

PODCAST START:

Brian: Hello hello hello! This week at the Queer Theology podcast, we're doing another throwback episode. Today's episode is going to be one that originally aired three years ago, back in 2015. Next week we'll be back with a brand-new episode! Last week we did a new episode and a bonus throwback episode, so we're trying out some different things for you here on the podcast to see what works for you and make sure that you get all the best queer theology content each week. If you have thoughts on the throwback episodes, the new episodes, the mix of throwback and new, we would love to hear your thoughts – email us at connect@queertheology.com or tweet at us @QTheology. Without further ado, here is this week's podcast, taking a look at the lectionary text for this coming Sunday. It's Mark 4:26-34; here's the episode.

[intro music]

Fr. Shay: Welcome to the Reading Queerly queer theology podcast, where each weeks, your hosts Brian Murphy and Shay Kearns will offer a reflection on the week's lectionary readings. This week we are taking a look at the lectionary texts for June 14th. We're going to look at Mark 4:26-34; it is the parable of the mustard seed. We'll put a link to that in the shownotes.

[not read aloud]

[Jesus] also said, "The kingdom of God is as if someone would scatter seed on the ground, and would sleep and rise night and day, and the seed would sprout and grow, he does not know how. The earth produces of itself, first the stalk, then the head, then the full grain in the head. But when the grain is ripe, at once he goes in with his sickle, because the harvest has come."

He also said, "With what can we compare the kingdom of God, or what parable will we use for it? It is like a mustard seed, which, when sown upon the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on earth; yet when it is sown it grows up and becomes the greatest of all shrubs, and puts forth large branches, so that the birds of the air can make nests in its shade."

With many such parables he spoke the word to them, as they were able to hear it; he did not speak to them except in parables, but he explained everything in private to his disciples. [NRSV]

So Brian, what does this passage do for you?

B: First of all, I'm just really obsessed with all of the passages about the kingdom of God. I think because, growing up in my church, the kingdom of God and heaven were synonymous with each other and, like, the place that you go in heaven to hang out with God and Jesus, who were sort of the same but different maybe?, and all of your friends and family who accepted Jesus as their personal Lord and Savior for the rest of eternity. And then as I started reading the Bible more seriously and less, sort of, just as, I don't know, an exercise that you're supposed to do to be a good Christian, I began to realize that what the Bible *actually* says about the kingdom of God is vastly different than this conception of the kingdom of God and heaven as this place up in the sky. So I like that.

And this particular parable about the kingdom of God and the mustard seed – what first sticks out to me is that mustard seeds are small but then they grow into these big plants. There's not many LGBT people in the world, in the church, but we are making a mighty impact on the church, on the world, on culture. I just like that parallel there.

And it also brings up for me that Maragret Mead quote, which is, “Never doubt that a small group of committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.” I know oftentimes folks want to say that, you know, we can achieve marriage equality, but not enough people care about trans folks, or not enough people care about economic justice, or not enough people care about queer homeless youth, not enough people care about Gay Iraqis, not enough people care about gay Palestinians – those issues are just too big for us to take on. You'll never win, why bother?

And so I think it's important to remember that like, with a faith the size of a mustard seed – that's the kingdom of God. A small group of people really can change the world. That's something that I hold onto. We LGBT folks, who are committed to justice, are in good company with a Jesus whose ministry was started in the margins and was made up of the outcasts, whose work is still unfinished, but went on to change the world in some pretty amazing ways. What about you, Shay?

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FS: The thing that jumped out to me is the beginning piece of this passage, where he tells the parable of someone who goes out and scatters seed on the ground and it grows by itself without his help. That, to me, is a really appropriate metaphor for the work that we do, especially in the church, and with people who maybe are not yet affirming or are just learning what it means to be in solidarity with queer people. We have these conversations, we tell our stories, and we don't always feel like we're making progress. We don't always feel like that seed is growing into anything that's helpful or productive. To me, it's a good reminder that a) the seeds that we plant matter and that they grow into something, and b) that we sometimes just need to be patient. We can't force those seeds to grow faster than they can. We just have to trust that God is doing the work behind the scenes, and all we can do is plant the seeds. I think that that's a good reminder for me. I can be a little impatient, especially when it comes to justice. I think that we *should* be impatient when it comes to justice, but also, we don't know the outcome of the conversations that we're having, and it's important to just keep at the work.

B: Totally.

[outro music]

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FS: And I'm Shay. And you can find out more at QueerTheology.com.

B: If you'd like to connect with us, send us an email to connect@queertheology.com.

FS: Thanks for listening.

[cut]

B: So that was this week's episode! I know that folks listen to podcast episodes at all different times, some later in the week, some weeks, months, even years later. So no matter when you listen to this podcast episode, you can go to QueerTheology.com/now to find out what's current, to find out what's happening in the here and the now, no matter when you're listening. Right now, we're in the

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midst of Pride month. It's June [2018], so we've got some links to resources about LGBT pride; we'll be adding more. But no matter when you're listening, the most current and upcoming information about what you can tap into, the conversations we're having, webinars, special offers, things like that, will always be at QueerTheology.com/now. So check that out, bookmark it, check back regularly, and we will see you soon! Bye.

PODCAST END

Transcript by Taylor Walker

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