

PODCAST START:

[intro music]

Brian G. Murphy: Welcome to the Queer Theology podcast-

Fr. Shay Kearns: Where each episode we take a queer look at the week's lectionary readings.

Fr. Shay Kearns: We're the co-founders of queertheology.com and the hosts for this podcast. I'm Father Shay Kearns.

Brian G. Murphy: And I'm Brian G. Murphy.

Fr. Shay Kearns: Welcome back to the Queer Theology podcast. This week is January 27th. We're looking at the passages in Luke. We're going to look at Luke 1-4 and then 4:14-21. It's kind of a weird mix of passages. And I'm going to read them for us. This is from the Contemporary English Version.

Fr. Shay Kearns: "Many people have tried to tell the story of what God has done among us. They wrote what we had been told by the ones who were there in the beginning and saw what happened. And so, I made a careful study of everything and then decided to write, and tell you exactly what took place, honorable Theophilus. I have done this to let you know the truth about what you have heard.

Fr. Shay Kearns: "As Jesus returned to Galilee with the power of the spirit, news about him spread everywhere. He taught in the Jewish meeting place and everyone praised him. Jesus went back to Nazareth where he had been brought up and as usual, he went to the meeting place on the Sabbath. When he stood up to read from the scriptures, he was given the book of Isaiah the prophet. He opened it and read, 'The Lord's spirit has come to me, because he has chosen me to tell the good news to the poor. The Lord has sent me to announce freedom for prisoners, to give sight to the blind, to free everyone who suffers and to say, this is the year the Lord has chosen.'

Fr. Shay Kearns: "Jesus closed the book, then handed it back to the man in charge and sat down. Everyone in the meeting looked straight at Jesus. Then Jesus said to them, 'What you have just heard me read has come true today.'"

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Brian G. Murphy: Amen.

Fr. Shay Kearns: Yeah.

Brian G. Murphy: This first sentence of this chapter just really popped out at me today. You know, I don't think I've ever read the contemporary English version before. When we were pulling up the passage it just sort of opened up in this translation. And it just really captivated me, "Many people have tried to tell the story of what God has done among us." And that just for me, could be like the thesis statement of the whole Bible.

You know, so often at Queer Theology when we want to talk about sort of, being LGBTQ, about formulating a faithful sexuality, about having healthy relationships, about what the Bible says about money, or power, or politics, or love, or marriage, or any number of things. What we first have to do is, there's always sort of a prerequisite to whatever that conversation is. And that's sort of a how to read the Bible conversation.

Brian G. Murphy: And so, we're really excited this year, in 2019, be launching a sort of mini course on how to read the Bible. So, if that's something that interests you, you can head on over to queertheology.com and join our mailing list and you'll get the first word about it once that's, we're ready to roll that out.

But in order to sort of, be faithful to the Bible, we have to understand what it is, and what it's trying to do. And this sentence just so lovingly captures it for me, "Many people have tried to tell the story of what God has done among us."

And here in Luke, this is sort of, one account of what this author sees and understands God to be doing in the world. And it acknowledges that people, they wrote what had been told by the ones who were there in the beginning. People have been telling each other over time sort of orally, "This is what happened, this is what happened, this is what happened."

And then folks started writing it down. And there's different accounts of it, right? There's Luke, and Matthew, and Mark, and the letters. And they all have a bit of a different perspective, because they're all sort of, trying to make sense of this thing that God is doing in the world.

And then, for the author of Luke, Luke 4 becomes almost like, the thesis statement of Jesus' ministry. And so, to Luke, this is what God was doing in the life and ministry of Jesus. This sums it up. What would you say, Shay?

Fr. Shay Kearns: Yeah, I love what you said about that first sentence, it's such a beautiful piece of writing. But I'm also struck by, Luke's kind of hubris to say, "I decided to write and tell you exactly what took place." I think it's so funny to me because we also have Matthew and Mark and John, and those four books don't always agree. We're still left with, even though Luke is really sure that he is writing the definitive truth, we're still left with these four different versions. The earliest church thought that they were all important enough to keep them as part of this one sacred text, and to put them in conversation with one another. I think that that, too, is part of reading scripture, is acknowledging the places where even the writers of scripture are naming what they're doing, and we can see what they name, and we can also see that they didn't actually achieve what they set out to do. That's okay, and that's part of this text.

But I love too, you know, you and I have talked about this Luke 4 passage in articles, and we talk about it in a unit of Reading Queerly, which is in Sanctuary Collective, how much we love this text and this statement of Jesus, about what his work is about. All of the people that say that Jesus came to die and save us from our sins, and that social justice is a distraction from the real truth of the gospel. In Luke 4, Jesus says, "I've come to release prisoners and heal people and take care of the people who suffer," so you can't say that social justice isn't a part of what Jesus' life and ministry was about and what his gospel is.

I think that this text, too, is interesting, because they cut it off right before the people try to throw Jesus off of a cliff.

Brian G. Murphy: Yep, yep.

Fr. Shay Kearns: He speaks the truth, and the people are like, "Oh, hell no." And I think that that's part of what it means to follow Jesus too, that you speak truth and you make a claim and you do justice work and it gets you into trouble. That's part of it, and that's kind of the beauty of being a follower of Jesus, and the terrifying part, but the good part is that you don't have to do that work alone. We are all in it together and hopefully working towards some of the same goals.

Brian G. Murphy: Yeah, like this passage doesn't say the Lord's spirit has come to me because He has chosen me to die for your sins that you might say the sinner's prayer and get into Heaven.

Fr. Shay Kearns: Right, right.

Brian G. Murphy: It's like this, it says this is what I'm here to do, and then later on in his ministry, Jesus says, like, "And I need you to do it with me, we've got to do it together." And that's just really exciting for me, and I'm excited to be a part of that life and that work. So often, people tell me I'm not a Christian, and sometimes I even wonder that myself. What exactly do I believe, and if I don't believe x, y, or z about God or Jesus or the Bible or whatever, does that mean I'm not a Christian?

And then I read passages like this and I'm like, "Oh, no, I am all in for this movement. I am here. Make me a fisher of people."

[outro music]

Brian G. Murphy: 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.

Fr. Shay Kearns: 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.

Brian G. Murphy: We'll see you next week.

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