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[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.

FS: Hello! Welcome back! We are taking a look at the lectionary text for June 3rd. We're going to look at 2 Corinthians 4:5-12. It's really beautiful, so I'm going to go ahead and read it. This is from the Common English Bible.

We don't preach about ourselves. Instead, we preach about Jesus Christ as Lord, and we describe ourselves as your slaves for Jesus' sake. God said that light should shine out of the darkness. He is the same one who shone in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God's glory in the face of Jesus Christ.

But we have this treasure in clay pots so that the awesome power belongs to God and doesn't come from us. We are experiencing all kinds of trouble, but we aren't crushed. We are confused, but we aren't depressed. We are harassed, but we aren't abandoned. We are knocked down, but we aren't knocked out.

We always carry Jesus' death around in our bodies so that Jesus' life can also be seen in our bodies. We who are alive are always being handed over to death for Jesus' sake so that Jesus' life can also be seen in our bodies that are dying. So death is at work in us, but life is at work in you. [CEB]

B: *Ooh*. I got literal goosebumps while you were reading that, Shay. This last section – 'we always carry Jesus's death around in our bodies so that Jesus's life can be seen in our bodies' – just like, immediately and viscerally reminds me of

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the queer experience. You know, I think a lot about how queer people don't exist in a vacuum. It's this weird thing where we don't necessarily have queer parents, though [laughing] some of us are lucky to have queer parents, but we are still connected to queer people throughout the ages. I just feel like, to be a queer person and to be alive is to be intimately aware a), that we're different than the rest of society, and b) what that difference has meant to people throughout time. Queer people carry generations and generations and generations of trauma in our bodies. We carry around shock therapy, we carry around gay bashings, we carry around AIDS. Every day, even when I'm not consciously thinking about it, somewhere in my mind, in my body, I know that is a part of my history, even though I wasn't physically present for it. Some part of me and my spirit is connected to that. I think about all of the queer people who have gone before us and taken that suffering onto their bodies, that I might have life. 'So death is at work in us, but life is at work in you' – I feel like, oh *yeah*. [laughs]

In the same way that death was at work in the early church to bring about eternal life to those who heard the message, there was something so liberating and life-saving about the gospel of Jesus that people were willing to put their physical bodies on the line for it – there's something liberating and life-giving about queerness. The folks who have gone before us have been willing to put their bodies on the line so that we might have life, and what a full life I get to have – because of all the pain and death and trauma that people have carried around in their bodies before me. Not that we've 'arrived' – the kingdom of God is not yet here. Queer people still carry around death and trauma in our bodies, so that life might be at work in the world. I just really feel like, oh *yeah*. Queerness is alive and well in this text here in Corinthians. What about you, Shay?

FS: All of that really resonates with me. The idea that, you know, as a trans person, and still living in a world that's really hostile towards trans bodies, especially towards trans femme bodies and trans women of color bodies, and the way that the trans community carries that trauma still. But also, the way that so many of us are choosing - and sometimes it's because of privilege, sometimes it's not to be visible, in order to make the world different and better so that kids coming up don't have to carry that trauma in their bodies. When I go into spaces, especially hostile spaces, to do Trans 101 trainings, or to talk about being trans and Christian, people will say things like, "Oh, you're so brave!" And it's like, I don't really feel brave. I feel like I have a responsibility to all the people who came before me who had such a harder time doing this work. And then I also feel this responsibility to all the kids who are coming up after me. I think about what it would have meant to me, as a kid, to see someone like me in a space talking about holding onto faith and being trans. That would have been mind-blowing

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and life-changing. And I think about the ways that I'm surrounded by a community that holds me up, that holds me in safety, so that I can go into these hostile places and do that work and then come home and still be intact, be kind of put back together by the people around me who love me.

I think about what a privilege it is to get to do that work, even though it's hard work. Even though it feels traumatic sometimes, even though it feels like walking into places where people are literally dealing death with their words and their actions and the way that they vote and the theology that they hold. And also, I feel, like you Brian, that the queer and trans community brings such life – life-giving theology, life-giving presence, that to go and stand in those places of death and proclaim the good news, the gospel, to hateful people who claim Christianity is part of what it means to bring about resurrection. It's not just for me and us, it's for them too, if they would only see it. That's what I see in verses seven through nine, this treasure in clay pots, experiencing all kinds of trouble, but not being crushed or abandoned or knocked out. That's what it feels to me to be a part of a queer and trans community, to be a part of a queer and trans Christian community, where we can get knocked around by homophobes and transphobes and quote-unquote progressive Christians who can't get their heads out of their own asses long enough to love us and really accept us – but also we're part of this community that holds us up and gives us life. That's really beautiful, and allows us to continue to do this work.

B: If you're listening and are jazzed about all of this, and you want to expand your community and be a part of a community like that, we would love to welcome you into our community, Sanctuary Collective. You can learn more at QueerTheology.com/community. Inside of there, we also have lessons and books on how to queer scripture. If our queer take on this passage was speaking to you, inside of Sanctuary Collective we look at the transfiguration as coming out, we look at the Passion of Christ from a trans perspective – lots and lots of queer takes on scripture, and how you might start to tell your own spiritual story, how you might be able to queer scripture. We would love to welcome you inside. You can learn more at QueerTheology.com/community.

[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.

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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