Boed i mi siarad yn enw y Duw byw, y Tad a’r Mab a’r Ysbryd Glan. Amen.

*When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.*

What is your experience of crowds? I remember when I was getting used to being out and about after the pandemic it was really strange seeing all these people. I remember feeling irritated that they got in my way when I was trying to do things like shopping or driving!

However, I can’t complain too much about crowds, we have some of our most meaningful experiences in crowds, like being together today. A few weeks ago, I was at the Wales Ukraine football match and being in that crowd, as the final whistle blew and Wales were through to the World Cup, was genuinely one of the most exhilarating experiences of my life.

Crowds can also be dangerous, and frightening. Online, when things turn sour, it can be horrible to see people ganging up on someone. Crowds can be physically violent too. It’s sometimes not safe to be the wrong type of person in the wrong place at the wrong time, even in our own country, even today.

When people get together, they can be a force for good or they can be a force for evil.

The context of our gospel reading is yet another experience of crowds. This was a group of people who seemed lost and anxious. We hear that Jesus looked at the crowd and had compassion on them. This crowd, who would shout hosanna on Palm Sunday and crucify him on Good Friday. He could see they were leaderless, and literally hope – less. And he desperately wanted other people to join in with the work of giving them hope.

*The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few;****38****therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.”*

In our ordination retreat for the last few days, we’ve been looking at different themes to do with ministry. One of the themes we looked at was being called to a ministry of hope.

I spoke about one of R S Thomas’s poems, it doesn’t have a title, but is in his book Echoes Return Slow. He starts it by saying:

I was Vicar of large things in a small parish.

Doesn’t that phrase encapsulate ministry beautifully? Clergy are involved in the large things – life, death, love, suffering. But in the middle of ordinary everyday life. The word parochial has come to mean this doesn’t it, having small horizons, interested in the trivial. So, there is a tension in ministry between the large and the small, the so called trivial and the eternal.

The poem goes on:

“I was there

I felt, to blow on ashes

That were too long cold”

Now he was writing in the last century. Imagine what he would have made of this century, with its declining numbers accelerated by Covid. The way the media likes to talk about ministry and the church these days you would wonder if there was anyone left.

But here we are – hundreds of us crammed into this Cathedral, to celebrate the new ministries of

Dan, Ruth, Rachel, Jan, Tina, Sarah, Glen, Mandy, Andrew and Karin.

And whilst some of you are here, not because you have a faith, but because you want to support these people, you must wonder, why has your loved one or friend decided in this stage of their lives to put themselves through this? I should know, as I’m the one who has put them through this! For those training for full time ministry, they have given up everything to follow this calling. For those following a part time route, they have had to shoehorn their training into an already busy life, and they will shoehorn ministry into an already packed week.

For everyone there will have been sacrifices. And not just theirs. Your sacrifices as friends and family too. And for what? For an institution in decline? To shore up something that’s already out of touch and irrelevant?

As humans there are few things which motivate us, and love is one of them. For the right person we will consider changing our job, our home, our community, things we love to do, because we want to make a relationship work. Sometimes someone will love us enough to move communities, change jobs, compromise on important things. Some of you are sat here today, watching your loved one about to be ordained. Love involves compromise and sacrifice.

Likewise, ministry is a love affair with someone who wants us to be the best person we can be, and to fulfil who we are meant to be.

For some of you who may feel a bit left behind because of this great love affair, we, the church, and the communities they will serve, hear this, and are grateful for it.

*The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few;****38****therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.”*

We have a lot of metaphors for ministry but the one that Jesus has for us today is that of being a jobbing fruit picker. It’s such an unglamorous role that it’s difficult to find anyone to do it in the UK now. But we need as many as we can get.

So are you being called to this work too? It doesn’t need to be work wearing a collar and being called Rev. There is work to be done in communities all across this diocese, and beyond,

We may have different language for it –sharing our faith, loving people, evangelism, serving them, bringing them hope…. it’s all the same thing. Even if you have no faith or little faith we all have a calling, we all want to find meaning in our lives.

So, if you have little or no faith, I’d encourage you to ask these people being ordained today what has motivated them and why this love affair with Jesus is making them do extraordinary things? If you have faith – what is God calling **you** to do with this season of your life?

Remember that God never calls us to do something alone, he calls us to work with others for his kingdom. He calls us to a team. So, we don’t have to be brilliant at everything, there is always someone who is great at what we can’t do very well. There are things we can do that others are not so good at too. That’s the great thing about working in teams.

So we now turn to this ceremony and we ask the Spirit to come and equip Dan, Ruth, Rachel, Jan, Tina, Sarah, Glen, Mandy, Andrew and Karin for a new ministry as a deacon as a priest. We ask for the empowering of the spirit to be able to speak and show the ‘large things’ in the middle of ordinary lives.

They are literally an answer to prayer and are the labourers for the harvest in this part of the world that Jesus is talking about.

In our gospel reading today we hear that Jesus looked on the crowd with compassion because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.

In so many ways we are harassed and helpless too. The ongoing effects of the pandemic, the war in Ukraine, the cost-of-living crisis. We need hope. And Jesus is looking on us now with compassion, with love.

And calling Dan, Ruth, Rachel, Jan, Tina, Sarah, Glen, Mandy, Andrew and Karin and all of us to be fruit pickers for him. To get our hands dirty, and to share his compassion, hope and love to a hopeless and cruel world.

In the name of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.