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[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.

B: Welcome back. This week, we are looking at the lectionary text for Sunday, July 19th. We're going to be taking a look at Ephesians 2:11-22. It's a little bit long, so we will include a link to that in the shownotes. It's about circumcision and uncircumcision and sort of the reconciling of Jews and gentiles through the work of Jesus.

[not read aloud]

So then, remember that at one time you Gentiles by birth, called “the uncircumcision” by those who are called “the circumcision”—a physical circumcision made in the flesh by human hands—remember that you were at that time without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

For he is our peace; in his flesh he has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us. He has abolished the law with its commandments and ordinances, that he might create in himself one new humanity in place of the two, thus making peace, and might reconcile both groups to God in one body through the cross, thus putting to death that hostility through it.

So he came and proclaimed peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near; for through him both of us have access in one Spirit to the Father. So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are citizens with the saints and also members of the

household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone. In him the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom you also are built together spiritually into a dwelling place for God. [NRSV]

So, Shay, what comes up for you as you are looking at this passage?

FS: I really like this passage. I don't always like Paul's letters. [both laugh] Because there's just a lot there. But actually, I'm really digging a lot of this one. Starting in verse fourteen, it says, "Christ is our peace. He made both Jews and Gentiles into one group. With his body, he broke down the barrier of hatred that divided us." [Shay is using the CEB translation] And I just – I love that image of, almost of Jesus standing in between the two groups and bringing reconciliation by the way that he lived and died. I think that there's something really powerful there and there's something really beautiful in that image. [Brian *mhm's*] And in the physicality of it, right? It's not like, he sat them all down and they talked for a really long time. [laughs] [crosstalk]

B: Right, like they didn't vote on a resolution. [laughs]

FS: Exactly. With his body, he broke down this barrier of hatred. That really resonates with me. And I love, too, how this passage ends with, "So now you are no longer strangers and aliens. Rather, you are fellow citizens with God's people, and you belong to God's household." I'm reading a book right now called *Migrations of the Holy*. It's by William Cavanaugh, who's this Catholic scholar and thinker. He wrote a brilliant book on torture and Eucharist—

B: Ooh!

FS: —that just changed my whole perspective of the Eucharist. And so in this book, he's writing about, kind of the rise of nation-states. He talks about this kind of global economy. And so I've been thinking about what it means to be a citizen of the kingdom of heaven, right? A citizen of the kingdom of God, and the way that that breaks down our national allegiances. You know, we just celebrated the Fourth of July in the United States, and people were posting pictures online of like, altars draped in American flags. It was just gross. And just the way that like, if you belong to Christ, if you consider yourself a Christian and a follower of Jesus, that demands a different allegiance from you. So I've just been thinking a lot about that. What about you?

B: The part about Christ's body is also sort of something that stood out to me. It reminded me, also, of this passage in Romans where Paul says, "Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship." [Brian has nearly flawlessly remembered the NIV translation of Romans 12:1] Which I think was, like, a memory verse. [both laugh] [cross talk]

FS: Oh, it definitely was. I can guarantee you it was.

B: In sixth grade. And it's actually really ironic that that would be a memory verse, because the church that I grew up in was so, so concerned with memory verses and daily quiet times and right beliefs and asking Jesus into your heart to be your Lord and savior. It was a very sort of intellectual faith. The senior minister there was like really really really smart. It was really about that, and not sort of – we were never talking about, like, Christ with his body did this. I mean, *sort* of, but in that, 'Jesus was crucified and paid for our sins,' right, that we might accept him intellectually. But like, 'with his body he broke down the barrier of hatred that divided us' – it was never sort of phrased in those words.

Now that I'm sort of reading scripture afresh, I'm seeing that, and it reminds me of protesters throughout the ages who, with their bodies, are breaking down barriers of hatred. When protestors are chaining together themselves on highways to block bridges to raise awareness, shutting down streets, making sometimes less big things that disrupt traffic and more symbolic things. My friend Shane Claiborne tells a story of this group of elderly nuns who snuck onto a war ship and poured their blood on the guns on it and beat it with hammers to turn it metaphorically from swords into ploughshares. That really sort of immense change and progress and reconciliation happens when people are willing to put their bodies on the line. I think it's so easy for folks to sort of, from the distance of Facebook, say, "Can't they behave?" Or, those people are messing up my commute. Or, they would get the message across if they wrote a letter to Congress. Or any sort of the criticisms of direct and public gathering. This passage here reminds us that with his body, he broke down the barrier of hatred that divided us. If we feel so called, we can do that as well.

[outro music]

B: This has been Reading Queerly, the queer lectionary podcast. 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