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## 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 lectionary reading for Sunday, September 3<sup>rd</sup>. We're going to be looking at Romans 12:9-21. I will read that to you now from the Common English Bible.

“Love should be shown without pretending. Hate evil, and hold on to what is good. Love each other like the members of your family. Be the best at showing honor to each other. Don't hesitate to be enthusiastic—be on fire in the Spirit as you serve the Lord! Be happy in your hope, stand your ground when you're in trouble, and devote yourselves to prayer. Contribute to the needs of God's people, and welcome strangers into your home. Bless people who harass you—bless and don't curse them. Be happy with those who are happy, and cry with those who are crying. Consider everyone as equal, and don't think that you're better than anyone else. Instead, associate with people who have no status. Don't think that you're so smart. Don't pay back anyone for their evil actions with evil actions, but show respect for what everyone else believes is good.

“If possible, to the best of your ability, live at peace with all people. Don't try to get revenge for yourselves, my dear friends, but leave room for God's wrath. It is written, *Revenge belongs to me; I will pay it back*, says the Lord. Instead, *If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him a drink. By doing this, you will pile burning coals of fire upon his head*. Don't be defeated by evil, but defeat evil with good.”

[CEB]

Okay, Shay. What is your queer take on this passage from Romans?

FS: You know, I don't know if it's necessarily a queer take, but I keep thinking, when I read this, about all of the responses about what happened in Charlottesville a couple weeks ago. In the wake of Nazis basically invading this town and murdering a woman in the street and wreaking havoc and being violent, all of these white Christians came out with this generic kind of love-one-another bullshit messaging. There's a part of me that reads this passage and knows that people pull quotes out of this, just like they pull quotes out of Martin Luther King Jr.'s writing, to do this generic, "Well we just need to love one another, and that's going to make everything better!" I'm so frustrated by that and I'm so angered by that, because that's not how the world works. That's not how Nazis get defeated. We can't love them into not killing people. We fought an entire world war over that. I think that the things that really stand out to me in this passage are the facts that it's not just about this generic love-everyone, but there are pieces of this passage like – *hate* evil, and hold on to what is good. Contribute to the needs of God's people and welcome strangers. Consider every one as equal. And considering everyone as equal isn't saying, "Oh, well, we're just all the same," it's actually making sure that the laws and the ways that your church treats people who are marginalized is actually equal. I think we see this happen with queer folks, too. We are 'welcome' in churches but we don't get to be equal. I think that there's a lot in this, but there's a tension here, too, because some of this sounds like that generic love thing that makes me so cranky. What about you?

B: Yeah, I have also heard that sort of like, "Don't answer hate with hate!" response from white Christians, and it reminds me of a quote from Walter Wink's *Jesus and Nonviolence: A Third Way*. I'm going to read it for you now. It says,

"When a church that has not lived out a costly identification with the oppressed offers to mediate between hostile parties, it merely adds to the total impression that it wants to stay above the conflict and not take sides. The church says to the lion and the lamb, 'Here, let me negotiate a truce.' To which the lion replies, 'Fine, after I finish my lunch.'"

I saw someone on Facebook or Twitter say, "If you're not willing to take a bat to the head to defend people of color and Jewish people, then shut up with your

calls to nonviolence.” Because like, if you’re not willing to put your body on the line, then what good are you doing? I, like you, also see in this passage these very specific ideas of what that love should look like. In the NIV Bible version, there’s a heading to this passage where it says “Love in Action.” Love is not just a feeling or a platitude, but it’s actions that you take, contributing to the needs of the people, welcoming strangers into your home. I also think about the ending to this passage. It reminds me that so often, Jesus’s teachings get distilled down to this kumbaya, everyone be happy, just be nice and friendly... but Jesus’s teachings are sort of aggressive, even when they seem like they’re being nice. In other podcast episodes we’ve talked about turning the other cheek, and how that’s a really provocative action. In this one, in Paul’s letter, he’s quoting elsewhere and says “by doing this, you will pile burning coals of fire upon his head.” You’re not feeding your hungry because your enemy is hungry, or giving your enemy a drink because he is thirsty. Yes, you’re doing that, but also there’s an element of this that’s a creative nonviolent tension. What you’re doing is a bit provocative. You’re not doing this to be a doormat of a person. You’re doing that because it’s one tactic for pursuing justice.

FS: Yeah, and I think it’s really important to remember that Paul here is writing to a group of people who are oppressed. He isn’t writing to the majority religious power, which is what we’re talking about in the United States in particular. In this case, the white Christian church is still the majority is and is also often the oppressor. The advice here isn’t for the people who are being oppressors. If Paul was writing this letter from a position of power, his words would be more like, “Stop oppressing people.” Whereas this is a letter written to people who are marginalized and oppressed, and is giving them a way to both (hopefully) stay alive and also create change. It’s a different message and a different context.

B: And what you say about if he was writing to the oppressor, he might have different language – I think that is absolutely true, and we see examples of that throughout the Hebrew and Christian scriptures. When God or God’s people are talking to the powerful, the language is very much like “Stop oppressing. Let justice roll. Stop doing these evil things!” You know, there is definitely a different message in scripture for the powerful and the marginalized.

[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