

## 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.

FS: This week we are taking a little bit of a break from the lectionary readings, mostly because, every once in awhile, we read the lectionary texts and are just like, *whaaat* the hell do we have to say about that? [laughs] [Brian imitates a sad trombone] So... yeah. This is one of those weeks where we're going to deviate a little bit!

One of the things that happened over the summer, kind of towards the end of the summer, is that Brian released this really incredible video about queer sacred spaces based on his time on vacation at Fire Island Pines. We thought it would be cool to be able to talk about queer sacred spaces today, about the places that we have been able to be our whole selves and have been fed spiritually as queer and trans folks. And also, kind of the beauty and importance of those spaces. So Brian, I'd love to know, what was it that inspired you to make this video, and what was that process like for you?

B: So the inspiration came very immediately. I was out on a run. Fire Island doesn't have roads – there's just sort of these like boardwalk walkways that are in a grid. So, like a city grid, but they're boardwalks. [laughs] They're like thin boardwalk grids that go through the wilderness, and that the houses are all off of. My boyfriend Peter and I were going out on a jog, running on these boardwalks. There's this main boardwalk called Fire Island Boardwalk that runs down into the harbor, sort of the heart of the island. And it's also the pathway that, at 5 pm every day, sort of everyone from the island converges at the harbor for this thing called Tea. It's like drinking and music and some dancing and socializing and mingling. During the week it's more casual and on Saturdays and Fridays it's like really packed.

We were running in the afternoon, and it's like, oh, later tonight, more people will be walking on this path. And then I got thinking about how queer people have

been walking up and down this boardwalk, every day, every summer, for years, for decades – dating back to the 50s and 60s. And I was just thinking about how hallowed this ground is, just by the sheer number of queer people that have been here. Almost all the people who come to the Fire Island Pines and Fire Island Cherry Grove neighborhoods – it's almost all queer people. You're like surrounded by queer people. Sometimes you forget that straight people even exist. [laughs] There are some straight people there, but it's like, *so many* queer people have been here in this spot. And that just made me think of pilgrimages in general, and of walking meditations, and it sort of spiraled from there.

There were some other experiences that I had that week that really reminded me of how sacred of a place this place is, and how, so often, sacred places or people or rituals are divorced from queerness. It doesn't have to be that way. Queerness is sacred as well. And so I just wanted to notice that in me, and claim it and celebrate it.

FS: Yeah, I love that. It reminds me – there have been like two times where I've been really in a space where I felt really whole in both my queerness and my spirit, and both times have been in really small town gay bars. [Brian *mhm's*] I find often that in larger cities, queer spaces are really segregated depending on your identity. Gender and all of that stuff. But in a small town, when this place is the only game in town, it's so diverse. It's diverse in age and in body type and ethnicity and gender identity and orientation.

One of the times was in this small college town. Everyone was there. It was the first time I'd really been out dancing since I transitioned, and also since I'd gotten divorced because of my transition. I remember being in that space and feeling, like, so in my body in a way that I just never feel and felt in other spaces. I remember it feeling so holy and so, like, "This is what it's like to be a whole person and to be fully embodied."

And then, many years later, I was with some folks who were actually parishioners of mine. I had traveled with them to a small town in order to do a grave-side service for one of the men's mothers. And they said, "The one thing that we want to do with you is that we want to go to the gay bar in town. It's in a former McDonald's." [both laugh] So like, you go in the door and it's the McDonald's tile—

B: Yesss. I love it.

FS: —on the floor, and the DJ booth is where the drive-thru used to be, and at ten o'clock at night they do a drag show. And I normally hate drag, but this night

it was like queens doing stuff from the Dixie Chicks [laughs] and from like, all this stuff. I just remember kind of sitting back and watching the night and thinking that like, if Jesus were alive, this is where he would be. [Brian *mhm*'s] Like, he'd be hanging out in this space with these people. Not because they needed to be saved, but because this would have been his community. These would have been his people.

B: *Yeah.*

FS: And this would have been where he was building and starting his movement. It was such a moment for me of like, oh, *right!* This is what this is about. It's not about, like, my queerness is on one side and my Christianity is on the other. It's like, no, these two things feed each other and are brought together in me in a way that's really beautiful. The kingdom of God is here in me, in this space, in us together, in this diversity of bodies and genders and loving and family. That is just so beautiful and so holy to me.

B: And it's not just that my gayness or my transness can fit into the same faith that I had before, or could be Southern Baptist or evangelical or Pentecostal – there's something about queerness that is inherent in the gospel. If your gospel isn't informed by and transformed by queerness, then it's not the gospel.

And a few days later, after I had this thought on the boardwalk, we were at Showtunes Sunday. Everyone comes and they play music videos of showtunes, and everyone in the space sings along at the top of their lungs. It reminded me of being back at church, or being at youth group, and singing together as a congregation these songs that everyone knows. And even a few times throughout the night, the drag queen will dress up like a nun and they'll play a clip from Sister Act and they call it church. They make people come up on the stage and be a part of the church choir.

I think about how queerness is important for straight and cisgender Christians because we have a crucial key [laughs] to the divine and to the gospel. And, also, that this queer-informed spirituality is so important to queer people who have had Christian backgrounds and are no longer religious. Not that we need to bring queer people back to the Church, because for many queer people that's not the right fit for them. But that queer people are already aware of something bigger than themselves, and are aware of how we all need each other and how we're all wrapped up together. I think that, regardless of whether you're an LGBT Christian or not, or you're a questioner or a seeker or you're a nun, naming those things that are bigger than you or outside of you or that are special or holy or sacred, or whatever the word is, it's important to celebrate that. That exists in

queerness and that exists in cruising and that exists in sex and that exists in bathhouses. All of that can be holy, too.

So yeah. That was sort of my takeaway for that video. [laughs] And if you haven't seen it, we will put a link to it in the shownotes. If you don't know where the shownotes are, you can go to [QueerTheology.com/listen](http://QueerTheology.com/listen). Every single podcast episode we've ever released are all there, sorted by book of the Bible and date that we released them.

If you love this podcast and want more of it, and want to support it, we would love your support. You can head on over to [Patreon.com/queertheology](https://Patreon.com/queertheology) to get some perks and help keep us alive and running, or you can head on over to [QueerTheology.com/community](http://QueerTheology.com/community) to be part of our online community and get access to some premium resources. We would love to dive even deeper in queerness and in faith with you.

FS: And if you haven't yet, make sure that you subscribe to Queer Theology on Youtube! We've been uploading lots more videos recently, and you're going to want to make sure that you check them all out. You can search Queer Theology on Youtube or you can get there through the link on our website. We hope to see you over there soon!

[outro music]

B: The Queer Theology podcast is just one of many things that we do at [QueerTheology.com](http://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](http://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