

**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, February 2nd, 2020. It's episode 314 of the Queer Theology podcast. Oh my gosh, years keep flying by. Welcome back.

Shay, what are folks need to know this week?

FS: Yeah, so just a quick reminder that our Faithful Sexuality course, the registration is open for that. It's gonna be closing in a week or so, so make sure that you jump on that if you are interested. And as we've said before, if you have any questions about the course, if you are discerning whether or not it's a right fit for you or not, you can feel free to send us an email [connect@queertheology.com](mailto:connect@queertheology.com) or reach out in our DMs on any of the social media.

We're happy to discern with you and see if it might be a right fit. We only want people in the course that are super jazzed about being there and think that it's going to be a good fit. If you've been thinking about it or just not sure, wanna talk more about it, reach out to us.

B: I can't believe this is our 3rd week talking about this course on the podcast and I am just now realizing that I have not yet said: "Slide into our DMs" [laughter]. So slide into those DMs and we would love to chat more with you about it. And if you are ready to dive in, [QueerTheology.com/faithfulsexuality](https://QueerTheology.com/faithfulsexuality) is where you can learn more and sign up.

Bada bing bada boom!

Before we dive in, just a reminder as always, that this podcast is brought to you by over 125 supporters on Patreon.

FS: Our Patreons not only help to keep this show on the air but also support all of the free resources that we're creating and have created over at [QueerTheology.com](https://QueerTheology.com). That stuff like articles, videos, PDF guides, every time we jump on Facebook live, all that is paid for by our Patreon supporters.

So thank you, thank you, thank you to all of the people that have supported us on Patreon.

B: So this week we want to give a shout out to Beatrice and Indigo, who we first met at a Queer Theology meetup here in Southern California and in addition to being supporters of us on Patreon, Indigo was also featured on the podcast at the end of last year. So thank you Beatrice and Indigo.

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## What Does God Require?

Micah 6:1-8

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FS: If you enjoy this show and want to support it, you can do that for as little as \$2/month at [patreon.com/queertheology](https://patreon.com/queertheology). You can also learn more about why we're asking for your support in the first place. You can check out. We've got some perks over at [patreon.com/queertheology](https://patreon.com/queertheology).

B: This week's question had a lot of backstory and so we're going to distill it down and summarize it. It works out nicely because we've got a variation of this question a number of times over the years. It's basically this:

So I've found Queer Theology and been exploring the intersections of queerness, and Christianity, and liberation theology. My mind is blown open and this is also awesome, and I want more. I want to dive deeper. And so, should I go to seminary to learn more, and pursue this, and be able to share that with others?

So Shay, as our resident seminary graduate, [laughter] if folks are jazzed about theology and finding a new fire maybe coming from a different version of Christianity that wasn't as inspiring or realizing in a sort of scales falling off out of your eyes - Paul style. [laughter] The goodness of the queer gospel is seminary, the right next step, or what should folks be considering?

FS: Yeah! So I have a lot of opinions and feelings about the seminary question, so let me preface this by saying: I think seminary is fantastic. It can be a really incredible experience. The wisdom that I received in seminary, the community of friends that I made there, was literally life-changing. Also, at that same token, the debt that I incurred at seminary is life-changing, and has altered the course of my life, and has severely limited what I'm able to do. I graduated from seminary with probably \$100,000 in debt, which is astronomical.

B: Mind-blowing!

FS: And also, I will never pay that back with a church job, right? The economic reality is such that churches don't often have a lot of money to pay people. So I always offer that as a disclaimer upfront that I think that the idea that seminary is the only place that you can go to learn some of this stuff is not true. The reality that for someone like me, I felt called to ministry, I knew that as a queer and trans person that getting a job at a church, getting respect at all, as a queer and trans minister was going to be really difficult. So I went to a seminary that had name recognition because I knew that I needed a degree from that seminary in order to open doors. And indeed it has open doors and created some moderate opportunities. Opportunities that as a queer and trans person I would not have had otherwise.

And so that's a long way of saying, I don't know if seminary is right for you. I think that for some people, depending on the work that you're called to do. If you feel called to be an ordained minister, in a denominational church. You will probably have to go to seminary. That's the reality.

The good thing is that some seminaries are starting to realize that the student loan debt that they're placing upon their graduates is not justice based. So lots of seminaries are starting to offer free seminary education which is amazing. There are other scholarships. I would say if you can go to seminary without incurring any debt at all, and that's what you want to do, awesome!

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Go for it! And also, this idea that you have to go to seminary in order to learn things just isn't true. But you do have to potentially have to work harder outside of seminary to learn the things that you might want to learn. So the discernment question is tricky. Though I do think that being in community with people who can help you discern what you're called to do is a great first step. So my first recommendation always to folks is what community are you part of? Whether that's a church community, whether that's an online community, who are you walking with that can help you discern these things? And there's both a sense of internal calling that folks have, but also, is anyone actually asking you to lead? Because seminary is really a degree that's meant for leaders. It's a degree that's, a master divinity is really designed to be an active and ministry leadership degree. If all you want is the course work, I think there are other ways to go about that.

B: Yeah. So if you are looking for a first step to either start learning more about than you currently have before taking a plunge into seminary. Or you're looking for a community to sort of walk alongside you as you figure out if seminary is right for you. Sanctuary Collective might be a good spot for you. It's both those things. It's full of resources to help you take your queer and liberation theology knowledge deeper to learn, explore, and grow. Also, it's chock-full of 100/150 LGBTQ Christians and straight cis-gender supporters from around the world that were wrestling with this question. I know that over the years that we've had Sanctuary Collective, a few people have started at seminary, have decided to not go to seminary at all, have pursued spiritual direction, spiritual direction and coach training and certification. So there's a lot of avenues for you and the folks in that community, including Shay and I, are happy to walk alongside of you and that process. I think one of the reasons why we created [QueerTheology.com](http://QueerTheology.com) in general, and Sanctuary Collective in particular was to take all of the really dry academic stuff that is often inaccessible and make it more relevant, more resonant, and more accessible for folks. And so Sanctuary Collective is one of the places that you can start getting a taste of that. Of course, if Sanctuary Collective isn't right for you, there's also a ton of free resources all over our website and social media so you can begin that process as well. If you're interested in learning more about Sanctuary Collective, go to [QueerTheology.com/community](http://QueerTheology.com/community) and check that out.

Okay, so let us open up our Bibles and queer this text.

FS: This week we are taking a look at Micah, which is a fan favorite [laughter]. Both a fan favorite and a Brian and Shay favorite. So I'm gonna go ahead and read it for us. This is Micah 6:1-8. This is from the Common English Bible.

Hear what the Lord is saying:

Arise, lay out the lawsuit before the mountains;  
let the hills hear your voice!

Hear, mountains, the lawsuit of the Lord!  
Hear, eternal foundations of the earth!

The Lord has a lawsuit against his people;  
with Israel he will argue.

“My people, what did I ever do to you?

How have I wearied you? Answer me!  
I brought you up out of the land of Egypt;

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I redeemed you from the house of slavery.  
I sent Moses, Aaron, and Miriam before you.  
My people, remember what Moab's King Balak had planned,  
and how Balaam, Beor's son, answered him!  
Remember everything from Shittim to Gilgal,  
that you might learn to recognize the righteous acts of the Lord!"

What does the Lord require?  
With what should I approach the Lord  
and bow down before God on high?  
Should I come before him with entirely burned offerings,  
with year-old calves?  
Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams,  
with many torrents of oil?  
Should I give my oldest child for my crime;  
the fruit of my body for the sin of my spirit?  
He has told you, human one, what is good and  
what the Lord requires from you:  
to do justice, embrace faithful love, and walk humbly with your God.

B: Hm, hm, hm, hm! I just love it.

FS: Yes, it's very beautiful.

B: So I'm just about this particular passage for two, maybe three reasons. So first up, is I like the prophets. I feel like a broken record here just saying that it has been, reading the Bible again with fresh eyes has been so insightful to me and a reminder that justice is at the heart of our faith. It's not a secondary thing. This is another reminder, it's all over the Bible, every week we are talking about it. Justice is key and so, just like the prophets in particular where they put it so both plainly, put a point on it, and also poetically. It's just, "Oh yes!" It's just clear. You don't have to dig deep or understand historical context to get it, it's just do justice, love mercy, walk humbly.

The first half of this, or the middle section, it's starting to get a little nuance or nerdy or historical. There are just words, and places, and people that we might not immediately know. And it reminds me of the process of going through the How to Read the Bible course, journey into the Bible. One of the prompts you had was to read through it and ask all the questions that come up for you. Then start trying to answer them. So this text that at first brush, I'm just "Yeah, justice! That's what I take from this. Just justice. Go justice!" There's also I think, if you wanted to, you could clearly sit and spend time with this passage for weeks or months, and really dive into who are these people, who's Moses, who's Aaron, who's Miriam, who's Beor's son. What is this slavery that they were redeemed from. There's a really rich and vibrant, perhaps complex back story. That is informing this poetic, prophetic statement towards the end of this passage. And so it's sort of a yes and of. Sometimes you get this nice little meme-able nuggets. But also, that comes from a place of wrestling and struggling, and informed by so much more.

What about you, Shay?

FS: Yeah, I mean I love this passage mostly because of its simplicity. Right? You get this long, winded, kind of litany. It's almost like this litany that we could repeat today: What have you been told? Don't have sex before marriage. Don't be gay. Go to church every Sunday. Give 10% of your money. Right? All of these things where God gives us this litany of - these are all the things that have been told you to do in order to be faithful. Then, God ends it with, "No actually I asked you to do justice, and love mercy, and walk humbly, and that's it. So get on that." [laughter] I think that to me it's a good redirect, it's a good recentering when I get all up in my head about like, "Oh I need to be doing X,Y, and Z. And I should be figuring out A,B, and C. I should do this, and this, and this." And then it's like, "Oh no, okay. What does it look like right now, in this moment, to love justice? What does it look like right now to be merciful? What does it look like right now to walk humbly?" I think that that can be a good recentering. You know we talked a couple of weeks ago, Zoe's question about being on this hamster wheel of anxiety and I think this verse and passage could also be a great response to that. Like, sit yourself down, take some deep breaths, answer these three questions.

For me, part of the journey of being human and following in the way of Jesus, all of these things, is often asking myself, "What's the next correct step?" I don't have to figure out what does justice look like for the rest of my life? It's like what does justice look like in the next hour? What can I do? What do I do? Where is injustice showing up in my life right now? Where is a lack of mercy showing up? That's why I love this passage because of that reorientation, and the fact that it gets us off of that treadmill.

B: Also, can I just take a little moment for a personal nugget? That one of Shay and I's best friends is named Micah, and Micah is the person who introduced us to each other. We met through Micah many, many years ago. This passage has a special place in my heart because of him and how he connected us together. And also, if you've ever wondered where the name Sanctuary Collective comes from, it comes from this project that Micah and I did. Oh god! I'm so old at this point, it was probably 10 years ago.

FS: More than that, I think.

B: So Micah had been queer at a Christian college at Eastern University and felt isolated, and alone, and unsupported. And so he wanted to change that for queer folks at Christian colleges who were coming behind him. So we started this project - this year-long project to support young adults that were organizing for LGBTQ activism in Christian communities. And assembled this amazing team of mentors and supporters, and also, a prayer team. Brought 12-20 people to New York city for weekend-long training, and sent them back into their communities with their mentors. It's a really cool thing that we called Sanctuary Collective. Then retired that name for a number of years and when we were starting and a community for QueerTheology.com it was so clear that this thing that Micah had started with me is years ago, needed to be resurrected as it were. Then the name was just so apparent and so really cool to see Sanctuary Collective living on as our humble attempt to do justice and love mercy into the world. So that's a cool little personal aside. Don't forget that our Faithful Sexuality Course

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registration is open right now. You can learn more and join up at [QueerTheology.com/community](https://QueerTheology.com/community) and yep, that is all for now and we will see you next week.

[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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