

Mark 9.38-end

This morning we have the joy of welcoming little lyla, her family and friends, and baptising lyla into the family of God. And I wanted us to spend just a few minutes thinking about family, and about belonging to the church family as a disciple.

When a new baby is born, they are entering into a family that already exists, and making it larger. A baby is welcomed into the family with joy, because they are a whole new person to share life with!

And today we are doing a similar thing - through baptism, we are welcoming lyla into the church family, into the family of God.

Now I don't know if you noticed, but at the beginning of our gospel reading, the disciples were complaining that someone else was doing miracles in Jesus name, even though he was not one of the disciples. And they thought that only they should be allowed to do that. They are complaining that this other guy is stealing their thunder. Despite the fact that he was doing good, the disciples tried to stop him, because they wanted to keep their little small group just as it was.

But Jesus says, 'no, let him heal people in my name. Be at peace with one another'. So this first tiny group of disciples is being expanded. Jesus is welcoming in new

people, and starting to grow the beginning of the church, of God's family.

And you might wonder, what is a disciple? Can people today be a disciple? The word 'disciple' means 'follower' or 'learner'. And the answer is, yes. Anyone who follows Jesus and his teachings, and tries to live as he taught us, is a disciple. We can learn about Jesus by spending time with other Christians, like being in church this morning, or through reading the Bible, which is the story of how God is with us.

So this morning we are surrounded by new beginnings. lyla is at the beginning of her adventure through life, and her family are at the start of getting to know her as a person. By bringing lyla to be baptised this morning, her parents are helping her to start her own journey of becoming a disciple. She is being added into the church family, being welcomed as one of us, as someone who God loves.

Now, we can't know what the future will bring, but what we can know is that God is always present with each of us. God will always be with lyla, and the church, all of us gathered here and Christians everywhere, are also there to nurture and teach and support her, as we are there for each other.

Because, when we are on a journey, having friends alongside you can make a real difference. Especially when it is something new. So we offer our support to lyla in our joyful welcome. In the promises all of us are about to make, we make a commitment to teaching lyla about following Jesus, and being a disciple.

But most importantly, and most excitingly, baptism is God's way of saying, 'I will walk with you. Whatever life brings you, wherever the journey goes, I will be your companion along the way'.

lyla, we welcome you to join us in this journey of the family of God.

Amen.