

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 hello! Today we're taking a look at the reading for Sunday, March 4th. We're going to be taking a look at the reading for Sunday, March 4th. We're going to be looking at John 2:13-22. I will read it now from the Common English Bible.

It was nearly time for the Jewish Passover, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. He found in the temple those who were selling cattle, sheep, and doves, as well as those involved in exchanging currency sitting there. He made a whip from ropes and chased them all out of the temple, including the cattle and the sheep. He scattered the coins and overturned the tables of those who exchanged currency. He said to the dove sellers, "Get these things out of here! Don't make my Father's house a place of business." His disciples remembered that it is written, Passion for your house consumes me.

Then the Jewish leaders asked him, "By what authority are you doing these things? What miraculous sign will you show us?"

Jesus answered, "Destroy this temple and in three days I'll raise it up."

The Jewish leaders replied, "It took forty-six years to build this temple, and you will raise it up in three days?" But the temple Jesus was talking about was his body. After he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered what he had said, and they believed the scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken. [CEB]

Okay, Shay. What do we do with this passage from John?

FS: I love this passage, and I don't normally say that about the Gospel of John. [both laugh] You know, we're talking all month about the politics of Jesus, and I think that this is such a great window into Jesus's life and ministry, and kind of into how radical he was. I think it's really important to note that, in John's gospel, this moment in the temple happens really early. In many of the other gospels, this moment where Jesus clears the money changers out of the temple happens much later, and it's kind of one of the leading moments that lead to Jesus's crucifixion and death. But here, we have it at the very beginning of his ministry, one of the first things that he does. I think that it's really important to note that we don't get the kind of cute, docile, preaching Jesus in this passage. We get a pissed-off Jesus who fucks some shit up and does it with this righteous anger. I find that really inspiring. I think that, often, the work for justice requires some righteous anger, and requires some fucking shit up, and requires overturning some tables and making a mess of things and creating a holy ruckus in order to call attention to the lack of justice in the world.

I think that any time you get religious leaders who get uncomfortable about property destruction, in those moments, they're on the side of the establishment and not on the side of Jesus. I think that that's a really important tension to sit with, and to kind of grapple with. And grapple with what it means to follow Jesus in situations like this. I think, too, that this is a situation where the people were being ripped off. They were being ripped off as they were coming to worship. These were already marginalized people, they were already oppressed, they were already in poverty – and the church was ripping them off even more. People were using this space as a place to make money and to take advantage of people, and I think that we can see some parallels in some modern church settings [laughs] about that same thing. Those are the first things that kind of jump out for me. What about you?

B: Yeah, the first thing that jumps out for me is what you said in the beginning, that in John, this scene happens much earlier in Jesus's ministry. In the other gospels, it happens sort of after Palm Sunday [laughs] before the crucifixion. That's important for me to note. As someone who grew up hearing that the Bible was everything you needed to know about life, a, and b, that there was only one way to understand the Bible and that our pastor would give it to us, *and* that the Bible was perfect and infallible and, you know, sometimes we were sort of told it was almost as if God told the authors of the Bible what to write ... when discrepancies within scripture crop up, to me, it doesn't mean the Bible is *wrong*

or useless. It just means that it's not always intended to be exact history, a. B, it's a written account of something that someone had told them; that it's been filtered through lots of people over time. And before the stories even get into the Bible, interpretation, redaction, analyzing, prophesying has already happened. And so when we take it and we analyze, interpret, redact – we're not doing anything that hasn't already been done to the scripture. That's just a reminder that queering theology in general, and seeing things differently than you've been taught, isn't this radical, heretical departure from scripture, from God. It's just how you interact with sacred texts. Part of the job as a reader is to do this.

And the other thing that pops up for me is – so, in Sanctuary Collective, we're reading *The Last Week* by Marcus Borg and John Dominic Crossan. They look at, in their book, this scene in Mark. One of the things that I hadn't considered before, that I learned in reading this book with Sanctuary Collective, is that mono-Christianity sometimes comes across as being anti-Judaism, and like, "Well, we sort of are Judaism's replacement, and current people who are Jewish just didn't get on board like they should have." In this passage, I'm reminded that, a, Jesus was Jewish. And b, that he wasn't at odds with Jewish leaders *in general*. In this time and in this place, the Jewish leaders that Jesus came into conflict with were the ones in the temple who were collaborating with the Roman occupiers. That's where the tension arose. The folks who were supposed to be leaders the Jewish people and the Jewish religion were collaborating with Roman occupiers and the empire, not doing God's will. As you were saying, I see in Christianity, white supremacist Christianity, white evangelical Christianity, collaborating with the empire to oppress other religions, to oppress women, to oppress people of color, to oppress queer people. That doesn't mean that all of Judaism is flawed, or that all the Jewish leaders are who Jesus has an issue with – just in the same way that it doesn't mean Christianity is irredeemable. But something dangerous happens when religion conspires with the ruling government, and that's what Jesus was pushing up against in this passage. And that's our challenge to push up against today, to not collaborate with our own and other people's oppression.

[outro music]

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