Our scripture this morning comes from 1 Peter 1:6-9. While you’re finding that, A man went to an auction to bid on a parrot. He really wanted that parrot, but every time he bid, he got outbid! The bidding kept going higher and higher and higher. Finally, he won! When he paid for the parrot, he said to the auctioneer, "I sure hope this parrot can talk!” The auctioneer replied, “Who do you think it was that bidding against you?” Are you bidding Jesus for your own Joy? Do you allow the small things of this world steal your Joy?

**1 Peter 1:6-9 6In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, 7that the genuineness of your faith, *being* much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ, 8whom having not seen - you love. Though now you do not see *Him,* yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, 9receiving the end of your faith—the salvation of *your* souls.**

This morning, we lit the candle of Joy. Advent is the celebration of Christ’s first coming and the expectation of His second coming. We wait with expectant Joy, looking skyward in Hope, having all Faith that Jesus promised He’ll return, and He’ll do just that.

Let’s look at 1 Peter 1:8 in particular this morning - **whom having not seen, you love. Though now you do not see *Him,* yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory.** Sounds an awful lot like Advent. We may be grieved at this very moment with various trials, but we love Jesus, though we haven’t seen Him, and we rejoice with Joy inexpressible believing He’s coming back and we’ll **receive the end of our faith—the salvation of our souls.**

Joy is a funny thing – it’s often badly misunderstood. In order to know what Joy is, we must first understand what it’s not. Joy is not the same as happiness. We can have joy and happiness at the same time, but joy is not dependent upon happiness. Happiness is defined as “the agreeable sensations which spring from the enjoyment of good.” It’s a sensation that springs from enjoyment of good. When there’s nothing good to enjoy, there’s no happiness.

Joy, on the other hand, is the passion excited by expectation or acquisition of good. Joy is built on the expectation of good! We expect that the God of all creation loves us. We expect that Holy Spirit dwells within us. We expect that the Good Shepherd is coming back. We’re Joyful at Christmas, not because of what we see, but because of what we expect – based on Who we trust.

When my children were young, we loved to travel. One of my favorite things to do was to pull up in front of something that was supposed to be magnificent and, on purpose, look the wrong direction. Maybe we’d be beside the mighty Mississippi River, but I’d be looking at a drainage ditch… perhaps we’d be pulled off with a magnificent mountain view, but I’d turn and look into the woods. Wherever we were, I’d intentionally look the wrong way and say, “Well, that’s disappointing.” They found great joy in coming around the car and pointing me the right direction and saying, “No Daddy - look this way…” I’d turn and say, “Wow! That’s a lot better!!” We’d laugh and then I’d very seriously say – life really is all about how we look at it isn’t it?

Joy is about perspective! Joy is about choice! Joy in God is all about the expectation! It depends on where we are focusing! We can be hurting and yet be joyful. We can be grieving and yet be joyful. We can be sick and yet be joyful. Joy is the expectation of good to come. Hebrews 12:2 says **looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.** Jesus’ Joy came from being the fulfillment of God’s plan. I’m sure that the scourging didn’t bring happiness; the spikes driven into His flesh didn’t bring happiness; the spear driven into His side didn’t bring happiness… But He endured the Cross, despised the shame, took the humiliation for the Joy that was promised… being reunited with God, taking His rightful place in Heaven, and redeeming His children to be a special people peculiar to Him, zealous for good works. Those special people are called the church and we serve Him today.

Romans 15:13 reinforces what we read in 1 Peter 1:8-9 **– Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit**. This Christmas, Joy only comes by choice. Joy only comes by knowing Jesus. Knowing Jesus doesn’t mean everything will always be pink unicorns and cotton candy. If we’re living for happiness, we’re destined for disappointment. Joy means that we live with the expectant Hope for Good. Our Joy is built on our hope in Jesus. Perhaps you don’t know Him this morning – come as we sing, meet the King we celebrate. There’s no better time than right now… there’s no better place than right here. God will fill you with all Joy and Peace, that you may abound in Hope, but you must first believe… so you might receive the power of the Holy Spirit. Without Jesus, there is no indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Without Jesus, there is no path to God. Without Jesus, there is no Joy. Without Jesus, there is no Christmas. It all starts with Him and it all ends with Him. We must decide where is our Joy found this morning.