

“Sing to the Lord a new song,
give praise with dancing,
tambourine and lyre.” AMEN!

“Say their names.”

You may have heard of the campaign
that encourages publications, social media, and
protestors to say the names of people with
black or brown skin who had been
killed under
suspicious circumstances.

And you know that the purpose of
saying the names is to focus on
the humanity of the person who
was killed or murdered.

Saying the names helps society to not forget
the injustices done; it hopes to keep them
from being narrowed into statistics.

Saying the names helps society to realize
that the injustices happened to real people
under the authority and power of groups
that hold systems of superiority
over others.

The troubling reality is that
the “SayTheirNames” list is one
that keeps growing. (Pause)

And it makes the church,
in North America, squirm.

Especially when the leadership is
predominantly white-male.

There’s an uncomfortable conviction which
draws an unhealthy response.

Then, inevitably, the call comes
for pastors and congregations to
stay out of politics.

This strong current, that exists everywhere,
makes the old claim that church and state
must be separated or

it comes when we (white males) are poked and bruised
by the words of Jesus Christ.

It surfaces with the desire to not consider
the behaviors of their elected officials
and elect based on party affiliation.

Where we are now,

is a sad and unfortunate result of a
two party system,
flushed with money.

When identities in politics connect with
extreme agendas and
with cults of personality...

we find that winning is all that matters,
winning no matter what.

Feeding the call to KEEP politics
out of the pulpit.

Yet, the reality is that there is no way
to separate life with politics.

Now, I am not talking about
Republican or Democratic politics.

I'm not speaking about the mud-slinging or the
"but what about them" comebacks.

I am not even talking about political life
that concerns government, really.

Politics, that I'm talking about, has to do
with the way in which we live in society and
the way we make decisions that

either promote or degrade
the common good.

This cannot be separated from the mission of
the church, nor separated from
words from the pulpit.

Jesus never shied away from the political
because he knew there was nothing he could
say or do that did not have
political consequences.

And since Jesus was not an isolationist,
and neither should we be isolationists.

When I sneeze others get sick... or worse. (Pause)

So, the question then is really not
about being political but about
what kind of politics will I practice?

What kind of politics will you practice?

That's what Jesus' message was and is.

Politics in the broader sense of noting
the decisions we make in life.

How do my words and actions affect

the lives of other people around me?

How do your words and actions affect
the lives of other people around you?

Because, whether we know it or not,
we are connected and our words and
actions either positively or negatively
affect others. (Pause)

And on this All Saints' Sunday, we find,
it is a good time to think about
politics this way.

And speak these truths from the pulpit.

We are not isolated individuals who live
in the world alone and we all behave in ways
that impact other people.

We are connected and we affect each other. (Pause)

This is also a day to pause and remember
those of our commonwealth who are
no longer present among us in body.

To “say the names” of those who
we are still deeply connected and affected by.

Those we hold dear still, knowing
they have joined that larger city,
that greater place of commonwealth.

The one toward which we are all traveling.

That place and city of the New Jerusalem.

We say their names as statements of
faith and remembering.

“Faith” in where they are and whose they are.

“Remembering” in recognition that
they are still members of us and
still connected to us, as much as
we are to them. (Pause)

And in it, we see how it would be impossible
to listen to the words of Jesus’ sermon and not
realize their political impact.

With his sermon addressing the poor,
the hungry and the grieved.

With the words of encouragement when
you are harassed, excluded, and
publicly shamed by what?

By following the directions from Jesus.

Blessed are you when people mock you
for following Jesus.

How many of us rich folks bristle
with his words of woe?

With full bellies and stocked pantries
we seek people to speak well of us.

We can scarcely listen to Jesus anymore.

Why does Jesus need to be so political?!?!

Well, we know why now! Right?

He knew his words and actions affected
the lives of the people around him.

And that this sermon, in Luke, of which
we only have a section of it in our bulletins
today was delivered to a very large crowd.

“A great multitude” the Bible said.

People who needed healing;
people who were curious;
people who were hungry;

people who despaired;
people who had resources and
shelter; people like all of us.

But these blessings and woes were delivered
to the disciples and Jesus knew they'd
be the ones to carry on his
revolutionary message of God's love
out into the world.

A message that we are now
elected to carry on, as well.

A message that was carried on by
the names we spoke and for those
we lit candles to honor. (Pause)

Today, we give them thanks.

For all the saints we give thanks.

A statement that goes for all of us, as well.

We give thanks to each other and thanks to God,
as long as we are still listening to Jesus.

We might not get it right every time,
scratch that - we won't get it right every time, :-)

but we can keep listening and we can keep trying
to bring forward the commonwealth
promises from Jesus.

AMEN!