
PODCAST START:

[intro music]

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 cofounders of QueerTheology.com and the hosts for this podcast. I'm Father Shay Kearns —

B: And I'm Brian G. Murphy. Hello there! Today we're taking a look at the lectionary passage for Sunday, March 19th. We're going to be looking at John 4:5-42. It's rather long, as you can tell, so we'll be putting it in the show notes. You can get that at QueerTheology.com/171. It's the story of Jesus meeting the Samaritan woman by the well. If you're not familiar with that story, head on over to QueerTheology.com/171 to read it, and then come back.

[not read aloud]

“He came to a Samaritan city called Sychar, which was near the land Jacob had given to his son Joseph. Jacob's well was there. Jesus was tired from his journey, so he sat down at the well. It was about noon. A Samaritan woman came to the well to draw water. Jesus said to her, ‘Give me some water to drink.’ His disciples had gone into the city to buy him some food.

“The Samaritan woman asked, ‘Why do you, a Jewish man, ask for something to drink from me, a Samaritan woman?’ (Jews and Samaritans didn't associate with each other.)

“Jesus responded, ‘If you recognized God's gift and who is saying to you, “Give me some water to drink,” you would be asking him and he would give you living water.’

“The woman said to him, ‘Sir, you don't have a bucket and the well is deep. Where would you get this living water? You aren't greater than our father Jacob, are you? He gave this well to us, and he drank from it

himself, as did his sons and his livestock.’

“Jesus answered, ‘Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks from the water that I will give will never be thirsty again. The water that I give will become in those who drink it a spring of water that bubbles up into eternal life.’

“The woman said to him, ‘Sir, give me this water, so that I will never be thirsty and will never need to come here to draw water!’ Jesus said to her, ‘Go, get your husband, and come back here.’

“The woman replied, ‘I don’t have a husband.’

“You are right to say, “I don’t have a husband,”” Jesus answered. ‘You’ve had five husbands, and the man you are with now isn’t your husband. You’ve spoken the truth.’

“The woman said, ‘Sir, I see that you are a prophet. Our ancestors worshipped on this mountain, but you and your people say that it is necessary to worship in Jerusalem.’

“Jesus said to her, ‘Believe me, woman, the time is coming when you and your people will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You and your people worship what you don’t know; we worship what we know because salvation is from the Jews. But the time is coming—and is here!—when true worshippers will worship in spirit and truth. The Father looks for those who worship him this way. God is spirit, and it is necessary to worship God in spirit and truth.’

“The woman said, ‘I know that the Messiah is coming, the one who is called the Christ. When he comes, he will teach everything to us.’

“Jesus said to her, ‘I Am—the one who speaks with you.’ Just then, Jesus’ disciples arrived and were

shocked that he was talking with a woman. But no one asked, 'What do you want?' or 'Why are you talking with her?' The woman put down her water jar and went into the city. She said to the people, 'Come and see a man who has told me everything I've done! Could this man be the Christ?' They left the city and were on their way to see Jesus.

"In the meantime the disciples spoke to Jesus, saying, 'Rabbi, eat.' Jesus said to them, 'I have food to eat that you don't know about.'

"The disciples asked each other, 'Has someone brought him food?'

"Jesus said to them, 'I am fed by doing the will of the one who sent me and by completing his work. Don't you have a saying, "Four more months and then it's time for harvest"? Look, I tell you: open your eyes and notice that the fields are already ripe for the harvest. Those who harvest are receiving their pay and gathering fruit for eternal life so that those who sow and those who harvest can celebrate together. This is a true saying, that one sows and another harvests. I have sent you to harvest what you didn't work hard for; others worked hard, and you will share in their hard work.'

"Many Samaritans in that city believed in Jesus because of the woman's word when she testified, 'He told me everything I've ever done.' So when the Samaritans came to Jesus, they asked him to stay with them, and he stayed there two days. Many more believed because of his word, and they said to the woman, 'We no longer believe because of what you said, for we have heard for ourselves and know that this one is truly the savior of the world.'"

So Shay, what are your thoughts on this passage?

FS: This is one of those really famous and great passages. One of the things I think is important: any time women show up in the Bible, we should pay attention,

because it doesn't happen very often. Again, we have a woman who is not named, which is super disappointing, but serves as a really interesting character within Jesus's narrative and within the narrative of the gospel. This woman who, again, has some scandal in her life, as a lot of the women mentioned in the Bible seem to. Jesus treats her with compassion and love, which I think is beautiful and awesome. It's interesting, too, that at the end of this passage, this woman becomes a missionary and an apostle for Jesus. She ends up being the one to convert her entire town. We see, again, an example throughout the gospels of women stepping up into this role when the men around them are kind of feckless and [laughs] not doing anything helpful. Which is a pretty awesome thing to see, especially because in this time women were not trusted. Their word wasn't valid. Their word didn't count in court, they weren't trusted witnesses. So the fact that she then becomes the one to tell her town about Jesus and they *believe* her, is saying something really incredible. What about you?

B: Yeah, you know I'm struck by this passage where she says "I have no husband," and Jesus says "You're right when you say you have no husband; the fact is you have had five husband and the man you now have is not your husband. What you have just said is quite true." You know, that is something that, if that happened today, religious leaders would have all sorts of snide, judgy things to say about it. That's not what happens here. She goes on to be sort of a missionary. We say this over and over again: queer people have more to offer than what we're not, God is in the margins. We say that God is embodied in Jesus, and he's hanging out with this woman and befriending her and inviting her into ministry with him – and not judging her. It's not just that it's okay to be gay, it's not just that you can be LGBTQ and Christian, it's that we're central to this story. Queer people and women and immigrants and people who are HIV-positive and folks living with disabilities, we're central to this story of God that we see throughout the Hebrew Bible and Christian scriptures. That's just a cool reminder that that's where God is.

[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, Twitter, Tumblr and Instagram.

B: We'll see you next week.

PODCAST END

Transcript by Taylor Walker