
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.

Hello, hello, hello and welcome back. Today is Sunday, February 23rd, 2020 the year just will not quit. Welcome back to the Queer Theology podcast we're so glad to have you here. Shay, how are you doin'?

FS: I'm good! I'm really good. You know, truckin' along with the winter and all of that kind of stuff, but...

B: Familiar!

FS: Yes! Something I've been, I'm obsessed with this new band called Bonny Light Horseman. It's Anaïs Mitchell who is the writer of Hadestown, joined with a couple of other folk musicians to re envision really, really old traditional songs...

B: Cool!

FS: ...re-invent and re-record them. I started listening to their album, it came out right before I made my trip to L.A. so I was listening to on the plane. And it is just gorgeous. In a couple places they mash-up a couple of traditional songs and it weaves around --- I'm obsessed with it. If you like Anaïs Mitchell, you'll love this album. If you're just interested in folk music, it's high quality. So I'm jazzed about having some new music. I find that that gets me through the winter. [laughter] Having new things to listen to and inspire me is really helpful, so that's been something that's been good in my life lately. What about you?

B: Oh my goodness! I recently went to this thing called Beyoncé Mass which one of my friends from college developed with this seminary professor and some other students from one of their seminary classes. It's a womanist worship service, how black women find their voice, represent the image of God, and create spaces for liberation. It was possibly the most profound experience I've ever had in my entire life. They used all music by Beyoncé or Destiny Child or soundtrack as worship music. And a lot of Beyoncé's music is very spiritual and talks about the image of the IM and the spirit. It was incredible. So the combination of beautiful music, just phenomenally performed by this amazing band, and choir, and quintet of singers, and the visuals, and they served communion and the sermon about community, and dreams, and vision was phenomenal. It was just like so incredible, and jazzed, and I wept a number of times and my boyfriend, who grew up Christian but no longer goes to church turned to me afterward and was like, "If church was always like this, sign me back up!" It was just really, really cool and I am honored to have gotten to go and be a part of it. It was really cool to be able to meet some of the folks that started it, and had a vision for this, and called this forth to live out of an idea. It

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started at the church that my friend was an intern in San Francisco, but has since gone to churches and colleges around the country, and wants to live in Portugal. So I don't know if they have any more scheduled anywhere else, but if you're interested you can go to [BeyoncéMass.com](https://www.beyonce.com) to see some pics and learn some more, but it's just a really, really, really, really cool. I can't stop thinking about it.

FS: It makes me think that one of the gifts of queerness, and transness, and also coming out of the evangelical church has been finding spirit and spirituality in unexpected places, and in places that aren't necessarily considered "religious". Right? I found myself being really moved by listening to this Anaïs Mitchell album, and there are a couple like Biblical references in the album but it's definitely not a religious album, right? And Beyoncé wouldn't necessarily be considered a religious artist and yet, there are so many amazing spaces to find God and spirit in the work of art. And it's really freeing to be able to find that outside of the spaces that we're told that we can find it.

B: Yeah. And I think that being LGBTQ is not the same thing as being black or Latino, and being a gay man is not the same thing as being a woman. And also, I as a white male bisexual person can see the ways in which I find God in my queerness, and then I know in myself that straight cis-folks have something to learn about God from my queer experience. It's then an invitation for me to say, well what, I can only see part of the picture of God from my vantage point. Not in a voyeuristic way, but in a true beloved community way. How can I go into places where I'm invited and through a genuine relationship with friends see God from other perspectives and learn from that? It's not about --- when I went to this Beyoncé Mass I was honored to have been invited and to be a part of this. It wasn't about me saying, "Oh, this is the same thing as being queer." but rather it was, "Oh, this is what this community is doing with their experience and their understanding of God and how cool is that." Sometimes there are parallels and sometimes it's totally different and I think the beauty of anything that breaks the mold of white cis-gender, heterosexual, American patriarchy is a way to question it all and for those of us who are men, or for those of us who are cis-gender, or for those of us who are white, or for those of us who are able-bodied. The ways in which we experience marginalization are an invitation to also reflect on the ways in which we are powerful and privileged. To then work in solidarity in other communities. I think that my queerness calls me to that in the same way that my Christianity does. I'm so thankful for that and I think that my understanding of my queerness is also enriched by the queerness of women, or of black folks, or immigrants. That we all need each other to illuminate God, our community, and even our selves.

FS: Before we dive in, this podcast is brought to you by over 125 supporters on Patreon.

B: Our patrons not only help to keep this show on the air but also support all the free resources we create over at [QueerTheology.com](https://www.queertheology.com). Articles, videos, PDF guides, and so much more. So thank you to all of our Patreon supporters.

FS: This week, we want to give a shout out to Rev. Jonathan Vanderbeck who has been a patron for about three months now! So thank you so much, Rev. Jonathan, we're really grateful for you!

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B: Thank you. If you enjoy this show and want to support it, you can do that for as little as \$2 per month at patreon.com/queertheology. You can learn more why we need your support and check out the perks, there's a few different levels and fun little things at patreon.com/queertheology.

FS: We also just want to give a shoutout, we are in the middle of our course on Faithful Sexuality, but we've got another course coming up on Queering the Bible. We're super excited about that. I just want to let you know that you can jump on the waitlist for that if you are interested in doing the work, finding out how we do the workaround queering scripture and looking at it through a queer lens. We would love to have you, so can jump on the waitlist for that.

B: You can find that waitlist at queertheology.com/queerbible.

FS: OK. On to the show!

This week we've got a reader question from Charlie who is asking a question that I think a lot, a lot, a lot of people are asking. So I'm gonna go ahead and read this email from Charlie.

How can one be gay and still be Christain? I know there is much literature out there in regards to another view/vision of what the bible says about being gay. It says what it says. How can one (me) live as a gay man and not feel like I am rationalizing away what the bible says? Just how do I reconcile this? Am I wrong?

B: Oooh! I feel this in the depths of my soul. I both remember this question so vividly, and clearly, and emotionally, and it was one that I wrestled with for years, and years. I still struggled after I came out. I can really remember that, and also, sometimes now I'm so confident of the goodness of the LGBTQ live, loves and bodies that I'm like, "What do you mean?" It's just so evident. But I think the starting point is that you can know that gay Christians exist because gay Christians exist! You already exist. Perhaps the question of what do you do with that? Is it right? Shameful? Sick? There's perhaps a question to be had there but I think starting with the reality that you exist, and a child of God, and created by God is point one. That is a lot of work. Just you existing. And this question you asked about rationalizing away the teaching of the scripture or teachings about homosexuality or whatever, and I can also hear myself asking that I can hear pastors, and Sunday school teachers accusing me and other people of doing that. But I wanna flip that on its head and say, to deny the goodness of LGBTQ people is to rationalize away that which God has made. God made you. YOU ARE QUEER. No fire and brimstone sermon or twisted teaching on the clobber passages can rationalize away what God has made. If we start there with our existence and start there with being the image of God, that there's something powerful that transcends any argument. Which there are many valid, solid, theological arguments to be made, but I think before you even start looking at those or trying to tackle those, remembering that you exist is an important place to start. What would you add Shay?

FS: I mean that's a great answer and is much better, and more articulate than what I was going to say. I think for me, I am really struck by a couple of things in this question. One of the things is when Charlie says, "I know that there are other visions of what the Bible says about being gay, but it says what it says." And I think the reality is that it's just not true. That this idea that the

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Bible is clear on, frankly just about anything, is just not accurate. I think figuring out your anxiety or anyone's anxiety around what the Bible says has to start with starting to unravel what the Bible is. And how it's read, and how it can be understood. We have just a ton of resources on the website about that. We tackle even just like, how do I know it's okay to be gay? You can find all of that at QueerTheology.com there's a button right on the homepage around that. But I think, and part of that is what helps you get out of this trap of feeling like you're rationalizing because once you realize how many different ways there are to read scripture, and not just how many ways argumentative ways that there are to read scripture. But how many really faithful ways to read scripture? It allows you to unhook from this sense of I have to find the one right way to read this passage, and get out of this, I think Brian early on you called it the hamster wheel right?

B: Yeah.

FS: To get off of that hamster wheel so that you don't feel like you're just running in circles and that you're rationalizing away something that's really important. And then again, I think back to Brian's quote of like you exist, you are valid and worthy, and that alone is proof that gay and Christian can co-exist. I think too, it can be helpful and it was helpful for me when I was just coming out, to look at the lives of other queer Christians who have been out for a long time. Who were settled in both their sexuality and their spirituality, and watch how they navigated these things. That gave me a ton of comfort to see that there are ways to be absolutely faithful, and a faithful follower of Jesus and also hold the goodness of your sexuality and gender identity. Those two things don't have to be opposed to one another.

B: Yeah. It reminds me of in Matthew 7 Jesus tells us that we can sort of judge the truth of a gospel message by looking at the fruits of that message. I think that the fruits of these LGBTQ Christians who have been out and settling their faith testify to its rightness. We will put some links to the various articles, videos, and this 7-part email series on Is it OK to be LGBTQ in the show notes for this episode which you can find at queertheology.com/317. And if you are looking for even more support that is a great way to use Sanctuary Collective. There are folks in all points of the journey: folks that are wrestling with these same questions. Also the folks that Shay was referring to who have been out for a long time and are further along in their journey, and are no longer asking "Is it ok?" but are exploring the ways in which queerness and Christianity enrich one another. So you'll find role models along the way. So you can tap into that at queertheology.com/community.

FS: Ok, let's open up our Bibles and queer this text!

This week's lectionary text is from 2 Peter which is one we haven't done before.

B: We have not!

FS: Which is super exciting. Been doing this for 300 and however many episodes, it's like whoo... a brand new one.

B: A brand new text! Whooo...

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FS: So this is from 2 Peter 1:16-21, I'm gonna go ahead and read it for us, it's pretty short, this is from the Common English Bible.

We didn't repeat crafty myths when we told you about the powerful coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Quite the contrary, we witnessed his majesty with our own eyes. He received honor and glory from God the Father when a voice came to him from the magnificent glory, saying, "This is my dearly loved Son, with whom I am well-pleased." We ourselves heard this voice from heaven while we were with him on the holy mountain. In addition, we have a most reliable prophetic word, and you would do well to pay attention to it, just as you would to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. Most important, you must know that no prophecy of scripture represents the prophet's own understanding of things, because no prophecy ever came by human will. Instead, men and women led by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.

B: Okay, so bear with me for just a second. So a few years ago I was walking down the street in Queens in New York City with my boyfriend, Peter and he just started giggling and smiling. I turned to him and said, "What?" or asked what? He said, "I'm just thankful to be alive at the same time as memes." [laughter] And he just loves internet memes. Specifically the GIF kinds or the text-on-pictures kind. And can just crack himself into a stupor. Sometimes looking at memes or just sometimes remembering a meme that he saw earlier, he's just really obsessed with memes. But the memes are called memes because before they met this graphic on the internet, a meme is a cultural idea and so, I'm seeing in this text a Christian meme if you will that, "This is my dearly loved Son, with whom I am well-pleased." is a meme that it appears in different gospels. In Matthew twice: once at Jesus' baptism and again at Jesus' transfiguration. And throughout the Bible, we find these nuggets of sayings that had been distilled down. Sometimes we here at Queer Theology will say, LGBTQ people have more to offer the world and the church than always defending ourselves against what we are not. Or that queer lives, loves, and bodies are holy. There are things that they can come down to that. Or short and digestible and meaning, and it's not something that we invented in 2019 or 2020. People - humans have been doing this for a while. So I just wanted to note that that fun little nugget about memes and there's something there about Jesus there.

And then, shifting - I just love the way that his passage starts, "We didn't repeat crafty myths when we told you about the powerful coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." the passage goes on that it's not about making a theological case or having the right written arguments about Jesus or reflecting back earlier to this question about how you can know is it okay to be LGBT? About the rightness of LGBT. It goes on to say that, "Quite the contrary, we witnessed his majesty with our own eyes." So how can you witness the power of the gospel and the power the queer lives in your own life? We've said before that if the gospels mean good news and if the gospel is not good news for queer, and trans, and other marginalized folks then it's not good news. It's not the gospel. It's not from God. And that is a message that is repeated over and over again in scripture and has been foundational in the Christian church throughout the millennia. We talked about this earlier, in Matthew 7, judging a tree by its fruits, but there's this idea that we see a lot that about witnessing the majesty, about seeing the fruits of the spirits, about putting faith into

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action, and it's not about saying the right prayer or having the exact same debate team argument. Shay, what would you add to that?

FS: There's something in this passage that all of these pieces about prophecy and about witnessing the majesty of Jesus with their own eyes. There's something in here that's speaking to me about intuition. It feels really tangential which is why I'm hesitating saying it because there's part of this passage right? That's like, prophets aren't speaking for themselves. There's speaking lead by the spirit of God. So when I was at this Rob Bell workshop, he would call people out and be like, "Where are you stuck?" and talk them through what they were experiencing. And in 8 out of 10 of these encounters, two things would happen: one, it was very clear that the person already knew what was wrong, and how to fix it, but just needed to be given space and time to articulate that. Then the other piece is that so many of them had already taken steps to build whatever future that they had been dreaming about without having been able to articulate that future. So there was someone who already started giving away a bunch of their stuff, and in the moment realized, "Oh, I think I need to downsize into a smaller place so that I can pursue my calling." And it was this moment of you knew and you've already been walking that path. So there's something about that in here. Part of what it means to be a follower of Jesus and what it means to come to terms without queer and transness is to trust the voices inside of us, that are saying, "This is the right thing to do." Part of that is we've witnessed the majesty, we know what it is. We just need to own it and do it. And we need to internalize this message of "This is my dearly loved Son, with whom I am well-pleased." Right? I think that that's something that Jesus hears at his baptism, but I don't think that it was specific to Jesus, right? It was a moment where God was saying: pay attention. You're gonna do something great. I've got you. So just do this thing that you already made the choice to be baptized so now go and do the work. You know what the next right step is. So I think that there's something in that for us to pay attention to and sometimes we get wrapped in a passage like this and it's like: "Well, it's about Jesus and it's about the apostles. It's not about us." But it is. It's about us, too and about those particular things. So there's something cool in there for me.

B: Yeah I think this last sentence of this particular passage underlines that. That instead, men and women led by the Holy Spirit spoke from God that, the person of Jesus is now gone and in His place, that work and that movement continues through the leadings of the Holy Spirit, but lived out, and acted out, and embodied, and spread through us, and through you. Through you! You are part of this movement. And as you were saying Shay, that we got to learn to trust ourselves and our callings.

FS: Again, we will put some links to some of the stuff that we've referenced, some of the articles and videos in the show notes. If you wanna do more of this diving into the Bible and finding queerness in it, queerness and transness because it is all through the Bible...

B: All up in it!

FS: We would love to have you in the Queering the Bible Course that's gonna open in a couple of months. But you can join the waitlist now. You'll be one of the first people to find out when

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registration and gets some teasers maybe, along the way. So queertheology.com/queerbible is the place to sign up for that waitlist.

B: 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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