be happy, surround yourself with positive people." But also, I think that both throughout the Hebrew and the Christian Bibles, we see stories of God's people getting mixed up about who's in and who's out, and sort of falling into this human inclination of like, my people are the good people; the others are the evil ones. We have God, they are heathen.

And throughout the Hebrew and the Christian scriptures we see God, over and over, saying, "No, you've got it mixed up." Telling Abram, "You're going to be a blessing for all nations." Peter having this revelation that what God has made clean, let us not call unclean. Who are sinners and who are disrespectful isn't always who we think it is, and it isn't necessarily who the religious establishment says it is. Yes, heed this advice, but also, make sure that you're discerning

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faithfully and looking at all of scripture in its various contexts to help you with that. Use your heart and your mind to help you with that. Look at the fruits of what the trees are bearing to help you discern that, and not just fall back on, 'Well, my church says this song is bad,' or this book isn't Christian or that's not godly. Be simplistic and dualistic about it.

[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