

The power of powers

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This week [my Century lectionary column](#) focused on the text from Luke. Here are several threads I found useful but could not weave into the final piece:

- ○ It's always a good idea to consider our uses and misuses of power. But what opens us to gospel hope is remembering together how God frees us from our earthly distortions of who is in charge.
- ○ It's easy to demonize power. "He's so power-hungry," we might say, or, "That was just a play for power." On the other hand, to "feel empowered" is considered desirable and positive. Power is a slippery, imprecise concept—even in the New Testament, with its depictions of "powers and principalities." The power described is a complex mix of good and evil.
- ○ Sometimes it is illuminating to imagine what other characters/people would do in Jesus' situation. Mockery is a form of violence, and Jesus refuses to participate. He never says anything like, "You'll get yours!"—rather, just the opposite. He prays for divine forgiveness for his tormentors' utter ignorance and depravity.
- ○ In the *Century* column, I drew a hesitant comparison between Golgotha and the potential for "relational violence" of all kinds at family

Thanksgiving tables. While domestic violence of all kinds deserves more vigilant attention in our faith communities, I meant to refer to all the ways we witness the most shadowed aspects of humanity, in ourselves and others, in the context of our families. The gospel speaks an especially powerful word here: violence is never, ever the last word. The power of powers is love, thanks be to God.