

At this time of year i love the city best in the early morning. My train's arrival at Parliament is synchronised with the sunrise, so I ascend from the cut and thrust of the station's escalators to a baptism of gold.

Loving the city is a sentiment that's often greeted with surprise. "It's so dirty" people exclaim [well yes, but so is the countryside]. We worry about the rampant consumerism, we cluck our tongues against graffiti, we despair at how anyone could hope to find peace in this relentless chaos. The city's a necessary evil; the best we can do is help people survive it until they can escape to somewhere better.

If we want to hate the city we can find plenty of support in the Bible. In the early parts of the Biblical story of faith it seems God is all too ready to condemn cities as the source and site of all that is evil and sordid. There are gripping stories of cities that are judged irredeemable and ruthlessly destroyed. People return to the garden, the wilderness or the desert to find themselves and get right with God [and we still do].

But by the time we reach the book of Revelation, something has changed. The ultimate end of creation isn't painted as a return to the innocence of the garden of Eden, it's now a Holy City where God and humankind dwell together – collaborators in its creation. It's a city where redemption and transformation are integrated in its infrastructure, where all that is grace and good will permeate even the buildings and the pavements.

If it's going to happen one day, we should be seeing glimpses of it already – places where God's redemption, transformation and hope are already becoming part of the fabric of our city.

I walk down Little Collins Street from the train station. The doorman at the hotel across from my office nods to me. "It's good to see you today" he says, every morning, and then later as I leave, "Hope I'll see you tomorrow". It feels like more than a platitude. Just past the hotel is the café where, last year, I sat with a friend after we'd heard some terrible news. We didn't talk much, we cried a little. Mostly we just sat, shocked. When we went to pay, the waiter who had served us told us that he'd already paid for our coffee. A little further down the road I know my friends are working to prepare the lunch they make each day and serve down a laneway to a group of their friends who are homeless.

They're moments of redemption and transformation. They're hints, replicated every day; a promise that one day this will be a city that builds itself around these things, where hope and life are as prominent as the billboards and neon signs, where goodness and grace are as solid and strong as concrete and stone that enfolds them.

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