

Pre-election themes for All Saints

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Many churches, including mine, will mark All Saints Day this Sunday. Of course, politics will also be on everyone's mind. At first it seemed to me that the two have little in common, but then several connections occurred to me:

- We might reflect on how the communion of saints binds us to one another—not only across time, but also in all places and life situations. If the communion of saints crosses all humanly constructed borders and divisions, what does that mean for our churches here and now?
- The Revelation text for All Saints speaks of the new Jerusalem. When Martin Luther King Jr. spoke to striking sanitation workers on the day before his assassination, he said this:

It's all right to talk about the new Jerusalem, but one day, God's preachers must talk about the New York, the new Atlanta, the new Philadelphia, the new Los Angeles, the new Memphis, Tennessee. This is what we have to do... It's all right to talk about "long white robes over yonder," in all of its symbolism. But ultimately people want some suits and dresses and shoes to wear down here. It's all right to talk about "streets flowing with milk and honey," but God has commanded us to be concerned about the slums down here, and his children who can't eat three square meals a day.

How might we preach about renewal and change in our communities, in our nation?
How might we connect eschatology and ethics?

- John's story of the raising of Lazarus shows Jesus as one who shares our grief—and also one who shares our anger. Our English translation says that Jesus was “disturbed,” but the Greek tells us he was boiling mad. How can anger be a holy thing? What about reflecting with Martha on all that stinks in the lives of our congregants, our economy, our politics—and on the hope this story reveals for us in the midst of that?