

When God's people were in exile in Babylon, they were urged to "seek the welfare of the city" (Jeremiah 29.7).

The final chapters of the Bible offer a vision of the "new Jerusalem", a city in which all creation flourishes as God intends (Revelation 21.1—22.5).

- What do you think are God's purposes for the place where you live?
- What part can we play in helping our local communities to flourish?

A Closing Prayer

Almighty God,
you have made us for yourself,
and our hearts are restless till they find their rest in you:
pour your love into our hearts and draw us to yourself,
and so bring us at last to your heavenly city
where we shall see you face to face;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

Amen.

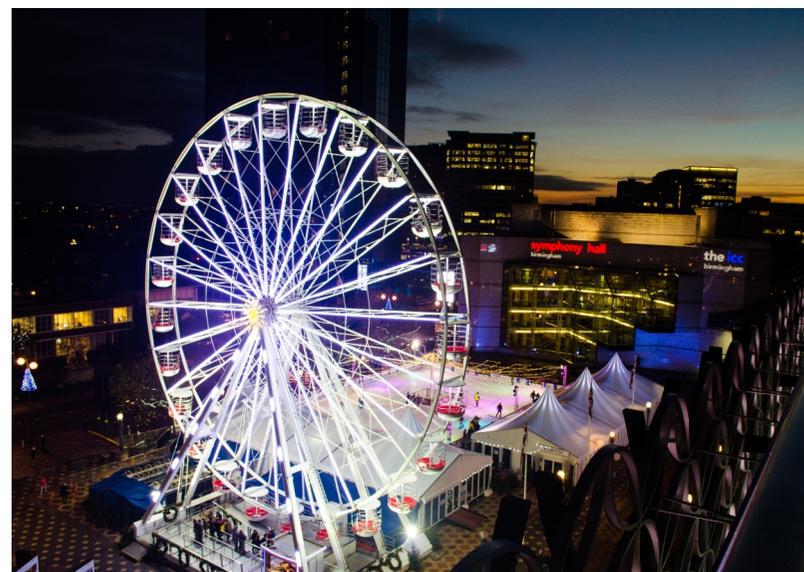
Common Worship

Collect for the 17th Sunday after Trinity

Lent Reflections

Lenten Landscapes

Week 5: The City



- What is your favourite city in the world? Is there a city that you would particularly like to visit or live in?
- What do you see as the advantages and disadvantages of living in a city?

Most other landscapes are part of the natural world, even if they have been shaped by human activity. The city is an environment entirely constructed by humans.

One of the earliest cities recorded in the Bible is Babel (Babylon), a place seen as a symbol of human pride and opposition to God. The same can be true even of the holy city, Jerusalem.

After Jesus said this, he went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem.

As he came near and saw the city, he wept over it, saying, 'If you, even you, had only recognized on this day the things that make for peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes. Indeed, the days will come upon you, when your enemies will set up ramparts around you and surround you, and hem you in on every side. They will crush you to the ground, you and your children within you, and they will not leave within you one stone upon another, because you did not recognize the time of your visitation from God.'

(Luke 19.28, 41-44)

- What do you think made Jesus weep over the city of Jerusalem?
- What are the things that might make Jesus weep over our cities?

We sometimes speak of cities as 'cosmopolitan' places, meaning that they can be seen as the world in miniature. The following passage is from Laurie Green's *Urban Ministry and the Kingdom of God*.

The very compact and concentrated nature of our city, town and housing state environments means that they are often the places where the most crucial theological issues of our age become clearly focused. It is here that issues of identity and difference, power and powerlessness, global and local, inclusion and exclusion, place and sustainability are writ large. It is here that questions of success, power, weakness, crucifixion and resurrection are explored moment by moment.

On the pavements and in the tenement blocks of poor urban landscapes, one meets the Jesus of the Gospels at every turn, and our congregations witness that fact daily. At the other extreme, the creators of wealth are here—those who generate and maintain the British economy, still at least the fourth largest economy in the world. From our towns and cities they manage and direct the lives of countless millions around the globe... ..And they all need to hear the challenge and the wisdom of the gospel.