

Shall Evangelicalism Win?: A Urgent Challenge to Preach Beyond Death Theologies

Across the diverse institutions of American Christianities, including Black Church traditions, preaching suffers from diminished imagination and ideological infections of White supremacy. As a political ideology and racial dogma, Evangelicalism is a theo-ethical crisis damning the future of the Jesus Movement, American democracy, nonwhite flesh, and American pulpits.

So much of American evangelicalism is White thought protecting White political power and interests. The crudely discursive, amorphous nature of this species of evangelicalism allows it to exist in some Black faith spaces and in Black preaching.

The storied legacy of the prophetic preaching tradition is assumed to be congruent with Black homiletic practice from the brush harbors of the antebellum period into our COVID-19 pandemic-impacted era of multispectral American anti-Blackness. This tradition decries thin preaching and forges thick preaching.

White evangelicalism contributes to a culture of mass death that manifests in political-economic, social, personal, psychological, and somatic ways and is heard in theology expounded in pulpits. These dead and deadly theologies—what the lecture terms the necro-theological—must not be sustained.

This lecture explores a homiletic praxis grounded in the freedom traditions of Black preaching that harvests the content, imagination, and priorities of Black theologies to renovate public life in America—abolition preaching.

Abolition preaching is the critical and imaginative communication of visions of the God of Freedom for this world. It treats the human person and their needs as holy and deserving of love and freedom vis-a-vis dismantling systems of disinheritance and structural sin.

Abolition preaching critiques the ideological foundations of the status quo, centers and exegetes the lived experiences of unprotected peoples and the least protected, and casts a vision of this world with new social and relational arrangements. Animated by an emancipatory spirituality, this preaching conscientizes and “repositions the gaze” of dispossessed persons and communities for disruptive and reconstructive action against hegemonic white evangelicalism.