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

B: And I'm Brian G. Murphy.

FS: This week we are taking a look at the lectionary for June 11th [2017] and we're going to look at Genesis 1:1-2:4. It's pretty long so we're going to go ahead and link it in the show notes. If you want to read along with us, it's QueerTheology.com/177. You can read the passage there. Basically, it's the beginning of the Bible, and it's the creation story. You know, in the beginning there was nothing, and God created.

[not read aloud]

“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.

“And God said, ‘Let there be light,’ and there was light. God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness. God called the light ‘day,’ and the darkness he called ‘night.’ And there was evening, and there was morning—the first day.

“And God said, ‘Let there be a vault between the waters to separate water from water.’ So God made the vault and separated the water under the vault from the water above it. And it was so. 8 God called the vault ‘sky.’ And there was evening, and there was morning—the second day.

“And God said, ‘Let the water under the sky be gathered to one place, and let dry ground appear.’ And it was so. God called the dry ground ‘land,’ and the gathered waters he called ‘seas.’ And God saw that it was good.

“Then God said, ‘Let the land produce vegetation: seed-bearing plants and trees on the land that bear fruit with seed in it, according to their various kinds.’ And it was so. The land produced vegetation: plants bearing seed according to their kinds and trees bearing fruit with seed in it according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good. And there was evening, and there was morning—the third day.

“And God said, ‘Let there be lights in the vault of the sky to separate the day from the night, and let them serve as signs to mark sacred times, and days and years, and let them be lights in the vault of the sky to give light on the earth.’ And it was so. God made two great lights—the greater light to govern the day and the lesser light to govern the night. He also made the stars. God set them in the vault of the sky to give light on the earth, to govern the day and the night, and to separate light from darkness. And God saw that it was good. And there was evening, and there was morning—the fourth day.

“And God said, ‘Let the water teem with living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the vault of the sky.’ So God created the great creatures of the sea and every living thing with which the water teems and that moves about in it, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. God blessed them and said, ‘Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the water in the seas, and let the birds increase on the earth.’ And there was evening, and there was morning—the fifth day.

“And God said, ‘Let the land produce living creatures according to their kinds: the livestock, the creatures that move along the ground, and the wild animals, each according to its kind.’ And it was so. God made the wild animals according to their kinds, the livestock according to their kinds, and all the creatures that move along the ground according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good.

“Then God said, ‘Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.’

“So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

“God blessed them and said to them, ‘Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground.’

“Then God said, ‘I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food. And to all the beasts of the earth and all the birds in the sky and all the creatures that move along the ground—everything that has the breath of life in it—I give every green plant for food.’ And it was so.

“God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning—the sixth day.

“Thus the heavens and the earth were completed in all their vast array.

“By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work. Then God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done.

“This is the account of the heavens and the earth when

they were created, when the Lord God made the earth and the heavens.” [NIV]

So, Brian, as you read this text, what does it bring up for you?

B: [laughs] You know, the creation stories are just a peeve of mine. There's two of them, in Genesis 1 and Genesis 2, and they're different – and they're not just different, they're contradictory. The peeve of mine isn't that they're contradictory. I think the peeve of mine is that some Christians can't see that and still try and say that the Bible is a history book—

FS: [laughs]

B: —when like it's very clearly not. You know, the opening chapters of a novel sort of set the tone and set your expectations for a book. The first chapters of any book, whether it's a textbook or a nonfiction book or a memoir, when you open a book and you start reading it you can sort of get a sense of the tone and the style and the content right from the beginning. And the Bible opens with two contradictory stories of creation. And they're both beautiful and they're both meaningful and they both have truth in them, and also they are historically incompatible with each other. I think it's just a reminder that, when queer folks look at the Bible critically, when we see ourselves in the Bible, when we take from the Bible and learn from it and apply it to our lives, that's the way the Bible is supposed to be used. It was never intended to be this, like, history textbook. And we can see that from Genesis 1 and 2 being different. So that's my big peeve right off the bat. I've got some more thoughts on the content of it but I would love to hear from you, Shay.

FS: I mean, I totally agree with all of that. I think it's really important that we understand the Bible is not this inerrant, historical, scientific document – right? – that's supposed to tell us the science behind the creation of the world and the historical basis of how it all happened. It's this beautiful, poetic account. I think especially in this first chapter, we have this really almost grand mythic story of God creating. It's so beautiful to me both that God uses words to create – as a writer, I am a big fan of the power of words and the power of naming things. God using language to create this world, I think is really beautiful and it tells us something important. And then also it just sets this tone, too, about – you know, humans come on to the scene pretty late, which tells us something maybe a little bit about our place in the cosmos, in the creation. [laughs] We're not the first things on the scene. We're pretty late and we're given the care of this creation. All of creation is entwined together and we're responsible for caring and tending,

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and not for domination and control and using up all of our resources. I think especially right now, in a time of climate change, this is a really important message. And also the way this passage ends, with God taking Sabbath and resting, resting from God's work. And in a way, setting that as a precedent, that we also are to rest and to take time for rest. I think it's really important. As someone who feels pretty driven to do more all of the time, it's a good reminder for me that, like, "Okay, it's okay to rest." And it's not only okay, it's really necessary.

B: Yeah. If rest is important for God, certainly it's important for us too. [laughs]

FS: Yes!

B: One of the other things that sticks out in this passage to me is when we're sort of talking about the creation of humanity. It says, "Then God said, 'Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness,'" and then it goes on, "So God created mankind in his image. In the image of God he created them, male and female he created them." I just think this is a beautiful reminder that all of us are created in God's image. And of course, you know, in this particular passage it says 'male and female he created them', but I don't think that that's to say that God didn't also create genderqueer, agender, genderfluid folks in God's image as well. I think this is sort of going back to what the Bible is; the language is a reflection of the people who wrote this in that particular culture in that particular time. And that's not to say that there hasn't been gender nonconformity throughout history; you know, that is nothing new. It's not like, oh, being trans is a modern invention, or being genderqueer is a modern invention. It's just these particular authors in this particular context; that's sort of the language that they had for understanding the genders around them. I just think it's an important reminder that each and every one of us are created in God's image.

FS: I do think it's cool that it says that God created them male *and* female, not male *or* female. I think that that's important, too. That this duality that is obviously reflected in God is reflected in us. And that there's diversity in, like, if all genders are created in the image of God, then God also has to be bigger than just the big white bearded man in the sky. Right? [laughs] There has to be something more there, which is really important.

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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

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