

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.

Brian: Welcome back! This week we're looking at the passage for August 31st. We're going to be looking at Jeremiah 20:7-9. It goes,

Lord, you enticed me, and I was taken in. You were too strong for me, and you prevailed. Now I'm laughed at all the time; everyone mocks me. Every time I open my mouth, I cry out and say, "Violence and destruction!" The Lord's word has brought me nothing but insult and injury, constantly. I thought, I'll forget him; I'll no longer speak in his name. But there's an intense fire in my heart, trapped in my bones. I'm drained trying to contain it; I'm unable to do it. [CEB]

Okay, Shay. So what comes up for you?

FS: Yeah, it's funny. I read this passage and my first thought was, oh, wow, this is awful. [laughs]

B: Yeah, right? It's intense.

FS: It's intense! And I thought, well, that's not my experience. And then the more I thought about it, the more I thought, you know, actually this very much is my experience. And especially coming out, and feeling like I was just getting crap tossed on me all the time by everyone else in my church. People who were mean to me and who mocked me and who thought, you know, 'you can't be a part of the church and be out and queer.' And I did go through a long period of time where I thought, you know, screw it. I'm going to walk away from the church. I'm not going to do ministry any more. It wasn't necessarily that I was walking away from God – I didn't really feel that – but I definitely felt that God's people were jerks and I didn't really want to be a part of them anymore. In my experience with doing that, I definitely had this piece in verse nine where the writer says, "I thought, I'll forget him. I'll no longer speak in his name. But there's an intense fire

in my heart, trapped in my bones. I'm drained trying to contain it. I'm unable to do it." And that's really what it felt like for me. It felt like I needed to be a part of the church. I needed to speak out about my experience and my life. And I needed to speak about what I felt God was teaching me. It did feel like this fire in my bones that I was unable to contain. And thankfully, I listened to that. That's been really rewarding for me. But yeah, so this passage really resonates in kind of unexpected ways. What about for you?

B: [laughs] It reminded me of, "I just can't quit you," from *Brokeback Mountain*. It's funny because, when we were sort of looking at the passages and I saw this, I was like, oh, yes, this is *totally* me. Folks often ask, are you a Christian, are you not a Christian, why are you a Christian? And I'm like, I don't know, I just can't – there's just something about this Jesus and the Jesus story and the Jesus movement and this community of people that come together, two thousand years ago and two hours ago, that I just find... something there that, even when I'm annoyed or frustrated – I don't know, I just can't let go of it. And we do a lot of work in Christian communities, oftentimes in conservative Christian communities, and so we meet lots of folks. This seems to be the case for lots of queer people, queer Christians who – you know, sometimes people will be like, why don't you just give up and walk away? You don't need God. And that's definitely true; you're someone who this is no longer working for or resonating with, by all means, go with grace. You do you, boo. But I know that we meet folks often who just have this fire in them that, no matter how hard it gets or how bad it gets or how often people try to press them out the door, they refuse to be defeated. I think there's something really cool and powerful about that. As queer people, we don't get to take our faith for granted. It's not something that our parents did and our grandparents did and therefore we should do it. I mean, it *is*, and also, we hear so many messages from society and from the church saying, "This isn't for you." And so it would be really easy for queer folks to walk away. And so I think that the faith that queer folks have is something that is often fought for. It's sort of our gift to this great church.

FS: I remember one time that you wrote something like 'queer people don't have time for a cheap faith.' Something like that. That really resonated with me then and it continues to resonate with me now, and I think that you're right, this really is this gift that we have to give to the church, this hard-won faith. And this idea that, you know, if anyone has justification for not being a part of the church, it's queer and trans folks. And so the fact that so many of us have chosen to stay, really feel called to stay, and the fact that we resonate with this Jesus story I think is something that should be listened to. And that the straight and cisgender church *really* needs to pay attention to, and can really learn from. I think that

there's power there, and that's exciting. And I think that's why I'm so excited about what we do at Queer Theology, right? It's *us* telling *our* stories. It's not people speaking for us. It's really us owning the power we have to tell our stories, to talk about our theology, to read the Bible through our queer lens. I think that there's power there, and that's really exciting.

B: Yeah, absolutely.

[outro music]

B: This podcast is possible because of the support of listeners like you. If you would like to help us continue doing this, you can go to [Patreon.com/queertheology](https://www.patreon.com/queertheology). All the money that you pledge each month will go towards supporting the work of QueerTheology.com, and also you can tap into some really cool perks. So if you want to support this, go to [Patreon.com/queertheology](https://www.patreon.com/queertheology). 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