May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing to you, O LORD, my rock and my redeemer. Amen.

Nothing has power to change us, confront us with reality, open our ears to a new truth, or turn our life in a different direction like a reversal of fortune can; a time when our world is turned upside down or the day we realize we are going backward not forward. That’s exactly what Jesus is doing in today’s gospel. It’s what he is always doing. The gospel of Christ reverses business as usual: preaching good news to the poor, proclaiming release to prisoners, offering sight to the blind, and setting the oppressed free. The Christian life and faith are based on reversals. Reversals are at the heart of the four beatitudes and the four woes.

Those who are poor, hungry, or weeping; those who are hated, excluded, and slandered can expect things to get better. Their situation will be reversed and they will be blessed. They will be given the opposite of what they have now. Likewise, those who are rich, those who are full, those who laugh, those who are popular and respected can expect to lose what they now have. Their situation will also be reversed.

That’s why the blessings and woes of today’s gospel should not and cannot be seen as a final judgment or a system of reward and punishment. They’re just not. They are not even at odds with one another. They are God’s way of saying yes or no to where and how we find meaning in our lives. Isn’t that what we want? That longing for meaning is in the priorities we set and the choices we make. It drives our life. Every blessing and every woe, every yes and every no, is Jesus’ response to our search for a life of meaning, significance, and value. As every good parent knows, sometimes we tell our children yes and sometimes we tell them no. Both responses are grounded in love and both for the well being of our child. So it is with God, our Father.

When we’re too comfortable, too satisfied, or too secure, whether spiritually, emotionally, or materially, Jesus says, “No, that’s not the way,” not because we are rich, full, or happy but because we can too easily become self-satisfied. We think we’ve got it all. We’ve arrived. The problem is that our life then becomes small and self-contained. There is no openness and receptivity to a new meaning for our life, a new way of living, or a new way of relating to those around us. We have no need to see beyond ourselves, to love the person next door, or to work for change that makes a difference in the lives of others. Woe to us when we are convinced that we have no needs beyond the things of this world. Woe to us when we are convinced that we have no need to grow and change.

Jesus promises blessings when we are empty, weak, or grieving, whether spiritually, emotionally, or materially, because our heart is softened, our eyes are open, and we desire something more. In those moments Jesus says, “Yes, blessed are you.”

They are a means by which God calls and guides us into the life we want, a life of authenticity, meaning, and goodness. That’s what all the saints understand, those of the past and those here today. They know this. They believe this. They trust and live in the tension of the reversals God brings to their lives. For it is in those reversals that we discover life in the midst of death, darkness illumined, and our own humanity to be the place God invests his life, his love, his concern, and his actions.

Saints embody in this world the reversals of God. You and I embody those reversals. We strive to love our enemies, to do good to those who hate us, to bless those who curse us, and to pray for those who abuse us. We may not always get there but the desire to love, do good, bless, and pray is always within us.

This day is not only about the saints we name and remember. This day means nothing if it is not also about you and me. Yes, this is their day, the great saints of the Church, but it is also your day and my day. This is our day. This is the Feast of All Saints not some saints. So as we look at, rejoice over, and give thanks for the lives of the saints there is one more reversal to see and celebrate. It’s the reversal that happens in our baptism.

What does it mean that you are baptized? Why do you care that your child or grandchild be baptized? What’s the significance of our baptism? It means that you and I are included in the gathering of saints. You belong. Your child belongs. Your grandchild belongs. I belong. We are the saints of God: rich and poor, full and hungry, laughing and weeping, respected and ridiculed. That’s why we renew our baptismal vows to remind ourselves of who we are.

All those saints of the Church are our teachers and guides, our companions along the way. They encourage and cheer us on. They pray for us. They nurture, support, and love us. They are here with us not just today but everyday. The Church holds them before us this day as a mirror showing us who we are and who we are to become. They stand beside us and we beside them as God’s holy people. That, my fellow saints, is a reversal of fortune we all need and long for. That is the reversal of fortune we celebrate this day, this holy day of All Saints. Amen.