

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. Today, Brian and I are going to tackle the 2 Kings 2:1-2, 6-14 passage.

[not read aloud]

Now when the Lord was about to take Elijah up to heaven by a whirlwind, Elijah and Elisha were on their way from Gilgal. Elijah said to Elisha, "Stay here; for the Lord has sent me as far as Bethel." But Elisha said, "As the Lord lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you." So they went down to Bethel.

Then Elijah said to him, "Stay here; for the Lord has sent me to the Jordan." But he said, "As the Lord lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you." So the two of them went on. Fifty men of the company of prophets also went, and stood at some distance from them, as they both were standing by the Jordan. Then Elijah took his mantle and rolled it up, and struck the water; the water was parted to the one side and to the other, until the two of them crossed on dry ground.

When they had crossed, Elijah said to Elisha, "Tell me what I may do for you, before I am taken from you." Elisha said, "Please let me inherit a double share of your spirit." He responded, "You have asked a hard thing; yet, if you see me as I am being taken from you, it will be granted you; if not, it will not." As they continued walking and talking, a chariot of fire and horses of fire separated the two of them, and Elijah ascended in a whirlwind into heaven. Elisha kept watching and crying out, "Father, father! The chariots of Israel and its horsemen!" But when he could no longer see him, he grasped his own clothes and tore them in two pieces.

He picked up the mantle of Elijah that had fallen from him, and went back and stood on the bank of the Jordan. He took the mantle of Elijah that had fallen from him, and struck the water, saying, “Where is the Lord, the God of Elijah?” When he had struck the water, the water was parted to the one side and to the other, and Elisha went over. [NRSV]

So Brian, as you read this, what comes up for you?

Brian: You know, I feel like a broken record, because I'm always saying, “This reminds me of [laughs] my church growing up!” What I would have gotten fixated on in the past is, did Elijah actually ascend or not? Which I guess is a fine question to ask – but there's richer material here. So what comes to mind with me, as someone who is – I'm 27, I still sort of feel like I can live forever. I know in my mind that I'm going to die one day, but I don't quite feel it in my gut yet. So this is a reminder that I won't always be here forever, and at some point I will need to pass on my work to others. And also, a reminder that I've received the work that has come before me. That we're able to even have a queer lectionary podcast is because people have fought and died for decades and centuries before us. This is a reminder to see myself as one person in this lineage of progress and of faith and spirituality.

FS: That really resonates for me. I like this idea of him passing on the mantle from one generation to the next, and also this kind of ‘you're going to get a double-portion of my spirit’ – this idea that the people behind us will be able to do even more than we've been able to do, and that that's a really exciting thing, that's not a threatening thing. I think often in the church, and in the queer community, we see this tension between older generations and younger generations. We feel like we're competing against each other, and we're fighting for control over the church or for control over the direction of the community, when in reality we should be working together and thanking one another for our contributions. And also realizing that the people who come after us, while inheriting the work that we've done, there's a good chance that they're also going to be able to do twice as much. That's a good thing, and not something to be frightened or threatened by.

B: Yeah, humbling. It also reminds me that when I moved to New York City, I had a pastor, **Reverend David Wilke**, who was a huge part of my spiritual formation, immensely helpful for me as a gay person. He was straight, but we just had this

great relationship. And then a few years ago, he followed a call to lead a church in Atlanta, Georgia with his wife, to co-pastor that. So this reminds me of that, that at some point, the teacher that you follow – they're going to need to move on. And it's good for you to stay and continue to do that work. You don't have to follow the people who have come before you. Sometimes you have to split off and do your own thing. Elijah had somewhere else to go, and David Wilke had somewhere else to go. Sometimes we have to part ways, and again, as you were saying, that can be a good and a fruitful thing.

FS: Yeah, and I wonder if this also – maybe it's a message to us to be more intentional about the ways that we mentor people. The ways that we receive mentoring and seek out mentors, and also the ways that we create rituals for those leavings, or mark them in some kind of way. There is kind of ritual in this passage about how that leaving happens. I think that we're not *good* in our modern society, always, about ritualizing things and making sure that they are meaningful and that there's closure there.

B: At Camp Osiris this summer we talked about rituals for resistance. This passage isn't something that came up, but as you're talking now I think that it *is* an important thing, that as queer people, as Christians, as queer Christians, this is a really cool moment that they share. How might this be integrated into the life of a queer community? How might this be more intentionally integrated into the life of the church? People who might be listening who are leading churches, think about the ways that you might integrate this, not just as a text that you preach on, but how do you integrate this into the life of your community or congregation? I think there's some really powerful stuff there waiting for you to tap into.

[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 to connect@queertheology.com.

FS: Thanks for listening.

PODCAST END

Transcript by Taylor Walker

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