
PODCAST START:

Brian: Hey there! The Queer Theology podcast is on summer vacation for the first time ever. But fear not, there is an episode of the podcast coming your way in just a minute. We have given a queer take on over two hundred Bible passages. There's a good chance you haven't heard every single one of those, which is why every week for the summer we're publishing a throwback episode of the podcast. We'll be back with new episodes in September, and until then, you can stay connected with us on social media, inside of Sanctuary Collective (which you can learn more about at QueerTheology.com/community), and of course, with throwback episodes of this podcast. So without further ado, here's today's episode, and we'll see you in September!

[intro music]

Fr. Shay: Welcome to the Reading Queerly queer theology podcast, where each week, your hosts Brian Murphy and Shay Kearns will offer a reflection on the week's lectionary readings. This week, we are looking at the lectionary texts for August 23rd. We're going to look at John 6:60-69. This is from the Common English Bible – I'm going to go ahead and read it.

Many of his disciples who heard this said, "This message is harsh. Who can hear it?"

Jesus knew that the disciples were grumbling about this and he said to them, "Does this offend you? What if you were to see the Human One going up where he was before? The Spirit is the one who gives life and the flesh doesn't help at all. The words I have spoken to you are spirit and life. Yet some of you don't believe." Jesus knew from the beginning who wouldn't believe and the one who would betray him. He said, "For this reason I said to you that none can come to me unless the Father enables them to do so." At this, many of his disciples turned away and no longer accompanied him.

Jesus asked the Twelve, "Do you also want to leave?"

August 26, 2018

Does this offend you? (#throwback)

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John 6:60-69

Simon Peter answered, "Lord, where would we go? You have the words of eternal life. We believe and know that you are God's holy one." [CEB]

So...[crosstalk]

B: [laughing] I love this. I love it! I love that Jesus is like, what, does this *offend* you? [Shay laughs] It reminds me of that sort of quip you hear sometimes that's like, you know, 'if you're more offended by the cursing in this than the actual problem, you're part of the problem.' I think this so clearly relates to the LGBT experience and struggle, because, I mean, I literally cannot count the number of times that someone has been like, "You're being too harsh!" Or, "That's unrealistic," or, "That requires too much of folks." Can't you be gentler? Can't you be more gracious? Can't you be more patient? Can't you go slower? Can't you be content with incremental change?

And like... now that I've been doing this work for a decade, and have worked on a number of different causes, the same sort of responses and pushback comes back, and the work continues, and oftentimes progress is made or victory happens. And then people forget that there was ever pushback. And then the next issue comes up – and it's like rinse and repeat. You know, after the marriage equality Supreme Court ruling two months ago, my friend's boyfriend on Facebook posted something to the effect of, "Can't the soapbox gays take a break for one second and stop raining on everyone's parade?" [Which was] sort of in response to some critiques of the institution of marriage in general and the focus on it as a movement priority in particular. And I am one of those people who just has lots of things to say about marriage as an institution! But almost ten years at this point, I was part of a Right to Marry campaign here in New York State, and people called me a soapbox gay then. It's sort of like, the same soapbox gays that people are complaining about today are the ones who made the progress happen.

I think it's easy to look back and celebrate Stonewall, decades after it happened, but, you know, that was a police riot when it was happening. I think we need to remember that what might seem harsh now is sort of like the beginnings of the movement. And we know how this particular story ended – two thousand years later, Christianity is still a major force in the world, so obviously it wasn't too harsh. [Shay laughs] What about you, Shay?

FS: I love how unapologetic Jesus is in this passage, right? He doesn't back down. He just is like, what's your deal? Of course it's harsh. You either get on

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John 6:60-69

board or you don't. I really appreciate that piece. There isn't any backtracking of, oh, I'm sorry I hurt your feelings! I'm sorry I said it in anger. He's just really flat out, like, "What, does this *offend* you? Tough." I just really appreciate that. And I also love this kind of ending piece where Jesus turns to the people he's closest to and says, "Well, do you want to leave too?" He in some ways gives them an out – I mean, it's also a challenge, too. [Brian laughs] Everyone else has bailed, do you feel like it too?

But also this piece of Peter's response, where he says, you know, "Where would we go? You have the words of eternal life." I think that, when we talk about Christianity and Jesus being someone who centered his life and mission around the oppressed and the marginalized – oppressed and marginalized people realize that they have no where else to go. This is where life comes from. This work for justice, this struggle for justice – that's where life is found and that's where liberation is found. I think that that's both comforting for us, and also it's a challenge to the folks who can easily walk away, right? To recognize that there's privilege in being able to walk away from a justice movement and say, "Well, you were too harsh. This doesn't affect me." When it's like, the rest of us are sitting there saying, where else are we going to go? This is our lives. This is the movement that we're invested in.

[outro music]

B: This has been Reading Queerly, the queer lectionary podcast. I'm Brian—

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.

PODCAST END

Transcript by Taylor Walker

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