

September 8, 2019

What does it mean to choose life?

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Deuteronomy 30:15-20

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, September 8, 2019 we're going to be looking at Deuteronomy 30:15-20. I will read it to you now from the Common English Bible.

Look here! Today I've set before you life and what's good versus death and what's wrong. If you obey the Lord your God's commandments that I'm commanding you right now by loving the Lord your God, by walking in his ways, and by keeping his commandments, his regulations, and his case laws, then you will live and thrive, and the Lord your God will bless you in the land you are entering to possess.

But if your heart turns away and you refuse to listen, and so are misled, worshipping other gods and serving them, I'm telling you right now that you will definitely die. You will not prolong your life on the fertile land that you are crossing the Jordan River to enter and possess.

I call heaven and earth as my witnesses against you right now: I have set life and death, blessing and curse before you. Now choose life—so that you and your descendants will live— by loving the Lord your God, by obeying his voice, and by clinging to him. That's how you will survive and live long on the fertile land the Lord swore to give to your ancestors: to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Okay Shay, there's some interesting messages in here. What do you make of this?

FS: Yeah, I mean obviously the first thing that comes to mind is just the beauty of this idea of choosing life, and that life and death are set before us, and that we have the opportunity to choose life for ourselves. I think that's really beautiful. I think that this idea of listening to your heart and trusting your heart to be able to choose life is beautiful and I think important especially for queer and trans folks who are often taught to not trust our bodies and our hearts. Instead, we are supposed to just trust things external to us. But I also think that there's something here about, my sense is that this was around the time when the Hebrew people, the Israelites are about to be sent into exile again. Or have been wandering. There's also the sense that by staying close to the community, by doing this work of choosing life, that's what's gonna help them survive all of the hardships that are ahead. I think that stuck out to me on this read. I think in a tumultuous American time, particularly, this sense of choosing life, of investing in your community, of doing the things that will give you survival is really resonating and sticking out to me.

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B: Yeah, you know, we talked in one of the past few weeks about how many of us grew up a conservative type of Christian and got messages about what the Bible meant and was saying. So it's really easy for me to see this and say, oh by walking in the ways of God, and keeping God's commandments, God's regulations, and God's case laws, then you'll live. That the evangelical church gets to define what all of that means? This is a beautiful message for people living in this time, and now we're living in a different time. We have to figure out what does that means for us. I love what you saying about being in excile, being vulnerable, and keeping in the community. I think about how the queer community is such a vibrant life-giving thing for so many people. That part of what is so devastating about the closet is that you're like cut off from this community of people who are like you, who have been there before you, who understand what you're going through, who have made the mistakes so that you might not have to. And so, in many ways, coming out of the closet, or choosing to transition, or getting connected to other queer folks, is choosing life. It's not about, you have to choose this version of God's commandments that some pastor on TV tells you is the right way to honor God. But look in front of yourselves, and see what's good, and see the blessings in your life, and choose to be connected to that.

I often say, just choose life. We know the research about what happens if you accept or don't accept your queer kids. We know the research about accepting yourself as a queer person. We know the research about having supportive friends. Just choose life! I say it all the time. Part of that is an intellectual choice to say, believe good things about yourself and hold on to theology that is life-giving. Part of that is like what Shay is talking about, be in community with people who will take care of you, and nourish you, and understand you, and walk alongside you. Just like the importance of being in communion with queer Christians is so, so, so, so important.

[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.

PODCAST END