

# A place for all generations

[Zechariah 8:4-12](#) | 18th June 2017 - Thanksgiving for Stepping Stones

Zechariah is writing to a society facing a challenging and uncertain future. The people of Israel are back in Jerusalem after being exiles in Babylon, but there's a lot to do. Zechariah speaks about strong and stable leadership which is for the many and not the few (with God, both things are possible).

The people, though, are a bit weak and wobbly. They think there's too much for such a small group to accomplish. Instead of telling them that they are up for the task, Zechariah enlarges the scope of the challenge. He wants them to address present issues by seeing further: Jerusalem will be inhabited by people from all over the world. The people need to get on with the rebuilding work, because visitors are coming! The task is far bigger, the project much greater, than they presently think. The people have every reason and more to get on with their work.

And Zechariah starts this speech with a wonderful vision of how God intends things to be. Its beauty is its ordinariness: old women and men will sit out in the streets, telling stories and getting about with their walking aids, while girls and boys will play in

the parks and the streets. It's a good city to grow up in, and to grow old in. It's God's city and it's for everyone to share together.

This really is the politics of hope. Politics because it is about how people engage with one another, work together and strive in partnership for a common good. Hope, because there is the promise of a bright future which has its security not in grand ideas or powerful leaders, but the very purposes of God.



Of course, it's right to recognize there have been hard times. People have been held back, poorly paid and anxious about violence erupting seemingly from nowhere. Armed men have been on the loose while others, also with weapons, hunted them down. Zechariah's vision is not blindly optimistic. But in the face of real struggle he puts a picture before God's people of how things might be, and he encourages them to work for it - all together.

We're hearing today about work done altogether here. About all ages worshipping, learning and growing. About everyone playing a part, as they are able, to make us richer as a faith community. We do this, here, that we might make a real and valuable congregation, inspired by faith, to the community we are privileged to be part of. Faith leads to service, which itself nourishes faith.

Maybe this is what God is calling us forward to be like: a community of generous welcome of all, so that we might be ages together. Spinning stories and remembering the past with fond gratitude. Looking forward with enthusiasm and vigour to what lies ahead. Playing, talking, working, loving, worshipping, trusting - from the youngest to the oldest.

It's quite an inspiring vision. What do you make of its message to us, in our world, at this time, for the future? And how does it encourage you to get involved with people who aren't the same age as you, to work together towards this vision which God set before the people then, and sets before us now?