Sermon Pride Evensong Luke 10:17-20 and I Corinthians 3:16-23

In name of our God, originator of the they them pronoun who is ever here, ever near, and of course ever Queer. Amen

I am Shaneequa Brokenleg. Thank you for the honor of asking me to be to be with you today. I bring you greetings on behalf of our Presiding Bishop, Sean Rowe and our Gender Justice Missioner Aaron Scott.

What a holy, powerful, and joy-filled thing this is…to have a *Pride* Evensong…to come together as LGBTQ2S+ people, as allies and friends, as the colorful, messy, beloved Body of Christ we are, and say: we are here; we are Queer; and *We*…are holy**.** Amen?

Now, I have to be honest with you, preaching about demons makes me a bit uncomfortable. You see, in my Lakota culture we didn’t have a concept of demons. We didn’t even have a word for evil. We didn’t divide the world into "good guys and bad guys" or "pure and impure" or "saved and unsaved." That binary way of thinking came later—through colonization, through empire, and through a theology that needed to justify domination.

In our Indigenous worldview, the world was about **balance** it was about living into Wolakota or the state when all things are in right-relationship. When we are in right-relationship with ourselves, with each other, with creation, and with the Creator. When something was out of balance, the community responded not with condemnation but with ceremony. With prayer and with sacred medicine—not punishment.

So when Jesus talks about Satan falling like lightning, I have to wonder what he’s talking about. That name Satan originally comes from a role, not a person. In Hebrew, its ha-satan, “the accuser,” part of God’s court; not some cosmic monster. Maybe instead Jesus is talking about a system. A system that twists the soul. That isolates people. That whispers shame. That hoards power. That demonizes the ones who shine.

And demons? They didn’t come from God’s world. They are what happens when we fall deeply out of right-relationship. Demons came from empire, and from the *Church* when it stopped listening to the Spirit and started *listening* to empire. The real “fall” wasn’t just of Satan, but of systems that separated us from our sacredness and from right-relationship.

As LGBTQ2S+ people we know something about demons because *we know* what it’s like tobe demonized.Far too often we have been cast out, blamed, pathologized, exorcised, beaten, mocked, and erased. Some of us grew up in churches that taught us to hate ourselves. Some of us had to flee from proclamations, pulpits, and pews just to stay alive. Some of us are still trying to unlearn that old voice in our head that says, *"You are not enough."* *"You don’t belong here."* *"God hates fags."*  And if we listen to that voice too long, *we* can become demons, in the sense that we fall deeply out of right-relationship with ourselves and with the God who loves us *unconditionally.*

But here’s the truth, my relatives: we were *never* the problem. While we’ve been demon-ized, we were *never* the demon. We *are* the medicine. We are the *temple*. Paul says in First Corinthians: *“Do you not know that you are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit dwells in you?”* Paul doesn’t say “the spirit *will* dwell.” Paul doesn’t say “the spirit *might* dwell if you change.” Paul says the Spirit *dwells*, present tense, in *us* now, already, fully…period. Our queerness, our trans-ness, our bodies, desires, and loves…they are part of *God’s* architecture. Your transness is not a mistake—it’s a gift of the Spirit. Your queerness is not brokenness—it is a testament to your sacred ability to be unbounded. Your body, your gender, your love—they are not barriers to holiness. They are doorways to sacred. *We* are not problems to be fixed. We are prophets, bridge-builders, and sacred medicine for a hurting world.

Throughout the Indigenous world LGBTQ2S+ folks are sacred healers. In my Lakota culture we are considered a third gender. Two-Spirit is a modern term for this ancient identity. In all Indigenous nations that I am aware of, Two-Spirit people held special roles: we are visionaries, mediators, carriers of tradition, caregivers of the vulnerable, healers, and *always*…we are holy. We walk in those sacred liminal spaces; between the worlds of the masculine and feminine, and the worlds of the natural and supernatural. Many people: Queer folks, immigrants, folks who are mixed, and others...walk in the liminal spaces; in-between the boundaries. We don’t see in black and white; we see in rainbows. That is one of the many reasons we are sacred, and valuable to society. We can see things from various perspectives and walk in ways that others cannot. The Lakota believe that a community is not whole without those people who walk in those liminal spaces. In our world today; this world that is still hurting, still colonized, still confused; we are being called again to those sacred roles…not just to survive. But to *heal*.

Let me say this plainly: We cannot heal our communities if we don’t tend to our own healing.

I want to talk for a minute about trauma and wounds because, guess what, we *all* carry them and so many of us have been targeted lately. Some of our wounds are physical; some are emotional; some are spiritual; and some have been handed down through generations. Our world tells us that our wounds are something to hide, something to cover up. Our world tells us to pretend like everything’s fine. But the Gospel, that Good News, tells us a *different* story. Because when Jesus rose, his wounds didn’t magically disappear, he brought them with him…but it was *those* very wounds that brought faith back to Thomas when he put his hands in them…because those wounds told a truth. They told the truth about Jesus’ love; the truth about Jesus’ suffering; and the truth about resurrection. Our wounds can be transformed, if we get help to heal and if we persevere to get *through* it.

Jesus didn’t come back flawless. He came back “transformed.” Maybe this is why so many people didn’t recognize him at first. His wounds became sacred. And if His wounds can be sacred—so can ours. Because *loss* is never the end…*grief* is never the end. I have seen the power of healing; the power of transformation; and the power of resurrection. I have seen the power of God’s *resurrectional, God’s transformational* alchemy. It can turn wounds into wisdom, pain into purpose, grief into growth, and it can turn heartache into hope.

The name of my Lakota community is Šičáŋǧu, which means Burned Thigh, French speakers later shortened it to Brulè.  At some time before 1600 when we got horses, a prairie fire was coming fast. Knowing we could not outrun it, my ancestors turned and did the only thing they could, they ran t*oward* it. Only by getting *through it* could we survive…and we did. At the next gathering of all the Lakota, Dakota, and Nakota, the others saw our burned thighs, not as a sign of defeat or shame, but as a sign of survival and triumph…that, my relatives, is resurrection…that is Pride.

Not the absence of pain…but the holy act of going through it; the holy act of resistance; the holy act of *survival* is transformational. Sometimes the most vulnerable and holy thing we can do is to come to Jesus, come to community, with all our grief, all our wounds and say “this is all I have today, God.” And guess what?, God meets us there; maybe not with quick answers or instant healing but God definitely comes. Jesus knows what it is to suffer and walks with us on our healing journey. God comes to *us* with healing, with community, with transformation, and, with those resurrection and Pride miracles.

Jesus transcended *his* wounds and transformed them into glory. His very resurrection honors the pain we’ve been through. Jesus says, “You don’t have to hide your pain, your wounds, your trauma anymore because I will make them holy.” Your scars, even the ones that still ache, can become the sacred script of survival. They bear witness to what tried to break you *and failed*. And when we show up with our stories, when we bring our wounds into the light of community, of ceremony, of God’s love, they begin to heal—not in isolation, but in relationship. The Pride miracle isn’t in pretending we’re untouched; the miracle is in being transformed by love in the midst of the fire.

Theologian Richard Rohr said, “Trauma that isn’t transformed is transmitted.” Hurt people hurt people but healed people? They heal. So how do we stay whole, when systems try to fracture us? How do we stay *sacred* when systems of oppression, white supremacy, racism, anti-trans violence, homophobia, and Christian nationalism try to convince us we are not?

We do that by building community, building up one another, and building up God’s kindom. We know that the kin*dom* of God is not a gated community for the pure…it is a *feast* for the *hungry*…where every pronoun is celebrated, every body is blessed, and every seat is a seat of honor. So…we stay *sacred* by resting…because rest is resistance. We stay sacred by grieving, making room for our tears and for each other’s pain. We stay sacred by connecting to Spirit, to land, to our ancestors, and to community. We stay sacred by refusing to shrink, when some just want us to go away. We stay sacred by letting joy in—even when it feels risky. Because joy is not frivolous. Joy is medicine. Joy is prophetic. Joy says, “You do not own me.” Joy says, “I belong to something deeper than your fear.” Joy says, “I am a beloved child of God and I will celebrate the fabulousness that I am.”

Jesus tells the seventy not to rejoice in the power to cast out demons, but in the fact that their names are written in heaven. My relatives, *your name is already written*. Not in pencil. Not conditionally. Not in the footnotes. But boldly, joyfully, in the heart of God. And nothing…no law, no slur, no policy, no pulpit—can ever erase it.

Remember, when things are out of balance, how Lakota turn to ceremony? That is exactly what is happening here. Pride *is* ceremony—sacred and embodied. It’s a public act of truth-telling that says: “We are still here.” It’s the lighting of a spiritual fire, one that says imbalance and injustice will not go unchallenged. Pride is a reclamation. It is a collective prayer, a sacred refusal to be erased. It is where glitter meets grief, where survival meets joy, where the Spirit shows up dressed in drag and says, “This too is holy.” Pride is the place we return to—not just to celebrate—but to remember who we are, whose we are, and why we keep going. Pride isn’t rainbow capitalism or surface level acceptance. Pride is the radical, Spirit-infused act of showing up in power, in truth, and of course in love.

Pride can look like more than disco balls and divas. Maybe your Pride doesn’t look like fanfare and fireworks; maybe yours looks like forgiving yourself, or a having a change of heart, or reaching out to community. Maybe it looks like attending a 12-step meeting, or showing up at a protest for something you’re passionate about, or like lighting a candle for someone you still miss. Maybe…it looks like waking up, and deciding to try again when things are overwhelming. That is Pride too.

And my relatives Pride isn’t just a one day, or one month event. It’s a daily practice, a spiritual discipline where we remember that we are God’s beloved. Every time we stop apologizing for being who God created us to be…Pride. Every time we touch our *own* wounds with gentleness…Pride. Every time we choose love over shame…Pride. Every time we speak the truth in a world that wants to silence us…Pride. Every time we honor our identity, or who God calls us to be…Pride.

So this Pride, let it be more than a party. Let it be a ceremony that brings balance and right-relationship back into our world. Let it be a reclaiming of sacred space. Let it be a homecoming to your body. Let it be a resistance song against the empire. Let it be the drumbeat of the kin*dom* of God—reminding you that you are home.

And when the world tries to call us a demon, we can smile and say: “Listen sister, I’m a temple.” “I am where the Spirit lives.” “I am sacred…Still. Again. And Always.” So shine, relatives. Pray, dance, protest, kiss, heal, rest, and *live*. Let your survival be your witness. Let your joy shake the foundations of empire and oppression. Let your *love* be the anthem the world cannot ignore. Because Jesus saw Satan fall like lightning. And us temples, guess what, we’re still standing. Amen