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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: Hello, hello, and welcome back to the Queer Theology podcast. It is Sunday, January 26 and we are excited to be back with you for a second version of our new, and revamped, and longer podcast, and so...

Together: Buckle in!

B: I can't believe it's already the end of January. The time is flying.

FS: I know! It's wild! It's wild! So what's new in your world, Brian?

B: It's still trucking along in trying to figure out my life-career, making all the money work. [laughs] So thank you to everyone who supports Queer Theology making it a little less stressful.

The website is ready which is wild to me! It's been a long time coming and I don't know now if we're going to find glitches, so if you find glitches on the website please very gingerly let me know about them. There's almost seven years of QueerTheology.com now. We've started with a one-page website. We were like, let's just see what happens and we just keep adding more and more as ya'll keep wanting more and more from us. So trying to make sense of seven years of content in a way that is useful to you and gets everything there but is not overwhelming and that nothing got lost in translation has been a challenge. So many spreadsheets, and spreadsheets, and spreadsheets trying to keep track of everything. So if you spot any glitches, let me know. That's me. What about you Shay? You're getting ready to come to me!

FS: Yeah! I'm super excited! I signed up for this 2-day workshop it's called Something To Say and Rob Bell basically walks through a 2-day communications workshop on how to communicate better. It's capped at 30 people, so I'm super excited to just be in a really intimate space of other creatives and communicators, and hopefully, learn some tips. I've long admired Rob Bell as a public speaker, the fact that he can give a 2-hour or more talk that involves science and deep theology, and never once look at notes is just... it's just mind-blowing to me. I aspired to that level of ease with both message, and also content, and being.

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So I don't think he is going to fix my life in the next two days, but I'm certainly hopeful that he will give a push in the right direction.

I guess I just find him really inspiring the way that he has reinvented his life and his ministry, and his career a couple of times over. I'm just excited to be in the same room as him and kinda soak up that energy for a couple of days. Also, to not be in the tundra of Minnesota for a week and I think I'll probably be the only person in LA in a tank top and swimming trunks. Everyone else will be in their jackets, but I'll be like "Not Minnesota". So I'm pretty stoked about that.

B: I'm excited for you to bring some of that learning and energy to the work that we're doing here and just continue taking Queer Theology up it up to the next level. Making it more and more useful and engaging for folks. One of the things we set out to do all those years ago was to engage the head and the heart of theology. It has to be a sound faith, but it also has to be a meaningful faith. That's what we're trying to do and I'm excited to see what comes out of your time with Rob Bell.

FS: Yeah, and you've been working on a course for everyone too, yeah?

B: I sure have! It is coming so soon. We're doing a Faithful Sexuality course. I think we're going to open up registration later this week if you hop on the waitlist, you can get early registration and maybe a discount or bonus. You can go to QueerTheology.com/faithfulsexuality.

It's like a few things. So it's a one-part "Is it Ok to have sex?", "What types of sex are okay to have?" We don't want to spend too much time on that because there's much more interesting questions when it comes to faith and sex. But we know that is a pressing question for lots of people, so there will be some info on that in there. But if you've already got that figured out and you're like, "I'm good! I'm having the sex, I'm ready to roar!" Don't worry that's just the beginning of it. And then we're gonna dive into what does our faith have to say about our sexuality? How does our sexuality inform our faith? How do we figure out and articulate into a sexual ethic that isn't just: sex is bad, don't have it until you get married and then it's good, but only if you're straight. I think that queer people figuring out a sexual ethic can be a really helpful and healthy thing, so we're gonna do that.

Then we're just going to look at the ways in which scripture is a little sexy. Both the parts of the Bible that talk about sex, but also the ways in which we use metaphor or imagery or allegory, and the ways in which sex have been a part of that; both in scripture and in art, and theology throughout the ages.

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There's some juicy stuff in there and the way we talk about God and community and sex and I think that it's just going to be really fun to explore that. I know for everyone in the whole world that there's so many negative cultural messages about sex and about our body. That is especially true for Christians and it's especially true for queer people. Really making space to reclaim our sexuality as this good, holy, and sacred thing. That's also fun and playful, and I'm just really excited to dive into it with the community that we've got. So keep on the lookout for that and if you're interested in this QueerTheology.com/faithfulsexuality is where you can hop on the waitlist or if you're listening to this next week or in two weeks and registration is already open, that will set up a redirect that takes you to the registration page so that you can dive in. And if you have any questions about the course or about sex, send us an email at connect@queertheology.com or send us a DM on any social media and we'll talk through and help you figure out if this is right for you or what your options are.

Yep, so that's the course that's coming and I'm just jazzed about it.

FS: Yeah! It's gonna be awesome. Alright! Before we dive in, this podcast is brought to you by over 125 supporters on Patreon.

B: Our Patreons not only keep this show on the air but also support all of the free resources that we create over at QueerTheology.com. It's articles, videos, and PDF guides, and all that jazz. So thank you, thank you, thank you, thank you so much to all of our Patreon supporters.

FS: And today, we wanna give a shout out to one of our new Patreons, Jamie who just joined this past month. Thank you so much Jamie we're super excited to have you as part of this community and to have you supporting this work.

B: Thank you! So if you out there enjoy this show and you want to support it, you can do that for as little as \$2/month over at Patreon.com/QueerTheology. You can learn more about why we need this support, what it goes to and you can check out some of the perks that are available at the various levels again at Patreon.com/QueerTheology.

FS: Okay! On to the show!

We are gonna dive in with a listener question. Just a reminder that if you want your question to be featured on the podcast, you can send us an email at connect@queertheology.com. You can send us an audio file and we'll feature your audio, or you can just send us in a regular email. We would love to feature your question and so today's question comes from Zoe.

Zoe writes, "I still worry sometimes. Am I wrong? Is this kind of social justice the wrong kind? Even if I am the most justice-advocating, kindest person alive, being queer and

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defending queer people, am I going to be condemned for being those things once I die? Am I doing mental gymnastics in apologetics, and how will I defend myself if apologetics won't work? Do you have any tips for quelling these anxieties?"

B: Ohh! I just want to first say that I feel this question on a gut and soul level. I'd like to think that I've put this question to rest many, many years ago. Also, I remember living in that fear and uncertainty. Just so vividly and viscerally. Just first off, I want to say to you Zoe and to anyone else who is listening and having similar questions: I feel you, and I've been there, and you are not alone. You're not the first person and you won't be the last, unfortunately, to have these worries and we're here with you.

FS: I think this is probably or some variation on this question, is probably the questions that we get the most often at Queer Theology of people wondering: How do I deal with this anxiety? How do I know if I'm right or wrong? So yes, I too feel this deeply and also you're definitely not alone. We get this question at least once a week and have for over seven years. This is the work. Right? This is the work.

B: So Christianity is often framed in the public discourse as this personal relationship with Jesus, going to church, believing a handful of things about God or Jesus or Bible or the world. So in that model of Christianity, justice becomes this thing that is secondary to Christianity. Or perhaps a distraction to Christianity. If there's one thing that this Bible podcast shows, looking at the Bible, the actual Bible for almost seven years now, is that justice is not secondary to or in competition to Christianity but it is at the heart the faith story in both the Hebrew and Christian Bible.

Then there are like some Christians where they are "Well yeah, justice for some people but not our people." is a good thing. I think, hopefully, that this podcast shows that we're all wrapped up in this together. This specifically this question about worrying about what's going to happen after you die. We have an article on the website that is it all about getting into heaven and we will put a link in the show notes to that article about the question, what happens after you die? Is Christianity about just getting into heaven? You can get the show notes for this episode at QueerTheology.com/313. Shay, what else would you add?

FS: What you said about justice is huge. I think there's also this idea, this pray a prayer and you're good to go. That's not actually in scripture, so the justice work is more integral to what it means to be a Christian than praying that prayer. I also think that some of this idea of what can you say to me that will make this anxiety go away, is the uncomfortable truth that there is nothing that we can say that will make that anxiety go away. Part of what it means to deprogram yourself from a really toxic or traumatic first encounter with Christianity is number one, it takes time. It takes time to do that work and to do the unpacking work. I think you and I both know that sometimes those doubts still come up and even though you've done the work and you've been in therapy for forever

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and you don't believe in that God anymore. Those messages die hard and that's part of recovering from trauma is that those messages don't ever go away.

But I do think that there is this sense that it does get easier after time and the more work that you do to unpack and to learn a different kind of faith. The less loud those voices get. I just want to share this quote that's been super comforting to me, it's by Marcus Borg who's this great, popular theologian, and he has this quote about the afterlife that I think is really beautiful. He says, "So, is there an afterlife, and if so, what will it be like?" And his response is "I don't have a clue. But I am confident that the one who has buoyed us up in life will also buoy us up through death. We die into God. What more that means, I do not know. But that is all I need to know." And I revisit that quote a lot and hang on to it. Both because to me, it sums up so perfectly this idea that if I can trust in God and that God is good, then I don't actually have to worry about getting it right and having it be a 100% right all the time. I don't have to worry that I'm going to be smoked or struck down by a vengeful God after I die because I believe that God is loving and that the rest will sort itself out. I offer up that quote up to you, this idea "I am confident that the one who has buoyed us up in life will also buoy us up through death. We die into God. What more that means, I do not know. But that is all I need to know."

B: Yeah. I think it can be tempting to take, well it's not about saying this prayer and getting into heaven and that justice is at the heart of our faith. Translate that into, then I have to do the right things and that then, nervousness and anxiety about, am I doing the right things? Am I enough? Is my justice enough? Can replace that old question of am I still saved? You are already enough and you are good and whole, just as you are. If you want a little bit guidance, Shay wrote this amazing quick start guide for finding your faith that walks you through the process of deconstructing and reconstructing which you can get at queertheology.com/guide for free.

FS: Yeah! If questions like this are meaningful to you, if they feel helpful, we dive deeper into stuff like this all of the time in Sanctuary Collective. Sanctuary Collective is Queer Theology's online community. It's the place where Brian and I spend the bulk of our time hanging out with people. It's a space for questions, for diving deeper into scripture, for getting support on everything from coming out, dating, mental health stuff, dealing with being trans, and also celebrating our wins together. Celebrating good dates, and new babies, and just fun that we have throughout the week. It's a really beautiful community. If you would like to join this international community of folks, you can do that at QueerTheology.com/community we would love to see you inside Sanctuary Collective. It's a really special place and we would love to have you be a part of it.

B: Okay, so let's open up our Bibles and queer the text.

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FS: This week we are taking a look at 1 Corinthians 1:10-18. I'm going to read it because, well it is a passage...

B: It sure is.

FS: This is from the Common English Bible

Now I encourage you, brothers and sisters, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ: Agree with each other and don't be divided into rival groups. Instead, be restored with the same mind and the same purpose. My brothers and sisters, Chloe's people gave me some information about you, that you're fighting with each other. What I mean is this: that each one of you says, "I belong to Paul," "I belong to Apollos," "I belong to Cephas," "I belong to Christ." Has Christ been divided? Was Paul crucified for you, or were you baptized in Paul's name? Thank God that I didn't baptize any of you, except Crispus and Gaius, so that nobody can say that you were baptized in my name! Oh, I baptized the house of Stephanas too. Otherwise, I don't know if I baptized anyone else. Christ didn't send me to baptize but to preach the good news. And Christ didn't send me to preach the good news with clever words so that Christ's cross won't be emptied of its meaning.

The message of the cross is foolishness to those who are being destroyed. But it is the power of God for those of us who are being saved.

B: I'm here for this text. First is, oh Paul! Always. I got whiplashed from the thoughts that I was having as we were reading this text. So the first thought that jumped out at me was, ohh not this! I can hear the ways in which this passage is used to silence queer people, women, folks of color. To just say, no you have to be unified and basically just be quiet and let us continue to beat up on you, but act like we're all big, happy, unified family. There's a way that this is used to silence differences in descent, and that always comes at the cost of marginalized folks. First I was eww no, and then, I very quickly was, oh but there is something there and it made me think of the ways in which sometimes the various parts of the LGBT community sometimes try to fracture apart. I'm thinking mostly of white cis gays and lesbians who want to say, let's get this marriage important to me or the military is important to me. And we can jettison trans folks and maybe come back for you later, but actually, probably not. And bi people complicate the message around you can't choose so we're gonna ignore them. I see the various ways in which pride and ego, and identity play out in fracturing the LGBT community and that breaks my heart. So there's a part of me that does long for this unified community, and can we come together and really take care of ourselves and support each other. And also thinking back to the time when this was written where the early followers of Jesus were a minority, and living under Rome, and occupation. Not the state-sponsored religion and very different than American and Western Christianity today. So the ways in

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which queer folks sometimes need unity to survive and these Christians folks also might have been — perhaps a strategic element of we need to not be divided because we are still vulnerable. That is very different than the powerful institutional church saying, be quiet and be absorbed into the board that is American Christianity.

What about you Shay, what is coming up for you with this text?

FS: First of all, this text makes me laugh because you can tell that Paul is writing the stream of consciousness letter, I didn't baptize any of you. Except for those two people, but nobody else. Ooh, and that whole household, but I don't remember if I did anyone else. Right? It's again, to me, this indication of the fact that Paul didn't intend for his letters to become scriptures, right? Again this is clear to me that had Paul's intention been to set down something that would be handed down for centuries and would be considered on par with the Hebrew scriptures, this is not what he would've written. And he then says, "Christ didn't send me to preach the good news with clever words." So he doesn't have this sense of himself as being the arbiter of what it means to follow Jesus. In fact, instead, he is trying to continually re-orient this new community back to what did Christ say? What did Jesus say? It's unfortunate that often in American Christianity in particular, the emphasis has been on Paul's words and work. When Paul was really trying to orient everyone back to Jesus. So I think that it's an important corrective especially because this final verse, "the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are being destroyed, but it is the power of God for those of us who are being saved." I remember that verse being used all the time growing up. It was the sense of we understand Jesus because we are saved. And people are bashing Christianity because they are being destroyed. It was this mental gymnastics of will you reject it so, therefore, it's foolishness to you and not the other way around. I think it's important to remember that that's not what Paul is trying to say. But also I think your point to this idea of a minority or marginalized group needing to be united. I think about its political season in the United States, it's always political season in the United States, but the conversations that happen on the left around, "No. I'm a Bernie Bro", "No. I want Elizabeth Warren.", "No. I want Marianne Williamson". The four people that say they want Marianne Williamson. [laughs]

There's a sense of, "No. Only my guy or gal." Then there's these other folks that are saying, this insistence on ideological purity is why we ended up with the President that we have now. I think that there is a both-and. There is a responsibility of voting as harm reduction and figuring out what is the next right step. While also saying we need to hold people to a higher standard. So I think there is a both-and here of we can say no that this isn't good enough. The ideal needs to be this and also what's the thing that we can do right now that we can try to hopefully avert World War III. Those are both-and. I think that that is a fine line to walk. It's a really tricky balance. It's something that we need to be careful with because I think it quickly slides into what you were saying about, nope we'll come back to you because we can get this passed without trans people. So let's do

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it. We have to really be cognizant of the decisions that we are making, of the choices that we are making, of where we're gonna say "Nope. You know what, if we can't get it with everyone, we're not gonna do it at all." The moment where it says, "Nope if we don't get this we're really screwed, so we gotta do it." I don't have good and clear answers there, but it feels to me that this passage is calling us to grapple with all of that.

B: Yeah. Definitely important thoughts to reckon with and figure out what each of our appropriate way forward is. Just a final reminder, if you're interested in our course on healthy and faithful sexuality, figuring out sexual ethics, finding ways in which your faith compliments your sex life, and your sexuality compliments your faith. Go to QueerTheology.com/faithfulsexuality to hop on the waitlist or depending on when your listening to this to sign up for the course. If you have any questions about what comes with it, what we're gonna cover, if it's the right fit for you, we would love to talk through that with you. Find us on Facebook, Twitter or Instagram and send us a DM and we'll talk it through. We only want you to be a part of this course if it makes sense for you. So bring any questions that you've got to us we're here to work it out with you. Again that's QueerTheology.com/faithfulsexuality. I'm really excited about this course on exploring the inner sections of sex, and sexuality, and bodies, and the divine. It's gonna be juicy. So that's all I got for now.

FS: And again, if you've got a question for us for the podcast send an email to connect@queertheology.com. We would love to feature your question next time. Thanks so much for being here and we will see you next week.

[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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