

August 25, 2019

Take Care
Isaiah 58:9-14

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PODCAST START:

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 co-founders of QueerTheology.com and the hosts for this podcast. I'm Father Shay Kearns

B: And I'm Brian G. Murphy.

B: Hello, hello, hello. Today is Sunday, August 25th, 2019 or at least that is the day that it is when this episode comes out. Actually, Shay is with me here in Los Angeles for a week so we're recording a little bit ahead of schedule. It's really been exciting and fun to have you here for the past week, Shay.

FS: It's been super fun to be here.

B: A few days ago, we got together with some podcast listeners, some subscribers of the mailing list, some members of Sanctuary Collective for some park theology instead of pub theology. For an evening of getting to know each other, talking about everything from therapy, to veggie-tales, to Hebrew translations of the Bible, and all points in between. It's been really a lot of fun. What have been some highlights for you Shay?

FS: Yeah, I just love it when we get to meet with people face-to-face and hear more of their stories and find out how they found out about the website and podcast. But really, just to be in community with people and that's been super fun. It's been great to think a little bit about what's next for Queer Theology. To think about how we're doing things and what we can do better and what we want to do more of that's been really exciting, too.

B: Yeah, we got lots of exciting plans that we've been working on. One of them has already come to fruition. We are in the middle of registration for a course on How to Read the Bible. I think this is so important, I know that for me, I grew up reading the Bible, constantly talking with the Bible in church all the time. Really feeling like I knew the ins and outs of the Bible and then when I realize I was queer, having the Bible turn around on me and it becoming like a weapon used against me. Then, spending so many years having to fend myself against the Bible. And then, so feeling like I really knew the Bible, I remember as a closeted teenager and opening the Bible trying to figure out what the passages about homosexuality meant and did it condemn me. What about bisexuality, what about this transgender that I heard of? And then, fast forward years in the future and realizing that being a gay or a bi-sexual Christian wasn't quite enough as much as I thought I knew the Bible in and out, there was just so much more to learn and reading a lot of books by serious academics has been helpful. Working alongside folks that had seminary education has been very helpful. One of our goals at QueerTheology.com has always been to sort of make all of this juicy stuff that happens in Academia available to everyone so that you don't have to go hundred thousand dollars into debt and go to spend 3 years in seminary to learn how to read the Bible. Because I think there's something more to just picking it up and reading like it's the book in order to get the most out of it. So I'm super excited about this

class if you're interested in learning more, you can go to queertheology.com/biblecourse, with or without a hyphen, it will take you there. Shay, what can we look forward to in this course?

FS: Yeah. We're going to look at a ton of different stuff, we're gonna a lot about how to read the Bible in context meaning both in what kind of literature it is, but also the historical context and really unpacking that and how knowing that context impacts how we read scripture. We're gonna look at tools for you to do this work on your own, so that you don't have to be necessarily beholden to going to seminary. We are just gonna give a hint and a tease of starting to read the Bible through a queer and trans lens. We are going to do an entire course on just that later on, but you'll get just a hint of that in this course.

B: I'm super, super, super excited. So before we jump into this week's lectionary text, this is something that we don't really ever do. But if you are a fan of this podcast, it would really mean a lot to us if you could go and leave a review on iTunes, or Stitcher or wherever it is that you listen to this podcast. The more reviews that there are, the more it helps other people find the podcast with the algorithms, and also just having your voice on there gives a sense of what this podcast is about for folks who might be considering it. We do from time to time get anti-LGBTQ Christians leaving one star, hateful reviews on there. So having your voice to counterbalance all of that negativity would be super meaningful. So iTunes, Stitcher, the Google podcast, or wherever you listen to your podcast, go on there and drop a review we would really appreciate it. And now, unto this week's text. It is Isaiah 58:9-14 I will read it to you now.

Then you will call, and the Lord will answer;
you will cry for help, and God will say, "I'm here."
If you remove the yoke from among you,
the finger-pointing, the wicked speech;
if you open your heart to the hungry,
and provide abundantly for those who are afflicted,
your light will shine in the darkness,
and your gloom will be like the noon.
The Lord will guide you continually
and provide for you, even in parched places.
He will rescue your bones.
You will be like a watered garden,
like a spring of water that won't run dry.
They will rebuild ancient ruins on your account;
the foundations of generations past you will restore.
You will be called Mender of Broken Walls,
Restorer of Livable Streets.

If you stop trampling the Sabbath,
stop doing whatever you want on my holy day,
and consider the Sabbath a delight,

sacred to the Lord, honored,
and honor it instead of doing things your way,
seeking what you want and doing business as usual,
then you will take delight in the Lord.
I will let you ride on the heights of the earth;
I will sustain you with the heritage of your ancestor Jacob.
The mouth of the Lord has spoken.

Amen. Shay, I know you really love this passage, why is that?

FS: I do. I love the poetry of it for one, but I also love how it really turns so much of what I was taught as a kid on its head. I remember growing up and being told that the reason that America was in such bad shape, the reason that there were abortion and mass shootings was because we had taken prayer out of public school.

B: Right!

FS: I remember Carmen, God bless....

B: Carmen the life coach?

FS: Yes ...had this entire monologue about putting God back in America again. Quoted all these statistics that said that the rise, the violence happened exactly when they took God out of schools, whatever.

But I love that this passage talks so clearly about when you call, the Lord will answer, but it's if you remove the yoke from among you, if you open your heart to the hungry and provide abundantly for those who are afflicted. Then, your light will shine in the darkness. Again, when we talk about the fact that social justice is baked into scripture, that it's all throughout, that this idea of caring for the poor and those who are marginalized is at the heart of what it means to follow God. We are talking about through all of these passages. I think that this is a passage that's so clear. It's also a passage that it isn't like if you berate your neighbors for their religious beliefs, or lack of religious beliefs. If you make sure that you fly the American flag, if you protest the abortion clinics, and your light will shine in the darkness. No. You take care of the poor and hungry. And to me, my favorite is this, they would rebuild ancient ruins on your account, you will be called mender of broken walls and restorer of livable streets. I think that's such a beautiful image and it's so powerful to think about: that could be the legacy that we're living. This legacy of mending broken walls and restoring livable streets, and that's the work to be done.

B: Yeah. What sticks out for me in this passage, or I guess what comes to mind is: sometimes I think that the prosperity gospel, and God that wants you to be uber rich, and just name and then claim it, which the secular version of that is the law of attraction or whatever. Gets put in conflict with social justice, Christianity. And somehow, social justice, Christianity, in the popular conception gets translated into, God wants you to suffer or that suffering is noble, or that abundance is bad. What I see here is for this marrying of both of those. Not that we should

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be excessively wealthy, or if you donate to your millionaire pastor's church and God will pay your rent. But rather, this idea of removing the yoke and taking care of the hungry goes hand-in-hand with also resting on the Sabbath, and not being ground down. No one wins under capitalism. We're all grinding, and grinding, and grinding, and grinding. The goal of the Hebrew prophets and what I see in Jesus and what I see in my atheist, social justice friends is not that we are constantly miserable, right? But there is enough and we can take care of each other and still rest. Take care of ourselves, our family and the stranger. I think that is an important message for the world today.

FS: Just a reminder, if you want to take this Bible course, it starts really soon. We are going to start it right in the beginning of September. You can sign up for that at queertheology.com/biblecourse. We would love to see you there. It's going to be a really rich and powerful time together.

[outro music plays]

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, Tumblr, Twitter, and Instagram.

B: We'll see you next week.

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