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Divine in the Differences, feat Indigo Rose
Romans 1:24 - 2:8, 1 Corinthians 12:12-31

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PODCAST START:

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 co-founders of QueerTheology.com and the hosts for this podcast. I'm Father Shay Kearns

B: And I'm Brian G. Murphy.

FS: Welcome back to the Queer Theology podcast. Last week was episode 300! Can you even believe it?

B: I can hardly believe it.

FS: It was so great to celebrate with all of you. We talked a little bit about what the past six years has meant to us and where we are headed for the future. Just as a reminder, we launched an amazing Patreon, so that you can support this work and keep it moving into the future strongly. You can check that out at patreon.com/queertheology.

We talked about wanting to be able to feature more voices and so for the next couple of weeks, we are going to feature some interviews with folks that listen to the podcast, who wanted to share some of their favorite Bible stories, and also talk a little bit about what their journeys have been. So we are super excited to feature those for the next couple of weeks.

B: Yup! First up is Indigo Rose and we chatted the other day about a bunch of things including two of her favorite Bible passages, we talked about sex and spirituality, we talked about navigating unaffirming family and spaces, we talked about loving across disagreements, and finding the divine in differences. It was a really great conversation and I'm looking forward to sharing that with you now.

FS: Yes, so a little bit more about Indigo. Indigo Rose attended college in Pasadena CA. She now teaches in Pasadena CA after traveling around the country in different educational environments.

She is a published poet under a different name and can be found on Twitter @SinQueerlyRose. She has a book that can be found on Amazon called Careful with Her Memory.

She looks forward to a career as a mental health professional, teacher, poet, and author.

[Interview starts]

B: I'm so excited to be doing our first guest interview of this little series that we are doing right now. I am joined today with Indigo Rose.

Indigo Rose: Hi!

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B: Thanks for being here Indigo. We met a month or so ago, and had been dreaming it out being this happening ever since. So it's exciting to have you here today. For those of the folks listening at home who don't know you yet, can you tell us your pronouns and some of the identities that are important to you?

IR: Yeah, sure. So I'm Indigo Rose, my pronouns are she/her/hers and I identify as a bisexual, bipolar queer individual. That's basically, my core identities are those things and I really relate to these things in good and sometimes negative ways. But it's all really a part of who I am.

B: Well, thank you for being here!

IR: Yeah!

B: So can you tell us just a little bit about your faith journey that has brought you from there to this moment.

IR: Okay. I grew up without really a religious background. I grew up kind of agnostic: not really knowing which way was up, kind of deal. I ended up going to a Christian college just because I thought they would be like a good influence on me, and there would be good people, and I would be chill and happy. My freshman year was like hell on earth. I was really overweight, I was on 13 pills a day for my bipolar, and I was not in control of my body, mind, or spirit. I really didn't find support in that group, so that was really hard. But as I started to study scripture through the classes that I had, I was, there's Jesus. There they are! I really fell in love with Christ and just that tender, loving, beautiful, wonderful, complicated being that is Jesus. So as I fell in love with Christ, I began to be able to fall in love with people. Then I left college and I felt very disconnected from my faith. This is really random, but I think it's important somehow: I didn't have sex until I was 24. I described it before in some of my poetry and stuff, but my body felt like a dying bomb that was going to attack other people and destroy whatever is good inside of me. So I just didn't explore that at all for a really long time. I moved to Nashville, did that whole scene, and then I had sex for the first time. It was amazing, great, really fun, really enjoyed it.

B: Wohoo!!!

IR: Very sex-positive person!

It was just [laughing] sorry my fiance is looking at me like "What's happening?" I'm just giggly. I knew I was queer the whole time, I knew I had a desire for both genders or whatever gender is, whatever. I had a desire for different types of people. I really didn't explore that until this place called Nature's Classroom which you have a mug of Nature's Classroom right there.

B: And I'm drinking some delicious hot chocolate out of it.

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IR: Nature's Classroom was a really informative experience for who I am now. I was there for two years, for different seasons. It really changed my perspective because I wasn't around Christians anymore who are so closed and conservative. I was around just people who weren't trying to box themselves into religion and stay secured in it that sad, scary space just thinking God has to be one thing. You know? Then I went online [laughs], as you do. I went on OkCupid and found this lovely, wonderful person. I knew from "go", I knew from seeing her picture that she was the person. My heart just dropped in such an insane way, because I was "Oh, this is literally it." If she swipes right then this is gonna happen. So then she did! And it's been a magical, wonderful, crazy, complicated experience ever since.

B: That's lovely! We can chat more about finding our people online, so then we fast forward to a few months ago, Father Shay, my Queer Theology co-founder was in LA visiting and we were doing some work. So we had a QueerTheology.com meetup and met you and your fiance, Beatrice, for the first time. So how did you get connected to QueerTheology.com and the podcast?

IR: Yeah! So I was, "Okay! I met the person. She has a vagina. What do I do?" I just felt very insecure about that. I've always been in love with Jesus and I wanted to reconcile that with the person of Christ, and with the scriptures, and with myself. I wanted to feel, not just feel, but know that I was not necessarily damned or anything, I don't really care about that kind of stuff. It was just kind of silly to think about your life that way all the time. That would drive anyone insane. I wanted to know that God's love was for me, too. And not in spite of my queerness, but because of my queerness.

I don't know, we just met and connected. I Googled QueerTheology and it happened. The first podcast I listened to by you guys was [God Trusts You to Pick Your Partner](#). I was, "Okay, good!" I breathe the sigh of relief in my living room, and I was "Okay. Oh my God. That's it. That's what I needed to hear. That's all I needed to hear and know." There is a different perspective and it is truth. So, yeah!

B: Cool! Glad that that message landed with you.

IR: Yeah, totally!

B: So when was that?

IR: That was, Oh God! December, probably, of last year. Yeah. So December of *two thousand gay-teen*.

B: [Laughs] two thousand gay-teen! I love it! So have you continued looking into the podcast since then? What's your relationship with them and the podcast since that first episode?

IR: We used to listen collectively a lot and just talk about it. We've fallen off of that. But I still listen to it pretty fuckin' often - it's great! I don't feel like it's queerness laid on top of something. I

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feel like it's queerness incorporated and tangibly there already, and really just sucking it out for people to see it kind of deal. So I really appreciate that about the podcast.

B: Yeah! That's [inaudible 8:52], so now I know that you got some passages that you're jazzed to talk about, and to suck the queerness out that is already there. This is the queer Bible podcast so we can, even though we're doing these interviews we love the Bible still, somehow. So we can't let it go. We're gonna read two passages, this week for the podcast. Then Indigo is going to give us a queer message about them.

So we're gonna be reading Romans 1:24 - 2:8, so if you are a queer person and you're familiar with Romans 1...

IR: You're welcome. This is gonna be great.

B: Yeah! Just trust us to take you on...

IR: Trust me, it's gonna be okay.

B: We're going on a journey together. And then also, 1 Corinthians 12:12-31. So Indigo, can you read the Romans passage for us.

IR: This is from the message.

So God said, in effect, "If that's what you want, that's what you get." It wasn't long before they were living in a pigpen, smeared with filth, filthy inside and out. And all this because they traded the true God for a fake god, and worshiped the god they made instead of the God who made them—the God we bless, the God who blesses us. Oh, yes!

Worse followed. Refusing to know God, they soon didn't know how to be human either—women didn't know how to be women, men didn't know how to be men. Sexually confused, they abused and defiled one another, women with women, men with men—all lust, no love. [That's really important, and I'm gonna come back to that]. And then they paid for it, oh, how they paid for it—emptied of God and love, godless and loveless wretches.

Since they didn't bother to acknowledge God, God quit bothering them and let them run loose. And then all hell broke loose: rampant evil, grabbing and grasping, vicious backstabbing. They made life hell on earth with their envy, wanton killing, bickering, and cheating. Look at them: mean-spirited, venomous, fork-tongued God-bashers. Bullies, swaggerers, insufferable windbags! [I love that!] They keep inventing new ways of wrecking lives. They ditch their parents when they get in the way. Stupid, slimy, cruel, cold-blooded. And it's not as if they don't know better. They know perfectly well they're spitting in God's face. And they don't care—worse, they hand out prizes to those who do the worst things best!

Those people are on a dark spiral downward. But if you think that leaves you on the high ground where you can point your finger at others, think again. Every time you criticize someone, you condemn yourself. It takes one to know one. Judgmental criticism of others is a well-known way of escaping detection in your own crimes and misdemeanors. But God isn't so easily diverted. He sees right through all such smoke screens and holds you to what you've done.

You didn't think, did you, that just by pointing your finger at others you would distract God from seeing all your misdoings and from coming down on you hard? Or did you think that because he's such a nice God, he'd let you off the hook? Better think this one through from the beginning. God is kind, but he's not soft. In kindness he takes us firmly by the hand and leads us into a radical life-change.

You're not getting by with anything. Every refusal and avoidance of God adds fuel to the fire. The day is coming when it's going to blaze hot and high, God's fiery and righteous judgment. Make no mistake: In the end you get what's coming to you—Real Life for those who work on God's side, but to those who insist on getting their own way and take the path of least resistance, Fire!

B: Great! And I'm going to read 1 Corinthians 12:12-31 and this will be from the Common English Bible. And I love this passage also.

Christ is just like the human body—a body is a unit and has many parts; and all the parts of the body are one body, even though there are many. We were all baptized by one Spirit into one body, whether Jew or Greek, or slave or free, and we all were given one Spirit to drink. Certainly the body isn't one part but many. If the foot says, "I'm not part of the body because I'm not a hand," does that mean it's not part of the body? If the ear says, "I'm not part of the body because I'm not an eye," does that mean it's not part of the body? If the whole body were an eye, what would happen to the hearing? And if the whole body were an ear, what would happen to the sense of smell? But as it is, God has placed each one of the parts in the body just like he wanted. If all were one and the same body part, what would happen to the body? But as it is, there are many parts but one body. So the eye can't say to the hand, "I don't need you," or in turn, the head can't say to the feet, "I don't need you." Instead, the parts of the body that people think are the weakest are the most necessary. The parts of the body that we think are less honorable are the ones we honor the most. The private parts of our body that aren't presentable are the ones that are given the most dignity. The parts of our body that are presentable don't need this. But God has put the body together, giving greater honor to the part with less honor so that there won't be division in the body and so the parts might have mutual concern for each other. If one part suffers, all the parts suffer with it; if one part gets the glory, all the parts celebrate with it. You are the body of Christ and parts of each other. In the church, God has appointed first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, the ability to help others, leadership skills, different kinds of tongues. All aren't apostles, are they? All aren't prophets, are they? All aren't teachers, are they? All don't perform miracles, do they? All don't have gifts of healing, do

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they? All don't speak in different tongues, do they? All don't interpret, do they? Use your ambition to try to get the greater gifts. And I'm going to show you an even better way.

Okay, Indigo!

IR: Yes!

B: Pull out the juicy queerness for these passages for us.

IR: So I feel like, in my experience, it's been really interesting to see how the Bible can be translated, and how that doesn't take away, so this is not written by a bunch of white men in seminary doesn't mean that it's not valid and still truth. I think God's word speaks in different languages, different forms, different whatever. I feel that that was essential in my understanding of queerness and scripture was interpretation is really key, and interpretation is the way that we get to ourselves. We have to exegete we're not doing the work of God well.

With this passage I see that, I often think of people, my future mother-in-law, who is very conversative. She has written us many letters about how she is very sad about our choice to be ourselves, and that kind of stuff. It's really getting heard, but it's also propelling me forward because if you're doing that to me, I wonder how I can love you in spite of that and be like Christ. But also be not abused by that, you know?

B: That tension is so important

IR: It's such a weird thing. Susan Rusell, the person who is marrying us, she has this great benediction that she says often which is "May you have the strength or the power to love, serve, and resist people." And those are all a triangle, there are also not a mess right? So I feel like that's really important when you are in community with people you disagree with who you are and who God has made you. It's hard because they're thinking that they are doing it out of love, and they think they're doing it. They think Romans 1 is often a clobber passage for LGBT people, and it often seems like people aren't really looking at Jesus. They aren't really looking at what they did on earth or in heaven or any of that. They are just looking at, they're reading scriptures literally in a way that's not really helpful to anybody. So I think that's really interesting to unpack that and be "Okay, what can we actually do to see each other for who we are?" Kind of deal. And I think these passages address that very well.

B: As you mentioned, and I think everyone knows that Romans 1 is totally a passage that anti-queer people will say, "Look! This is why you shouldn't be gay." Right? It's so wild to me because now when I read it, I'm like, You motherfuckers! This passage is about you! You're the wrong ones and you're going to burn in hell.

Before we started recording you were talking about sometimes there's something holy about disagreement and finding God --- disagreement as a way to help you find, point you towards truth. Can you share more about how do we not look at this passage from a defensive posture, but find something life giving in Romans 1, of all places.

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IR: Yeah, I know it's crazy. Let me just open it up and let me dissect it for you a little bit. I think the one thing that I look up is the "all lust, no love". That part of it really struck me very well in this interpretation in this passage because it addresses the fact that queerness in itself is not a sin. It's always the intent behind what you're doing. When he calls them insufferable windbags, and swaggerers, and bullies. This has nothing to do with queers this has to do with your actions and how you're choosing to inhabit your body, inhabit your soul, inhabit your space, and your community. I felt that this has nothing to do with being queer, I think it really has to do with how the way people lose themselves to sin, and lose themselves to things that are actually sin. Love is love, and I know that's really cheesy, but it's totally true. I think, Christ shows up in the margins of that love and He shows up everywhere and in every situation, and take away that burden of seeing queerness as sin. We can live fully alive as God intended.

B: You can identify as a Christian, a queer-Christian or an anti-gay Christian and still an insufferable windbag, right? Being a Christian, or not being queer, being queer is not...

IR: Exactly. Yeah, or saying your Christian... or whatever. That's not the point!

B: That's not the point!

IR: It has nothing to do with that. I'm sorry.

B: I love this, "all lust, no love" also stuck out to me because I'm someone who loves to have a lot of casual sex. I've found in that, that that can also be holy and sacred and that there can be, with someone whose name I don't know, a lot of love, and care, and attention. There are people who are married, like monogamously, heterosexually married, and there's abuse, and neglect, and violence happening in their sex lives. So, "all lust, no love" doesn't mean committed, married sex, not casual sex. It is, what you were saying, beyond the surface, what is at the heart.

IR: I had sex for the first stand on a one-night stand and I was just like, "I just wanna fuck someone and this is gonna be great." We had sex for literally six to eight hours. I was, "Hey! This is great! I didn't know why I didn't do this before!" But I think for me, it was when I was ready and when I was secure with myself, and secure with who I was. I think that's what we need to be secure with ourselves and where we are with God and with each other. Literally, the point of being alive is just being a whole person and trying to find that journey.

B: My first time having queer sex was also a one-night stand, and I wrote a prayer for him...

IR: Aw! I love that!

B: ...in a first Spit & Spirit for the Sex and Bodies issue, and then, so this was fourteen years ago. When I was in college, moved to New York, fast forward I moved back to LA, and I reconnected with him because he lives four blocks away from me now. So we met up a few weeks ago for the first time since then.

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IR: Wow!!! That's crazy!

B: We talked about everything that has happened since. I was like, "I wrote a prayer about you." He is not Christian, I read it for him and he cried, and he was, "Really amazing!" We've been Facebook friends ever since, but sat in the same room for the first time which is... I should've been video taping this.

Okay, that's Romans. How does 1 Corinthians go together with this passage and what you want to highlight today.

IR: I think that there is a real diversity in Christ body, obviously, and the ways we interpret who Christ is, but I feel there is that tension that can be positive if you let it be. Instead of it being a burden or this sad, discouraging: you're gonna always dislike me because I'm queer or hate me inside of yourself because you think that's what God wants you to do, kind of thing. But I think that it's about not self-rejecting in a way, who God has made you to be. I feel like that within that, if the eyes are not part of the body, if you're a queer person saying, "I'm not part of the body of Christ because I'm queer." It's really damaging and hard. I think we need to invent our own space within the body of Christ. I think that God is making room for that as we get more rights, and get more secure in what we are doing, and who we are in this community of the world, you know? So I think that's really important and a really cool journey to be on.

B: Yeah! So I know that for me, sometimes reading the Bible has felt like academic, philosophical exercise

IR: Totally! Yeah! I studied Bible in college. I know, I've exegeted things, how to do the Greek, and the Hebrew, and blah blah blah.

B: Yeah! It becomes, oh yeah, this is really exciting and inspiring you, or whatever, but it's only alive in my head. How have you lived out these learnings from Romans and 1 Corinthians in your life?

IR: Oh gosh! Just by being steady and patient with myself and other people. Knowing at the core of everything is God. To love another person is to see the face of God. I think that's really important that's going on our pamphlet for our wedding, our little liturgy. I think that if you open yourself up to that idea, you will change immediately and gradually, and I look forward to that change in people. I look forward to people staying the same too, and the way that they have been created, and that diversity is really important. Yeah, I don't know, it's been a journey and I'm still learning is the point. And I will always be changing, and learning, and growing. If I'm doing it right, I'll be a totally different person in ten years, and ten years from that. It will all be because of Beatrice, my love, and also other people in my journey. You have to let in different types of perspectives in order to make you stronger. So yes! That's really important.

B: That's a beautiful message for us start to wrap up with and so, as we've said recently, we just passed the 300th episode of this podcast which is wild. We turned six, earlier this year. So as we look to the future of the podcast, we want to bring in more voices like Indigo, bring you back in the podcast perhaps, do a series looking at musicians, and artists, and activists, and

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things like that. And also just keep this podcast going, it takes a lot of time, and energy, and money. So if this podcast is meaningful to you, we would love for your support, we're doing a big push right now, you may go to patreon.com/queertheology, whether it's \$1, or \$5, or \$50. We will cherish your support and there's some perks over there, so check that out.

Before we go, I'm obsessed with poems as prayers, and as it turns out, Indigo is a published poet that has a poem here to close out our time together, so thank you so much for being on the show with us Indigo. Thank you at home for listening, and here is a prayer.

IR: This is called Sins and Songs.

My heart was designed to be destroyed, disintegrating beneath the acid tongue of past lives. Circling me like sharks. Only I'm in the water. Salt from my wounds, uncleaned, unseen. Then I see you sitting pretty on the beach. Mostly dead too, but also partially alive. In your particles, you lived before me, during me, after. The road is long, but the Christmas lights are off now and I must have you. Not must, but should. Not should, but could. If I'm blessed with the challenge of your silly, sweet head. The kind that comes from coming out. Only coming out could've brought you here my love. On the edges of your psyche with me in the middle of the God. Her divine love at the center swimming, singing, sins and songs.

B: Blessings to you!

IR: You too!

B: Thank you.

[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, Tumbler, Twitter, and Instagram.

B: We'll see you next week.

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