

## Varieties of power

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May 31, 2011

*For more commentary on this week's readings, see the Reflections on the Lectionary pages for the [Ascension](#) and the [seventh Sunday of Easter](#), which include current and past magazine and blog content. For full-text access to all articles, [subscribe](#) to the Century.*

A few homiletical observations on Acts 1:6-14:

- Luke is always concerned about place. Now, oddly, when it comes to Jesus' ascension, he's not.
- I'm always struck by the fact that the disciples still don't *get it*. After all they have seen and observed, I'd think they'd understand that Jesus didn't come to bring a geopolitical kingdom, nor was he going to be the kind of king that lives in a palace and sits on a throne. Could it be that even the literally earth-shattering events they have just experienced are now fading into the background as they return to their own expectations? And then I think about all the things about Jesus and his kingdom that I've had to learn over and over. And still I don't get it.
- There is much we don't know about God's purposes and much we don't need to know.
- My tradition has typically eschewed talk about power when it comes to doing the work of the church. In the theology of the cross, God's power is demonstrated in weakness. While I'm not turning my back on the theology of the cross, my experience with broad-based community organizing has led me to a new understanding of power. In organizing, power is simply the ability to act. The power that will be poured out on these frightened disciples will lead them to dramatic and effective action. They will be transformed. These disciples will become the body of Christ. Bodies are for acting, for doing things; bodies are our way of moving through the world. Bodies are what make our

thoughts and ideas and intentions concrete events in the world.