***1 Peter 1:6-9 6In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have beengrieved 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.***

How long is eternity? Ever think about that? A state where time has no meaning. The doctor took an eternity to see us… not he didn’t. The night before Christmas seemed like an eternity… not eternity. Eternity is infinity, timelessness, having no limit and no end.

This morning, we lit the Advent candle of Joy. Joy – one of the characteristics of the fruit of the Spirit. It’s a gladness in the certainty of Christ and the work He accomplished on the Cross. Happiness can be present with Joy, but happiness is not the same as Joy. Christian Joy is rooted in the unchanging nature of the Holy Spirit. Someone can be sad and still have Joy. Someone can be up against all manner of trials and still have Joy. God is the source of Joy

Verse 6 begins - *In this you greatly rejoice.* You celebrate, jumping for joy! Celebrate in what? Our trials? No! Verses 3 & 4 give us that answer - *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you.* Eternally reserved. We greatly rejoice in our eternal reservation, not in our temporary tribulation! Joy found in the Holy Spirit - The Helper He sends to us when we believe.

V 6 ends - *Though for a little while, if need be, you have beengrieved by various trials.* Though for a puny amount of time you are distressed by many adversities. This sounds a lot like James 1:2 *My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials.* It’s almost like God is telling us that there will be trials for a short while, that we will be challenged, but we must choose to rejoice in that eternal reservation that Christ has made for us. It’s like God is sending a repeating message, over and over again, hoping to get our attention. What is 100 years in the view of timelessness? It’s not a question of the reward… it’s a question of the Faith and Hope we place in that reward. How real is Jesus to us this morning?

Verse 7 - *that 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.* The testing of our faith produces patience. Here we understand that the genuineness of our faith is tested by fire- the Greek word here is lightning! Our faith is much more precious than gold that perishes – take whatever you want to hold up in this world and Faith in God is far more precious than that. We learn that this genuine Faith is found to praise, honor, and glory at the appearing of Jesus. But that genuine Faith must have been tested by lightning – anyone feel as though they’ve been tested by lightning lately – this lightning only comes by way of adversity and trials – we rejoice because these trials, this testing refines us to completeness, offering a doorway to Hope in Jesus. If we could get our mindset such that we view every trial as a door to Hope… that, my friends, would certainly change the way I view life. I’d indeed count it all joy.

Verse 8 starts *whom having not seen you love.* In John 20:29 we find this - *Jesus said to him, “Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”* This is us. We have not seen Jesus, yet we believe. We are the blessed. That is Faith. In John 20:27 Jesus says to Thomas,*“Do not* ***BE*** *disbelieving, but believing.”* Belief is not something we do… it is who we are. We live Faith with every breath.

Verse 8 ends - *Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory.* Joy – indescribable and glorious Joy believing in Jesus – even in times of trial and adversity – even as the lightning strikes – even as we stretch for that doorway to Hope eternal. We may not see Him, but we see people all around us being Him, living like Him, and helping us be believing and not disbelieving.

Verse 9*receiving the end of your faith—the salvation of your souls.* Receiving the very goal of your Faith. The deliverance, the salvation of your souls – and so we arrive back to verse 6 – greatly rejoicing, even in trials, why? Because Jesus has begotten us again to a living hope through His resurrection, an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away (**sounds eternal, doesn’t it?**), reserved in heaven for you.

This week, let’s make that connection between having Joy and eternal Hope. The pathway is lined with trials, lightning strikes fiercely, our Faith is tested, as we follow this short path called life to our promised salvation. Are we rejoicing this week in Jesus? Are we examining His sacrifice? Are we hoping for His return? Are we cherishing the gift of Peace He has given to us? It’s up to us what we will be… believing or disbelieving? Sitting by the doorway waiting on the Master or distracted by the world? May we find our Joy in Jesus today.