Diocesan Synod Eucharist 070314

Ezekiel 34: 11-16 Mt 5: 10-16

There are two things – maybe more than two – which churches crave and yearn for. A Diocesan Synod is as appropriate moment for contemplating what those are. The first is success – however measured. Bums on seats .. financial solvency .. spiritual vibrancy. The second is clarity. You can see that around the Human Sexuality discussion into which we enter today. How easily it becomes a collision between competing clarities – clarity about scripture and its authority and clarity about rights and inclusion.

So where is God and who are the recipients of his grace?

We have just listened to the words of Ezekiel. God is not with the fat and strong. God’s grace is with the lost, the strayed, the injured and the weak. I hear that as meaning that our need of God – maybe that’s the same as our recognition of our failures, our weakness and our wandering awayness – is met by God’s graceful presence with us.

What kind of church are we called to be? Not I think a church of dogmatic certainties stridently expressed; nor of the strength which has no compassion in it. In our Synod you will hear today that, if we are making progress in response to our Lord’s missionary command, we are doing so in the context of brokenness, pain and loss. And I believe that God’s sustaining grace is present among us.

I also reflect on Jesus’ words from the Sermon on the Mount. Why would anybody think that Christian faith made life easier or calmer or smoothed out the difficult patches. Here Jesus tells us that persecution and false accusation go with the territory for his disciples. Yet if we are to be salt and light – retaining our saltiness and shining our light – then there has to be a persistence about us that is a sign of the presence and the glory of God himself in our lives.

Sometimes the challenges of scripture pass over our heads. Familiarity blunts their impact. Our self-sufficiency and our self-centredness dulls our spiritual need. Our speaking crowds out our listening. Listen, hear and give thanks for the healing presence of God’s grace among us.