
PODCAST START:

[intro music]

Fr. Shay: Welcome to the Reading Queerly Queer Theology Podcast, where each week, your hosts Brian Murphy and Shay Kearns will offer a reflection on the week's lectionary readings. This week we're looking at the lectionary texts for June 15th. We're going to take a look at the Genesis 1-2:4 text, and it turns out that Brian actually recorded this really amazing video about it, so we're going to play the audio of that for you this week as something a little bit different in the podcast. But before we get to that, Brian, did you want to say anything about this video?

Brian: This is one of a few videos that I've made sort of looking at my journey of questioning my sexuality and worrying that it was a sin and coming to embrace and affirm that. This particular story is often used against queer people to say that we shouldn't exist, both from a sexuality perspective and also from a gender perspective. So I thought it was important to address it, but I wanted to do it in a way that was a little bit more imaginative. It wasn't sort of an academic look at it, but more of a soulful look at it, so I hope that's what comes across.

[dreamy music plays]

B: "In the beginning" seems like a good place to start, right? The beginning. "In the beginning, God created Adam and Eve, not Adam and Steve." Wait. [laughs] It doesn't really say that. If we're going to look at scripture to see what it means for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people, then Genesis seems like a good place to start, right? So – let's begin.

This is the cliff notes version of the story I was told when I was growing up. God create Adam, God created Eve *for* Adam, God placed them in this garden called Eden where they could have anything they wanted except the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. If they ate that, well... God would kill them. They did, but God didn't kill them. Instead, God kicked them out of the garden, made it really hard to grow food, and made it hurt like hell to give birth. And from that, we're also supposed to extrapolate that it's all women's fault that things got messed up, and that every man is supposed to marry a woman. Or... I don't know, something like that. That's basically what I was told and what I believed growing up.

June 15, 2014

God is your wingman

Genesis 1:1 – 2:4

2/4

And then one day I did something radical. I sat down and I read Genesis 1, 2 and 3. And what I found was something more beautiful and complex and deep and spiritual and inspiring than I had ever imagined.

In the beginning, there was nothing. And out of that nothingness, God created everything. I mean, *everything*. God created it all. And in one account of creation – there's two, and they're different, but that's a video for another day – in one account of creation, a man is the first living creature that God creates. Adam. And that man is all alone so God sets out to help him find companionship. God creates a lot of animals – I guess all of the animals really – and God brings them to Adam one at a time as possible partners. I think it's funny that God is trying but not really knowing exactly how to help Adam find his partner. I sort of picture Adam saying, "Ahh... thanks but no thanks God, but I guess we can just call that an otter." And then eventually God creates Woman.

And this is the remarkable part of the story – it's Adam, not God, who chooses the woman as his partner. Adam says, "Bone of my bone, flesh of my flesh!" He looks at the woman and says, "This is the helper that is suitable for me. This is the partner that I want to be with." He could have just as easily chosen a peacock. But... he didn't. There's choice and agency and kinship and partnership there.

We see the importance of choice in other parts of the scriptures. Jesus talks about the eunuchs. He says, "Some were born eunuchs and some were made eunuchs by men and others choose to make themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of God." And Jesus goes on to say, "He who can accept this, accept this." And then there's Paul – Paul talks about choice also. Paul encourages his followers to pursue a life of celibacy and singleness, but of course, only if they choose that and can accept that for themselves.

Choice.

God gave Adam the choice of his partner. It was there all along, staring me in the face. And so, maybe the creation story in Genesis isn't this one-size-fits-all dating for dummies manual. Maybe it's something bigger and grander than that. When I read Genesis, I see a story that points to the bigger questions. Who are we? Where did we come from? How did things get to be this way? And this is what I see Genesis telling me. I see that we're all connected, all of us. All genders, all nationalities, all ethnicities. We're all part of this big, human family. And I see that there's something special about the life that we've been given.

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I see that it's good. That it's *very* good.

And I see that we're social, relational creatures. I know that's a truth that resonates in my own life. If I hole myself up in my bedroom for too long and don't see anyone, I start to go a little bit crazy. And so if the creation story in Genesis points to and answers these big questions of who we are and where we came from, it only makes sense that it would begin with a man and a woman capable of producing children. I mean, right? But this is the *beginning* of the story, not the ending. The story continues. In scripture and in the world around us we see all different types of relationship configurations. We see lifelong singleness. We see deep, abiding friendships. We see happy couplings. We see polygamist relationships. We see in the Bible, no less than in the world around us, also some relationships that are messed up and hurtful and harmful. We see that we're not perfect in the way that we attract each other. But from each of those, there's something to be learned.

I know that my parents are straight, but what I learn from their relationship applies to my own relationships. And likewise, the Garden of Eden story of Adam and Eve and creation can resonate with and be instructive to people who don't find themselves in lifelong opposite-gender relationships.

When I read the creation story in Genesis, I see myself in that story. I see myself as a lonely person in this world that sometimes feels big and empty and overwhelming, but I'm not alone. I see myself as a person trying to find and make meaning in the world around me. And it's good. It's very good.

And I see myself as a person who desires relationships and to be in community, and I'm excited to know that God is ready to play wingman, to help me find those relationships that are right for me and ultimately trust my decision.

Now, that's a story that I want to be a part of. And it's only the beginning.

[end video clip]

FS: If you're interested in seeing the full video, you can go to QueerTheology.com/creation to see the whole thing. I hope that this gives you an idea of how you can use the lectionary to do more imaginative work and potentially even to preach more imaginative sermons.

B: If this sort of work resonates with you, we cover how to do this in our Reading Queerly course. You should definitely check out

QueerTheology.com/readingqueerly so that you can become your own queer theologian.

[outro music]

B: I'm Brian.

FS: And I'm Shay. And you can find out more at QueerTheology.com.

B: If you'd like to connect with us, send us an email at connect@queertheology.com.

Fs: Thanks for listening.

PODCAST END

Transcript by Taylor Walker