
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 are taking a look at the lectionary reading for Sunday, June 10th. We're going to look at the passage from 1 Samuel 8. It's kinda long, so I'm going to do a mix of summarizing and reading. So, all of the Israelite elders got together and went to Samuel, who was the prophet. They said to him, "Give us a king to judge us." Samuel prayed and the Lord answered, "Comply with the people's request, everything they ask of you, because they haven't rejected *you* – no, they've rejected me as king over them."

Eventually, Samuel complies with their request, but he says, "When that day comes, you will cry out because of the king you chose for yourselves, but on that day, the Lord won't answer you." But the people refused to listen to Samuel, and said, "No, there must be a king over us so we can be like all the other nations. Our king will judge us and lead us to fight our battles." And so that's sort of the context of this passage, the people of Israel wanting a king and a commander and an army no matter what that will cost them in terms of taxes and properties and lives. So, Shay, how does this relate to being queer in the modern day?

FS: I really love this passage, because it's super subversive, if you kind of pay attention to what's happening. I mean, here are the Israelite people, who have been used to being led and being organized by these Israelite elders and by prophets. I mean, they were *led by prophets*, which, let's just talk about how awesome that is for a second [Brian laughs] – this idea of people who are leading them in a way of truth. And then they decide, you know, you know what, we want to be like all of the other nations around us. We want a king.

Samuel, I think, rightly says: what will happen is, this king is going to take your kids and all of your supplies so that the king can wage war on other people. I think about that shift from being led by prophets to being led by a king, and your energy and your financial capital going toward making war and towards building up your own nation.

And I think about what the struggle within the queer community has been around assimilation, and this idea that like, what will *help* the queer and trans community to be accepted and liberated is for us to be cops and to be in the military and to wage war. I think about how we buy into this American system that decides that the way to be wealthy is to wage war on other nations. I mean, they're not wrong. [Brian laughs] And also, what are we sacrificing to do that? We're sacrificing our children. We're sacrificing money that could be spent on alleviating poverty, on education, on all these other things so that we can be like the other nations, and have a real big army and lots of cops. Even though, at this point, we're so much bigger than other nations that 'we wanna be everyone else' doesn't even make sense anymore. And I think about the gift of what it could mean to be, and to go back to being, led by prophets – prophets who speak about the need to take care of the poor, prophets who speak about the need to be peaceful, prophets who speak about the need for justice – and to put our energy into those places instead of into waging war.

So that's what this text brings up for me, and the subversive nature of like, Samuel being, "You're gonna get a king, but you're not gonna like what that's gonna look like." I think that's really beautiful, and I think it's important that we understand that that conflict with waging war is in the text and it's in the Hebrew scriptures. The text itself wrestles with that, and that's important. What about you?

B: I think we can continue that sort of parallel and zoom out a bit from this particular passage in 1 Samuel to see the larger narrative of the story. A handful of books prior in this story, the Israelites were slaves in Egypt, and God was very much on their side – was with them in their captivity and was with them in their liberation and their exodus from Egypt, sort of bringing them out of slavery, out of oppression, into new life. I think like, as queer people, God is there with us in our struggle, in our sorrow, in the closet, as we fight for our lives and our rights.

And then this day comes later, where now that they're out of Egypt and they start to breathe freely a little bit, they fall into this temptation to reproduce the same injustices that they just escaped. You know, here, it says, "When that day comes, you will cry out because of the king you chose for yourselves, but on that day, the Lord won't answer you." God - whether it's the Israelites being in captivity under the Egyptians or whether it's Israelites turning and oppressing each other, oppressing others around them, God is always identified with the marginalized and the margins. As queer people begin to breathe a little free, it's important that

June 10, 2018

When Liberation Turns Into Oppression

1 Samuel 8

3/3

we not forget where we came from, and that we don't reproduce the cycles of violence that we just escaped from moments ago.

[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