Today is a cause for celebration! We are baptizing Darius Nathan into the household of God! He will be a saint and conveniently today we celebrate the Feast of All Saints’ Day. Now don’t get me wrong, any Sunday will work to be baptized and in fact for an emergency baptism, any day or hour will work, but liturgically All Saints’ is one of a few big days for baptism, along with Easter and Pentecost.

You may have noticed that every Sunday we reaffirm the history of salvation in the Eucharistic prayer, so we recognize from our worship that these days are all related. These are readings highlight not so much the teachings of Jesus but instead focus on how believing and following Jesus can make a Christian’s experience of the world different.

Within the lectionary we don’t read a lot in our services from the book of Revelation to John. Still some of you may know that as weird of the the book of Revelation can be, it was not written as a prophetic text in the sense of predicting the future; it was not at all in the style or manner of prophetic texts at the time. It was not intended as a revelation of the next plot twist in the world then or now, but instead it was written as an allegory of the struggle between Christianity and Rome. It epitomizes how Christians should live in the world, but not of the world. They live in distinction to the life of Rome. And in this particular passage, there is care-taking and a claiming of Christians. There is a story-telling of redemption of those martyrs willing to sacrifice as their Lord was sacrificed for them.

The first letter of John likewise is probably to the followers in the community which were central to the Gospel of John. These were a Christian people set apart, both in the world and over and against people of the world. They were in a different relationship with God than their neighbors; they were Children of God. And such it is that when we are claimed by God, we are made different, we are made saints, we are made Children of God. It is God that changes us. It is by God’s grace only we are taken in and become part of the fold.

And this is good stuff. By baptism, we are washed and made part of the fold, but that is not the endpoint. The telos or the endpoint is the coming of God’s kingdom. We live in the “already and not yet” phase, by which I mean we are part of the communion of saints from the Jesus’ death forward and yet, the end times are not yet here.

And it is the looking towards the end times, God’s kingdom breaking in that Jesus addresses in the Beatitudes. The beatitudes of Matthew are written as statements, not as commands. Specifically blessings in the Jewish world are not only that God confers blessing upon you, but that by this you are to become a blessing to others. Thus, it is that the people who are blessed both become dear to God AND ALSO bless others by causing others to know God. We may see them as marginalized, by the world’s standards as somewhat silly, not getting the riches of the world, but God sees them and their actions as breaking in the kingdom. This is how things should be. This is the Christ in the world, blessing others that is longed for. The blessed are dependent on God and God’s love only, they find God’s favor. When others notice, they show what is important to God and that blesses and change the others.

These people who are blessed, they bless and change others. It is much like praying. Prayer changes things. When people say this, most people mean that God answers prayer. However, God answering prayer usually shows that God is more in the business of changing the person praying than setting off to tick off items on a grocery list. The very process of praying, of making us able to hear the words of God, making us listen for God, allows us to change expectations and approaches. Seeing the blessings in this world continues the process of molding us into Saints, the communion of Saints bringing forth the kingdom.

And so it is, God calls us to be children of God, to be light in the darkness, to be blessed and to bless as the world heads inexorably towards the coming of Christ. As we are baptized into the coming of Christ, we are changed and we bless and are blessed, and in that change we mean to be Saints at one with the heavenly communion and so we rejoice in the blessings of God.

Alleluia Alleluia, Amen.