

# BIRD\_WEEK\_47ga9a

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## Speakers:

- Natalie Thomas - 13.25%
- James Thomas - 35.76%
- Bird Treacy - 50.99%

## Notes:

No notes.

<b>Natalie Thomas</b>	00:00:00
Hello and welcome to Bedtime Chapel's weekly Bible study. I'm Natalie Thomas.	
<b>James Thomas</b>	00:00:04
And I'm James Thomas. We are deacons in the Episcopal Diocese.	
<b>Natalie Thomas</b>	00:00:07

Of Massachusetts and Bedtime Chapel grew out of a shared desire of ours to support families trying to center Jesus in a post Christian world.

## **James Thomas**

**00:00:16**

We offer a nightly prayer service that includes a short gospel reading. And in this episode, we'll be covering the readings for the third week of Lent.

## **Natalie Thomas**

**00:00:24**

And we are back today with Bird Tracy, who we know from shared ministry in the Diocese of Massachusetts. This is our fourth episode with Bird, so if you haven't checked out the first three, please do. Not only is there a wealth of scripture knowledge, but Bird is a godly play practitioner and trainer and just tons of wisdom and good ideas about how to integrate center learn from children in our faith.

**00:00:55**

And on that note, Bird, it would be great to hear from you. What are some of the current practices, scriptures prayers that are sustaining your nearness to God right now?

## **Bird Treacy**

**00:01:09**

It's such a good question. And one of those things that in wearing so many hats around different corners of the church world, it can feel really easy to actually fall out of alignment with those actual practices. But one of the things that I'm really making space for in my life and I love where it lands in my life, there's a lot of music that is serving as an anchoring practice.

**00:01:39**

In particular, I sing basically weekly with an online group from Music that makes Community, which is a paperless congregational singing model. And we come together on Monday mornings on a zoom call and it's called Monday Morning Grounding. And it's just such a beautiful way to to be in community while connecting with different prayers and engaging songs and prayers and poems in a way that is really creative.

**00:02:14**

So that's a big piece of what my practice looks like right now. And then a lot of sort of the broader prayer practices that I turn to are really just focused around attention and the use of my attention versus more traditional prayer practices. So it's really being attuned to prayers for my community.

**00:02:48**

Say when I'm dying some materials for my classroom or, or I am very fond of. We have a knitting ministry at our parish and I do a lot of fiber arts. And so a lot of sort of my hands on craft work is about prayer for the recipient or kind of praying into the attention of that work.

## **James Thomas**

**00:03:15**

Okay, great stuff, great stuff. And we always aim for the bedtime chapel. We had no, we have no aspiration of a Pie in the sky podcast. We're always hoping for Practical tips to help people in what we just described in the introduction as a post Christian world. We know it's hard to find that time and we're all, all of us trying to carve out that space to be faithful.

**00:03:36**

So thank you for your insights there. And turning to the readings for this week in our lectionary calendar. You know, in the Synoptic Gospels, the answer to how we follow Jesus is often to follow the law of love. And in John that switches a bit, which is not to say these are mutually exclusive, but the answer is more often something along the lines of believe in me.

**00:04:02**

Can you explain how you understand what's behind these difference approaches, which is to say, follow the law of love or believe in Jesus and explain what you think it looks like to follow Jesus and to do Christian work?

## **Bird Treacy**

**00:04:18**

So the distinction between the law of love and this message of believe in me struck me right in my teenage confirmation education core, which is coming away from that with the sort of axiom of belief which is, or of redemption of being saved by grace through faith, that our salvation is contingent on our belief more so than anything else, that we are granted that grace.

**00:04:58**

And so when I hear believe in me as the sort of answer to how we live, and then I think about that deep measure of grace that goes along with it, I find that as you were saying, that they're not mutually exclusive, that actually the gap between the two is really minimal. When Jesus says believe in me, he isn't saying believe I exist or even believe I died and rose again.

**00:05:36**

He isn't saying that we have to believe in him in this conceptual sense, particularly centuries on when we are not having the same kind of face to face witness, but rather it is believing in a love that transforms systems and overturn structures of power, that to believe in his divinity is to also believe in how much he honored humanity by taking it on and thus showing us how to honor each other's humanity.

## **Natalie Thomas**

**00:06:21**

That's a great interpretation of belief. Not just something that we do with our heads, but something we do with our whole bodies. I think Marcus Borg talks about that as faith as a faith or belief as a heart body centered action, not a head centered action like we often think of it. We referenced this in last week's conversation, but the readings that we're going to hear today for John 7 as well as the readings from next week have contributed sadly to antisemitism in our world.

**00:06:55**

So how do we understand the context of these chapters and how do we correct for this antisemitism in our churches and in our homes.

## **Bird Treacy**

**00:07:05**

I think we have several different responsibilities as parents and caregivers and teachers in grappling with these pieces of scripture to a, as we've talked about over the last couple of weeks, to recognize the context of Jesus as a Jewish figure operating out of that history and tradition. And I also want to acknowledge that there's a really huge piece of what this looks like that's going to have a lot to do with your context, particularly in teaching and working with children, in that this work looks really different if you're in a context where your children are in everyday friendship and community with Jewish families versus if you're in a location where that isn't going to be true.

**00:08:09**

Those are going to be two very different presentations of this challenge. And so I find in the location that I'm at when I am talking about Jesus as a Jewish figure and Jesus in the temple and pointing to things that the children in my community recognize from their friends lives, that that brings up a different set of questions than would arise with children for whom that's a much more foreign concept.

**00:08:41**

So just want to be really clear about that piece. But yes, it is our responsibility to know the history of how these texts have been used as a tool of harm. So knowing the really explicit pieces of like Jews killed Jesus rhetoric, which is in fact deeply useless rhetoric in the sense of Jesus's wider community was largely all Jews.

And that's not, that's not helpful here. That doesn't actually tell us anything about the systems of power and empire that are involved in Jesus's death. But it also, especially in the work of teaching and reading these scriptures, we need to be really conscious of naming our shared context with our Jewish friends and neighbors.

**00:09:36**

So pointing us back towards Advent, I always, when I'm reading Isaiah, for example, with the children in my community, I'm really clear about, yes, the prophecies in Isaiah for us point towards Jesus, but we don't own those scriptures. Those are a shared text. And while that is how we read our history into this, we are not the only ones who get to read and interpret that.

**00:10:08**

And so being really explicit about those elements of our shared history is essential. And being really careful and kind of not introspective, but analytical about what resources we put in front of children. Because the kinds of antisemitism that manifests in children's resources are often really subtle because that is not the most explicit layer of their content.

**00:10:52**

When I think about, for example, children's Bibles that I don't particularly, like, it's often kind of the whispers of supersessionism that the Christian tradition has displaced, you know, all of the significance of Judaism. And this is the only direction that these texts can point in. Like, it's not naming any particular thing about Judaism.

**00:11:16**

Instead, it's doing this really calculated erasure. And so being really careful about our resources is a big piece of our work. And I will say from the godly play context, we have this really beautiful relationship with this small corner of the world that is Torah play. And we have people that when we are facing questions about the way we are phrasing things or depicting things in our stories, that we have a community of Jewish practitioners and experts that we get to consult because we are really intentional about our resources not doing harm.

**James Thomas**

**00:11:56**

I think both Natalie and I are really glad to hear that, you know, and without casting aspersions on any other traditions or publishing houses or anything like that, because I certainly don't have the expertise to do that. I mean, I do think it is worth saying that when an institution sort of abandons a space or leaves a space, there's a certain responsibility that's born for whatever steps in to occupy it.

And as we've discussed a few times over the last few weeks that you've been with us here in this particular traditions, you know, I never know whether I should use the word mainline or old line or classical Protestantism or whatever word we're going to use. But you know what we're talking about when I say mainline Protestantism.

**00:12:42**

And in our sort of failures, if you will, in our failures to hold space for things like printing children's Bibles, which it turns out is a very important activity of the church and generating those resources, supersessionist beliefs have trickled into that space in our absence. And so it's a good call to action, I think, to reoccupy the space and to make sure that our churches are publishing really high quality resources.

**00:13:13**

I'm really glad for the resources that you mentioned.

### **Natalie Thomas**

**00:13:16**

I mean, in many ways, that absence or void is a motivating factor for why we created Bedtime Chapel, because we felt as if the resources, honestly just for adults looking to do a more nuanced, complicated, multi narrative, layered Bible study, were so few and far between. And we had people in our parish that were listening to things online.

**00:13:44**

And there was this question about how are we forming people intergenerationally who can understand and speak to the Bible in a way that's resonant and also grounded in truth, you know, and not just how we feel, but in the context and the history of that day. That often, often pushes us almost into a more inclusive way of understanding the Scripture.

**00:14:11**

So yeah, thank you so much for that answer.

### **James Thomas**

**00:14:15**

All right, so our last question for this week as we find that one of the reasons Jesus is being challenged and questioned by the authorities is because they accuse him of having a lack of formal educational credentials. And that's striking for us here in 2025 for a couple reasons. One is that in the last US election we learned that that is probably the greatest divide that we're seeing in the US context is the biggest predictor of voting behavior is formal education.

And there is a view that people with more credentialed formal education are seen as gatekeepers and the masses have turned to people who have taken non traditional routes to leadership. And secondly, that the Church continues to require a high level of formal education for the priesthood and for the diaconate and for other roles within the Church.

**00:15:08**

What do you think we can learn from the stories that we read this week about class and status and tying the two to the accusation that you're not book learned enough to speak your mind?

### **Bird Treacy**

**00:15:22**

It's remarkable to think about that questioning of Jesus in the Gospel of John in the context, for example, that we see in Other Gospels of 12 year old Jesus in the temple, talking with the rabbis there and their deep mutual respect even when he is so young. And to say that he lacks this, this formal accreditation, that that's the problem here certainly seems like it is primarily cover for the threat to power versus like an actual concern for his knowledge base.

**00:16:11**

But we very much do have a real sense of entanglement around education and class and authority, and also around other factors like age in the church today. And I say this as someone who does the work I do without formal theological education and without sort of the particular set of like I have, I have a great deal of education and it's just not in the thing that people expect it to be.

**00:16:47**

And so that's certainly a piece of that authority play. But it also is really essential in the way we think about ministry from an intergenerational perspective that when we are too caught up in notions of authority and who is the keepers of knowledge, we tend to miss some of the most interesting questions and considerations.

**00:17:21**

Because while education can certainly open us up to new ways of thinking, it also can give us a particular set of expected answers that limit the ways in which we are willing to answer questions. Because everyone else around us has a kind of set position. So I think about the way that the scholar Amy Jill Levine has spoken about parables as being something that should sort of condemn or convict us, that when we think we have a clear answer about them, that we're probably putting ourselves in the wrong position.

If, like, we feel good coming out of a parable based on where we've situated ourselves. When we think we have these answers, it's often not because we are so learned or have an authority around them, but because we have accepted what the rest of the world expects us to feed back. And in working with children especially, I know I get asked much more interesting questions because they don't yet have these preconceived notions of accepted interpretive frameworks.

**00:18:46**

And so authority has its places and its functions. And it is also often a tool for foreclosing possibility both in our faith and in all of these other ways in which we navigate the world.

## **James Thomas**

**00:19:13**

I'm thinking of someone that not too long ago I went to on a hospital visit expecting to visit someone who had a terminal diagnosis. But to my understanding at the time that I went to visit was had had some time left. I did not expect to be going there, to be the last visitor.

**00:19:32**

But it turns out that I was. And you know, I was just thinking, this is a very faithful person. Just one of these women of the church gave a life to it in every capacity, you know, from Sunday school to vestry to just a mainstay of the church for many, many years in the parish, actually, that sponsored me for ordination.

**00:19:55**

And unexpectedly, I ended up sitting with her for a couple of hours, two, three hours. And very unexpectedly, she sort of gave her last testimony to me. My grandfather had been the parish priest of most of her adult life. And so to see me there, and I guess that was maybe the connection that was made.

**00:20:17**

And anyway, I think about that encounter. And this individual had no formal theological education of any kind. Her name was Viv Vivian. And I got more theological education out of that hospital visit than. And I say this with all due respect too, but many, many, many formal theology classes that I have been a part of in my ordination process.

**00:20:46**

And just her testimony about the nature of the church and how the church had moved through her life in her 88 years or whatever it was that sort of sits with me. And just a regular Christian, right? We could say, of course, to quote the famous turn of phrase,



simply Christian. And it doesn't have to be any more complicated than that.

**00:21:10**

And those are the encounters, I think, that that matter are those just regular meetings between regular Christians, I guess. All right. Well, thank you, Bird. Four down, one to go. Thank you for joining us again this week. And thank you to Natalie for being on the journey with me. Thank you to the wider community of people praying with us.

**00:21:33**

We are so glad that you are listening out there, wherever you are. We do want to be in touch with you. You can find us on Facebook and Instagram as Bedtime Chapel. Follow us, let us know what's working, what's not working. You can always email us Bedtime Chapel at gmail. Com. You can find our website, bedtimechapel.

**00:21:52**

Com. And until we meet again, we'll be praying with.