

**Sermon for Romsey/Lancefield**  
**24<sup>th</sup> of January 2010**

**Luke 4:14-21**

**1 Corinthians 12:12-31a**

Today, we baptise Lachlan Thomas John Blades. We've gathered to celebrate this joyful event, and to support Emily and Andrew and Vicki and David as they make the deep commitment to help Lachlan become part of the Christian community, with all that that will mean for his life. We've also gathered to bear witness to Lachlan's baptism, so that as he grows up we can share our memories of it with him, always reminding him and reassuring him that he is a beloved son of God.

All baptisms are rich with meaning. The baptism of adult believers reminds us that baptism doesn't automatically follow birth; it's a serious, deep commitment to living a Christian life. The baptism of children like Lachlan reminds us that baptism is unearned, that God's love is the initiating agent and ours the response. Baptism is about love, and the baptism of children makes that obvious. Children don't ask for birth and they don't ask for the rebirth that is baptism; both happen because of the great love that their parents feel for them, the great love that is a reflection of the love of God for us all. It's in response to this love that Lachlan is baptised today. We're gathered here to celebrate a rebirth that is as important as his birth.

In baptism we become part of the body of Christ, joined to Jesus, and Jesus' ministry becomes ours. Today's reading from Luke's gospel describes what that ministry is. In his home town of Nazareth, Jesus makes his mission statement in the words of the prophet Isaiah: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour." This is Jesus' mission as the messiah, the anointed one – revealing God's kingdom of peace and justice. When Mary was told that she was going to bear a son she sang the song we call the Magnificat, praising God for bringing down the powerful from their thrones, and lifting up the lowly; filling the hungry with good things, and sending the rich away empty. Her son follows in his mother's footsteps with his own declaration of what God is doing in the world. To all the poor, the outcast and the excluded, Jesus brings good news. The time of God has begun, here, today, and the longings of the poor, the oppressed and the imprisoned are being fulfilled.

By being baptised into Christ, Lachlan, like every Christian, is anointed by the Holy Spirit to share Christ's ministry in the world. Luckily for all of us who are baptised into this awesome responsibility, we are not called to be individual Christs. We are to be Christ-like as members of the body of Christ, the church. Christ is one body with many members, Paul reminds the Corinthians, a community that seemed to be focussing more on the startling spiritual gifts of individuals than on the unity and mutual caring that is created by being part of a community. In one Spirit, Paul writes, we are all baptised into the one body. The unity of being one body doesn't mean uniformity, obviously: "If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole body were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? ... If all were a single member, where would the body be? As it is, there are many members, yet one body." We are all different, unique individuals created by God. But through baptism our story, our identity as God's beloved children, becomes the same.

Today Lachlan is becoming a member of the one body, the church, both this small local gathering of Christians who witness his baptism and promise to accompany him in his Christian life, and the entire holy, catholic and apostolic church throughout time and space. In his baptism Lachlan becomes part of the family of Jesus Christ, which includes every Christian who has ever been baptised. This is one reason that the baptismal service includes the Apostle's Creed, which later we will all be invited to stand and say together. This Creed has summed up the Church's faith from very early times. As we say it together it reminds us that Lachlan is becoming part of the community of everyone who has ever held these beliefs in every century and every country and every denomination. Today Lachlan becomes a member of the one body, brother to every Christian in the world. When any member of the body suffers, Lachlan, like every Christian, will suffer with them. When any member of the body is honoured Lachlan, like every Christian, will rejoice with them. Today Lachlan becomes intimately connected with billions of people.

It is these billions, working together, who carry out the mission of Christ. This is why it's impossible to be a Christian alone. None of us can individually bring good news to the poor, release to the captives, recovery of sight to the blind, and freedom to the oppressed. Trying to save the world by ourselves just leads to burnout and frustration. Following in Jesus' footsteps and serving the world for which Christ died can only be done together, as members of the one body, with different, God-given, gifts, using whatever abilities we have for the greater good.

Many things are happening to Lachlan today. Baptism has multiple meanings: being anointed to bring good news to the poor as a member of the body of Christ is just one of them. In baptism Lachlan becomes a new creation, cleansed of his sins, welcomed into the church community, acknowledged as God's beloved son, alive in Christ. Like all of us, Lachlan will be able to spend a lifetime exploring what his baptism means. Our role will be to support and encourage him.

Today is one of the most important days of Lachlan's life. So let us celebrate it and give thanks. Amen.