

**St Columba, 10 October  
At A Baptism**

Susan Adams

**Jeremiah 29:1-7**

**Luke 17:11-19**

**Make the Best of It: Live well in the City**

It is easy to celebrate when we have babies and children around us with their laughter and curiosity. Life is exciting and full of hope when we look at the youngsters in our church - what will they become, what discoveries will they make, where will they lead us as they mature and their adult world, so familiar to them becomes a little strange for us!

We are glad you have brought your children, Grace, Richie and Sam to the church for baptism this morning. We trust that you will bring them again so they can become familiar with the stories and rituals that make up our life and our vision for the world.

St Columba is a Church without easy answers; we have lots of questions about God and about how the stories and traditions of Christianity can help us live well today. We need each other to explore the stories and ideas so we can keep our minds open.

Over the past few weeks of this long season of Ordinary Sundays, we have been following stories from the ancient prophet Jeremiah... he was writing letters nearly 600 years before the time of Jesus. In his letters he is, trying to explain to his people the Israelites, what had gone wrong and why they were in exile from their homeland and, why they were struggling with the Babylonian empire even in Jerusalem!

You might remember he tried to explain to the people how they had forgotten to live in ways that reflected the loving and justice seeking way of God ... as a result they were now subject to the Babylonians.

But ... he tells them ... do not lose heart.

Do not give up.

Do not forget who you are and

Do not forget to seek the ways of God: that is, *do not forget to work for the wellbeing of the place where you live; the city, and for the wellbeing of the people you share it with!*

Jeremiah has been quite clear – when we forget compassion and justice and concern for neighbours and love, then things go wrong. When that happens we find ourselves isolated from what is good in our lives, from our better selves and from that sense of peace in our core that enables us to reach out compassionately to others.

Today however, the letter is full of hope ... build houses, plant gardens marry and have families - *and* – seek the welfare of the city and those you share it with!

At a time like this when we have a baptism and we are getting back to the fundamentals of the story of faith it is good to be reminded of what we need to do and how we need to live.

In a way, the current election of mayor and city leaders that we have been struggling with has been an exercise in engagement with our city and the ideas that will shape it - that is, the wellbeing of the people who are our city - for the next four years.

The story about the lepers is from a time about 70 years after the time of Jesus. It is another story with a similar theme, that is how to approach this business of living in community.

This time the story is by way of a demonstration!

It points out to us the importance of our attitude and says 'Remember 'an attitude of gratitude'.

This will help to keep you in right-relations with one another, and with God.

Don't take stuff for granted!

That 'taking things for granted' was what had got the ancient Israelites out of line with the positive energies and goodness of God.

So how is it then that we are invited to live?

- Thankfully
- Open minded
- Concerned for others
- Engaged with our city
- Caring about the sustainability of the earth and its capacity to feed us
- Concerned about the quality of our relationships and the quality of our home life
- Open to the activity of the empowering energy of God's spirit that may well surprise us

If we are talking about fundamentals, then

This is what you are being asked to teach your children as they grow in faith, and

This is what we support each other in, as we meet each week.

It is in these attitudes to living that we find the expression of the love of God, the power of the spirit of life and the healing of nations that we can say yes to and

that you have brought your children to be baptised into.

We try to live them day by day, and celebrate week by week with food and drink, silence and song.

## Children

It is spring,  
Planting time and growing time

What have you seen recently that is a sign of spring?  
How are your seeds growing?

Children are like young plants  
Beginning. You can't always tell what they are going to look like when they grow older or what sort of person they will be.

Do you know what you want to be?  
Look at Sam... he is the smallest... the newest...  
What will he look like?  
What will he be like?

We don't know for sure, but he may look a bit like his dad or granddad or even his Mum

When we come to church, it is a bit like being new all the time... because there is always something else to learn, something else to know.

We try to help each other to grow up, children and adults, into the sort of people who are kind to people, and gentle when people are hurt or confused and good at growing new ideas, happy to see flowers and birds