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## 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! Before we jump in, just a quick reminder that this coming Sunday we are doing a webinar all about Christianity and polyamory. It's happening Sunday, October 14<sup>th</sup> at 3 pm EST, 7 pm GMT. You can sign up at [QueerTheology.com/polyamory](http://QueerTheology.com/polyamory). And now let's dive into the lectionary text! Today we'll be looking at the reading for Sunday, October 14<sup>th</sup>. We're going to be looking at Hebrews 4:12-16. I will read it to you now from the Common English Bible.

...because God's word is living, active, and sharper than any two-edged sword. It penetrates to the point that it separates the soul from the spirit and the joints from the marrow. It's able to judge the heart's thoughts and intentions. No creature is hidden from it, but rather everything is naked and exposed to the eyes of the one to whom we have to give an answer.

Also, let's hold on to the confession since we have a great high priest who passed through the heavens, who is Jesus, God's Son; because we don't have a high priest who can't sympathize with our weaknesses but instead one who was tempted in every way that we are, except without sin.

Finally, let's draw near to the throne of favor with confidence so that we can receive mercy and find grace when we need help. [CEB]

Okay Shay, what [laughs] do you do with this passage, and how does it relate to queer folks?

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**How do we relate to God?**

**Hebrews 4:12-16**

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FS: I think the big, huge, massive thing for me is that this passage gets trotted out all of the time to talk about how the Bible should be respected and read, and how it works, and all of that stuff. And this passage is not about the Bible. [laughs] Because... the Bible did not exist when this passage was written. So whoever the author of Hebrews is – some people say that it was Paul, some people say lots of other things – when they talk about God’s word, they’re not talking about the Bible as we know it. I think that this is one of those situations where a modern, particularly evangelical, community is reading back into the text how they’ve learned to read the text, even though that’s not at all what the text says.

So like, any time that we have reference to God’s word, the best guess that we’ve got as to what it’s talking about is talking about Jesus. So when we think about this passage in the context of the life of Jesus, and Jesus as a living, active, person, ministry, still speaking – that changes how we read this text and what we’re supposed to take from it. This isn’t about us reading the Bible as this thing that judges our hearts and minds and condemns us. [laughs] This is about, like, how do we relate to the ministry and the teachings of Jesus? How are we working to follow Jesus better? And when you read it in that context, the whole tenor of this text changes. Now it’s about this living relationship that we have with Jesus, with the life and ministry of Jesus, with Jesus as our high priest who empathizes with us because he was human, and through whom we have this different relationship with the divine. That’s much different than, the Bible exists to smack you over the head with rules and judgement.

It took a lot of work to be able to read this text and understand that this isn’t about the Bible, because that’s how it was always taught to me. I’m excited to grapple with that and lean into a new reading of this text.

B: Right, totally. We put together a bunch of resources on specifically how to read the Bible at [QueerTheology.com/resources](http://QueerTheology.com/resources). There’s a little link at the top for the section on all of the resources on how to read the Bible.

Along with what you were saying, Shay, also it’s important for me to remember that the Bible as a whole, and in particular the Christian scriptures, are not a monolithic book, right? It’s a bunch of different pieces of writing by different authors. They’re commenting on each other, they’re commenting on the world around them, sometimes on the same things that are happening, sometimes on different things. They’re critiquing and sometimes disagreeing and offering different perspectives. They’re sort of figuring out, especially with the Christian scriptures, it’s largely Jewish folks who are saying, “We had this understanding of

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the way things were, and now we're starting to see things differently. And what do we do with that?" That, you know, in Christianity, for Christians, in some respects started with Jesus – but we've talked in some podcast episodes about how Jesus positioned himself in the lineage, in the legacy, as part of the movement of John the Baptist before him. So it didn't even *really* start with Jesus. Jesus is the product of Mary and John the Baptist.

And that's something that continues after Jesus, which we see in scripture, in Acts, that folks are wrestling with – what happened, who is this, how are we supposed to be? At some point, right, folks got together, men got together and said like, this is the Bible™. But there has been, from the dawn of time, through Judaism, through Jesus, into the early church and into the modern church, this ongoing legacy of listening for God's word in the still small voice, in the person of Jesus, in the observed world around us. 'Where two or more are gathered, there I am,' in the midst of community. So to do this work of wrestling with God, listening for God's word, finding how it relates to this person of Jesus and what that means for us now, in our lives here and now – is not a newfangled idea or a 'progressive' thing or a heretical thing. It's very much a deep tradition of our faith.

[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