Hey guys! I hope you're ready. If you brought a Bible, you can grab that and turn to 1 Peter. If you didn't bring a Bible with you, there's actually one underneath the seat in front of you. There's a black hardcover Bible. You can grab that. Like I said, we're going to be in 1 Peter. There's no shame in looking to the table of contents in your Bible. If you want to open up, right inside the front cover there's a list of the books of the Bible. It'll tell you what page everything is on. You'll find 1 Peter almost near the end, all the way in the back. It's a pretty small book, a little bit hard to find if you're just flipping.

If you don't have your own Bible at home, you can actually take that hardcover Bible with you. That's our gift to you. We're happy to give it to you and would love for you to have a Bible. We are in the middle of a series on 1 Peter. Last week you heard Brandon Barker preach. I love Brandon Barker. He gave us some great insight into the beginning of the series and why we're doing it.

Next week you'll hear Steve Hardin preach. So you can come next week, bring a lunch, and just be ready to camp out. Last time he preached I came to the 7:15. He got up, and he just said, "Hey, get the podcast. Let's pray." We just prayed it out at the 7:15. Some of you guys were here. I love it when Steve preaches. It's great. Then the week after that, Matt Younger, and you definitely don't want to miss that. Matt is also a little bit of a wildcard, unpredictable. I love it.

Today we're in 1 Peter. We're walking through, like Matt alluded to, kind of pointing toward the second coming. Part of the reason we're doing this... I really love this. I feel like at The Village, in particular, we spend a lot of time pointing toward the resurrection of Jesus Christ, back toward the gospel, which is that God loved us so much he came and dwelled as a man, Jesus Christ.

John tells us his creation, his people, did not recognize him. They betrayed him. They hated him. They tried him, found him innocent, and then they had him killed. They had him murdered. Three days later he rose again, conquering sin, death, and the grave. That's the gospel: that he has overcome death and sin for us, and it's awesome. It's beautiful.

We talk, maybe less often but hopefully with no less tenacity, about the fact that one day Jesus Christ is coming again. This series is really helping us talk about... *In light of the fact that Jesus is coming back, what does that mean for us as The Village Church?* What does that mean for us as individuals, as Christians, as believers? Today I get to talk to you out of 1 Peter, because it is thick with references to the second coming.
I love the text I've been assigned today. About a month ago we were reading through it as a staff. I didn't know I was going to be preaching it.

The verses I'm going to preach out of today... When we were reading through the whole first chapter, I got stuck here. I was just mesmerized by it, fixated on it. I loved it. I tell you, when I was assigned this Scripture, really more than any other time in my life I was very intimidated by it, because there is no part of me (I want you to hear this very clearly from me) that thinks what you need tonight is a teacher, is a preacher, to take the Word of God and go, "Here's what this means, and here's what this means," or "Hey, let me expound on this."

Rather, this Scripture is so clear, so beautiful, so eloquent, so powerful, so profound, there's nothing I read and go, "Man, do you know what that needs? That needs me to come and tell you about it." No. If we could just sit here and sit under the truth of what this Scripture says tonight, that's more than enough. So there's no reason in me that's going, "I'm preaching tonight because you need me." I want to share with you what I see in these verses for me, I want to share with you what I see in it for you, but there's no part of me that wants to communicate there's anything beyond this you need.

When you leave tonight, I want you mesmerized by this Scripture the way God has taken my heart and fixated it on it. This Scripture is profound. It's beautiful. I contemplated for a while just sitting down, reading chunks of it out loud to you, and just reverently sitting in silence and meditating on this as a group. We're not going to do that tonight, but we're going to walk through it together.

When I sat under this for a little bit and started meditating on what I was going to say, like I said, I was intimidated, but there was so much God had in it for me, in particular, I really want to share it with you. I believe wholeheartedly there's so much in the words we're about to read out loud in God's Word that he has for you. I just started thinking about our church.

For instance, I know there are a lot of marriages in this room, and I know a lot of these marriages have fights, just tumultuous arguments. Some of you guys are struggling. I know for some of the marriages in this room... For some of us, we're probably going, "Man, if it weren't for Christ, if I didn't say, 'I am a Christian,'" then we would say, "Maybe I would have left this marriage by now. If I hadn't claimed Christ, this relationship might have ended." I'm going to tell you this Scripture we're going to read tonight is really good for you, if that's where you are. This is going to be really good for you.

I know for some of you guys in here, you're teenagers, or maybe you have a teenager, so home has become kind of this place of rebellion, where maybe there's defiance in that home. There's just rebellion. I know in houses like that, you can easily slip into thinking, "Man, if I weren't a Christian," or "If I didn't love Christ, if I
didn't know Christ, what I wouldn't do. How would I react? How would I handle that?" I'll tell you tonight this Scripture is really good for you.

For those of you in this room... I know this is the 7:15 at The Village, so a lot of you guys are single. I'm sure a lot of you guys are thinking, "Man, maybe if I lowered my standards, maybe if I settled a little bit on a couple of things, maybe even on Christ, and said, 'Man, do they really have to be a strong Christian for me to date them? Do they really have to know Christ like this for me to date them?' maybe I would already be married. Maybe that would have happened by now." I'm going to tell you this Scripture is going to be really good for you, if that's where you are tonight.

For some of us, we're in a workplace or school where we're kind of shy to share the name of the Lord, where maybe we're afraid of the ramifications or the perceptions. Maybe some of us in this room, like me, are people-pleasers, where you care so much about what people think about you that you let it drive the way you behave and react. I'll tell you this Scripture we're about to read speaks so well into that.

For those of you in here who are going, "Man, my life is going great. I have so much joy right now. My life is just awesome," this Scripture is so full of the joy of the Lord this is going to be awesome for you tonight. For you guys who maybe are in a dry season, where you're going, "Man, I just don't know where the Lord is. I don't know who he is. I don't know what I think about him..." Or maybe you're thinking, "Man, my prayers just feel like they are bouncing off the ceiling and just coming right back to me. It feels like he is not listening. He has not been attentive." I'll tell you this Scripture tonight is going to be good.

When we read through this, what I'm trying to get at is I want you to hear these words. A lot of times, in church in particular, when somebody starts to read, I kind of start to tune out. Do you know what that is, where somebody starts to read and you just start to daydream? I really want us to hone in. I want you to tune in, and I want you to hear these particular words the Lord has written down through Peter for you tonight that we're going to study. So in 1 Peter, chapter 1, we're going to start in verse 3. It's so profoundly rich. I'll just read it. It's so good. Starting in verse 3, and we're going to go through verse 12. It says:

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus
Christ. Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully, inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories. It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in the things that have now been announced to you through those who preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look."

Isn't that good? Don't you just go, "Adam, just sit down. That is enough. Can't we just read that like six times, call it a night, and just walk out?" I'm not Steve Hardin, so I'm going to actually teach this. It is so good, it's so heavy, it's so thick, I barely know where to start with it. I love what it has to say, and I love what it has to say for us, so let's start at verse 6. The first phrase says, "In this you rejoice..." The this it's referring to are those verses right before that.

First, that God has caused you to be reborn, that he has caused you to be born again, the active agent being God himself. He has caused you to be born again. Through what? Through the resurrection of Jesus Christ. A man who was dead is alive, and that has caused you to be born again. For what? An inheritance that is imperishable and a salvation (I love what it says about salvation) that is ready. Isn't that good? A salvation that's ready. That's the this. "In this you rejoice..." My first question tonight, guys, is...Is that true? Do we rejoice in this salvation?

I would love to say, "Yes, I rejoice in that." There are times in here, in particular when we're singing in worship, I am just caught up in the joy of Jesus, and the idea of him coming back has brought me joy inexpressible, like the Scripture will say, where I'm caught up in that joy. Other times I'm going, "Man, I would love to say, 'In that I rejoice,' but it is hard to rejoice in that." I want to talk about that tension in me that goes, "Yeah, I want to find joy in the Lord, but sometimes it's a struggle." In this world it's hard to say, "Yes, I have joy," because when I look around there's so much that has gone wrong, that's broken.

Matt Younger and I were talking this week about how easily our hearts break when we see somebody get bullied or picked on, how when I look at our nation and go, "Man, we have legalized abortion," I go, "Man, that is heartbreaking." I look at the world and go, "There are terror attacks, there are wars, there are earthquakes, there are tsunamis, there are diseases, there is cancer," and I go, "Man, how can the Scriptures say, 'In this you rejoice,' that in the salvation that is ready I can rejoice?"
I'll tell you why. It's because, regardless of circumstance, that salvation is real and ready. No matter what I'm in, no matter what disease I'm walking in, no matter what hardship I'm walking in, no matter what circumstance I'm in, that does not change my God. That does not change his opinion of me. That salvation is real. That salvation is ready.

I have been caused to be born again through the resurrection of Jesus Christ through an inheritance that is imperishable for a salvation that's ready, regardless of circumstance. Yes, this world is full of suffering. In fact, the rest of the verse, as we read it, is going to say, "Yeah, in this you rejoice..." The rest of verse 6 says, "In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials..."

In that part when we say, "Is that true?" all of us could raise our hands and say, "Yes, I have been plagued by various trials. There are things in my life that have not gone well. There are things in my life I wish had gone differently. I've been plagued by temptations. I've been plagued by things we would call sin. There is a brokenness in me. Yes. Plagued by various trials? Absolutely. I validate that. That is easy truth for me."

Who is writing this? What does this phrase various trials mean? What is this about? Last week Brandon Barker pointed us back to Matthew 24. In Matthew 24 and Mark 13, Jesus gives this speech to his disciples, in particular Peter, Andrew, James, and John, about the second coming and about signs of the end of the world. He says, "Nation will rise against nation," and he talks about earthquakes. In other words, there will be times when people have caused problems with other people. There will be problems where the earth is cursed, so there are just disasters on the earth.

What Jesus calls these things... I think this is such a perfect analogy, such a perfect little anecdote. He says they are the beginning of the birthing pains. Those are the birthing pains. My wife is pregnant with our second son (she's due in August), which means we have one son, so we have been through birthing pains one time.

By "we" I mean my wife. I have not experienced birthing pains. I was reminded again this week there is no "we" in birthing pains. My wife has experienced birthing pains, and I have seen her experience birthing pains. I know enough to know, "Wow, that looks tough." That's the level of my empathy for birthing pains. I have no concept of what that's like.

In fact, you know what? For the single guys in the room, or you guys who are married but haven't had kids yet, let me give you a piece of advice about birthing pains. If you have anything to complain about, you need to get it out now. Okay? Because once the birthing pains have happened...no. You have no ground to stand on when it comes to complaining about pain. All right? There's no backache, no headache... There's
nothing you can confess to your wife to say, "Man, my back hurts," that she can't immediately trump with birthing pains.

"Oh really? I had a child grow inside of me and then pushed him out. Have you done that?" "No, I haven't." So yeah, trumped for all eternity. My wife will win every argument she wants. All she has to do is drop the birthing pains card. In fact, probably for your benefit, on the day we were having our son Oscar, we were in the labor and delivery room, and I had done something to my back that day. I have no idea what it was, but my back was killing me. My tailbone hurt. I could barely sit. I had trouble driving that day.

It was hard for me to walk from the labor and delivery room to the waiting room to tell people what was going on because I was in so much pain. So, of course, I shared this...with no one. Okay? If your wife is going through labor, you're not telling anyone your back hurts. You know, like, "Oh, we're doing okay in there. My back is just real sore. Chelsea, can I get a massage right here?" No, she's barely able to talk or communicate, and I'm like, "Oh, my back is killing me."

I didn't say anything. In fact, I waited a month, and it still hurt, before I said, "I think I need to go to a doctor." That was still too soon. My wife was like, "Oh really? A month ago I pushed out our son, and you need to go to the doctor because your back hurts?" In comparison, there's no pain I can ever come up with that I can go, "Yeah, I get birthing pains, baby." No. Birthing pains are severe pains. Are you with me? I hope so.

That whole day, though, that my wife is going through labor, my wife and I never look each other in the eye and say, "Why?" As bad as that pain gets, we never go, "Why? Why would this happen?" In fact, God has been very clear on why childbirth hurts. He said in Genesis 3, "It's going to hurt because this is the curse on mankind for sin. Childbirth will come with pain." That's the curse. So none of us go, "Why?" Yeah, we get sin. None of us go, "Why?" because we know, in the end, the culmination of the pain we're going through ends in a child, our son Oscar. He's awesome.

At no point do my wife or I look at each other and think, "You know what? This pain is just not worth it. Let's just quit pushing. Let's just quit trying. Let's just end the pain." No. At no point did we say, "Why?" That's why I love that Jesus Christ would say, "When you see person against person, when you see nature in its devastation, those are the birthing pains." We can go, "Yeah, there's grief there." There's terrible grief. We have friends and loved ones who die. We have friends and loved ones whose relationships break up, and there can be grief there, but at no point can I look at that and go, "Why?"

I know the answer why. First, because of the curse of sin on humanity and on this planet, and second, because it's pointing toward something great that is about to happen, and that is the return of the Son,
Jesus Christ, this time not as a baby in a manger, not as a sheep to be slaughtered, but as a reigning King. I go, "All this travesty around us, all this tragedy..."

We look at that and go, "Man, if those are the birthing pains, I'll have grief in this moment, but I understand I can still have joy, in the same way as in the labor and delivery room I can look at my wife and go, 'Man, this is painful, but I understand why. It's pointing to something. It's culminating in something. We're moving forward toward something.'"

So yes, there are birthing pains, and it's hard. At no point did I tell my wife, "Hey, it's okay. Let's just ignore it." No, I was in it with her. We were grieving in it. We did not delight in it. We didn't go, "Yes! Another contraction. That's awesome. I'm glad how much that one hurt." No, we weren't delighting in it. We were, on the other hand, going, "We're going to deal with this." We were doing those breathing exercises that are so creepy. We were doing the weird stuff they teach you in birthing classes. At the same time, we were understanding, "This is a hard moment pointing to something great."

That's the suffering of this world. That's what Christ would say. It's pointing toward something great to come. So yes, you can have joy in the moment, saying, "Even though this is a tragic event, it's pointing toward something great I placed my joy in long ago, that is, Jesus Christ, who has caused me to be born again, who has my inheritance imperishable, who has a salvation ready. That's my Jesus Christ. A salvation that applies to me now. I am saved, and there's another salvation for my glorified body yet to come."

So yes, my joy is in Jesus Christ. When tragedy happens around me, I can both grieve and have joy. That's okay. I don't have to feel like I can't have joy because this is a grieving time, and I don't feel like I can't grieve because this is a joyous time. I can have both somehow. That's what the Scripture would call us to. "In this you rejoice, even though you grieve."

There's a second kind of suffering here Peter is talking about as well. I'd be really remiss if we didn't spend some time there. Peter is not just talking about, "Hey, this world is broken. Hey, this world is full of sin. Hey, there's disease." What he's saying here is to the people of God. If you are a follower of Christ, part of following Christ will include suffering. Part of following Christ will mean you will believe something the world will not like about you.

The world will look at you and call you ignorant. The world will look at you and call you a bigot, intolerant. They will look at you and think less of you because you follow Christ, whereas you think that is the most important thing about you. Jesus Christ has told us bluntly, "You will carry your cross and follow me if you are a follower of Christ." That's not a pretty picture. That's not, "Hey, life is going to be easy from here on out."
Remember who's writing this. This is Peter. In the last chapter of John, before Jesus ascends into heaven, Jesus tells him, "Hey, there will come a day when someone will walk you in a direction you don't want to walk, and they will spread out your arms," and John tells us he told this to Peter to tell him how he was going to die.

Jesus told Peter, "One day, because you believe this, because you follow me, you will die," and Peter did not hesitate to still write in here, "You will undergo various trials, and in this, your salvation, we still rejoice." Why? Because Peter believed, much like I do, like I hope you do, that this is worth dying for, that Jesus Christ is worth dying for, that in following Jesus Christ, I'm not trying to find the path of least resistance, but rather, understanding his path means I will encounter resistance. I am heading headlong into it, understanding that's the way I'm going to go.

Yes, in our culture we love to find the path of least resistance. When I was a teacher, I used to present my kids with this choice: "Would you rather have a teacher who gives you an automatic A and you have to do nothing in that class, or a teacher who will teach you? You will learn, and your grade will not be guaranteed. It'll be hard work, but you'll come out on the other side more intelligent and smarter." Without fail, all of them go, "Give me the A." You know that. People aren't in school to learn. They're in school to get A's. So, "If you can give me an A and I don't have to do anything, great."

For some reason, that's translated over in our Christian culture, where we go, "If I could follow Christ but not have to suffer for him, awesome. If I could follow Christ but not have to pick up my cross and follow him, awesome. If I could follow Christ but not have to tell anyone in any way that would make me feel uncomfortable or them uneasy, then that would be great. That would be the path of least resistance. That way I would be guaranteed this imperishable inheritance one day and not have to sacrifice anything along the way to get there."

Or reality: Follow Christ. Pick up your cross. You will encounter various trials. What the Scripture will tell us is these trials are not only grievous and yet joyous, but beneficial for you. They do a work in you. They do a work in your faith. If you avoid them, you're avoiding the discipline of the Lord. Discipline is for your benefit. Discipline is for your good. Remember, Peter, worth dying for... He didn't just die for this. I mean, he suffered for this.

I want to read you a quick bit from Acts. You can turn there if you want. It's Acts, chapter 5. In Acts, chapter 5, there has been this occasion where the disciples have been preaching Christ publicly and have been arrested for it. They were put in prison, and then, in the night, angels came and set them free from the prison, and they went right back out and started preaching again, as the angel encouraged them. Then,
when the people got up the next morning and saw them out preaching, they rearrested them. Verse 27 says:

"And when they had brought them, they set them before the council. And the high priest questioned them, saying, 'We strictly charged you not to teach in this name [the name of Jesus Christ], yet here you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching, and you intend to bring this man's [Jesus Christ's] blood upon us.'

But Peter and the apostles answered, 'We must obey God rather than men. The God of our fathers raised Jesus, whom you killed by hanging him on a tree. God exalted him at his right hand as Leader and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. And we are witnesses to these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him.' When they heard this, they were enraged and wanted to kill them."

They want to kill Peter and the apostles for this. It's going to go on to say Gamaliel, a respected Pharisee, stands up in their midst and says, "Hey, there has been a guy who raised up before, and when we killed him, his people eventually dispersed. Then another guy... Remember him? He raised up, and when we killed him, his people eventually dispersed. Just like Jesus Christ. He was raised up, we killed him, and now, if this is not of God, these men will eventually disperse, but if this is of God, you will find yourself opposing God himself. So let these men go." In verse 39 he says:

"...but if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them. You might even be found opposing God! So they took his advice, and when they had called in the apostles, they beat them and charged them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. Then they left the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name. And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they did not cease teaching and preaching that the Christ is Jesus."

They left rejoicing. What did they leave? They left prison, where they were beaten, rejoicing, because they were counted worthy for suffering for the name of Christ. Now don't get me confused here. I'm not saying Christians need to seek out opportunities to be beaten or flogged. We don't celebrate the pain we experience. That's not what they're celebrating. They're celebrating that Jesus Christ's name was glorified, and that they're counted worthy to be associated with it.

For us, for the most part, we have such a tendency to take the Lord's name in vain by applying it to us, saying, "I am a Christian," and then looking nothing like Christ. Here he would rejoice, going, "These
various trials I'm telling you guys about? I have been there." We know Peter's story. We know he suffered. We know he knows he's going to die, and yet he continues on this path despite the resistance.

Look at the end of verse 6 into verse 7 back in 1 Peter. It says, "...if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ." This is a pretty common analogy in Scripture, that they would say, "Hey, your faith is like a precious metal, the difference being your faith is more precious and more imperishable. It will last longer, and it's more valuable than gold or silver."

In the way they are alike, when you purify gold and silver, when you test its genuineness, you apply a fire to it. You melt it. In the refinery fire, all of the junk, all of the impurities, float to the surface of the precious metal and then are burned or scraped off, leaving a more precious version of what was there before, a more perfect version of what was there before. It says that is similar to your faith.

The word for that stuff that comes to the surface... The Scripture talks about it often. It's called dross, the junk that comes to the surface. Much like your faith. When we are applied to the fire of trial, temptation, suffering, all of our junk comes to the surface. It's clearly seen, and then it's addressed. You guys in this room who are married know this happens. When you are in a trial, when there are more tumultuous discussions in your marriage, your junk comes to the surface. Sometimes it's clearly visible and you're able to address it.

You guys who are in good Home Groups, where you're doing life on life together, know sometimes your junk will come to the surface. If you're in counseling, like me, and you meet with your counselor, you know the longer you talk about yourself and the way you are not like Christ, the more your junk comes to the surface for you to address it, for it to be burned or scraped off. That dross comes to the surface.

If you're in recovery here at The Village, there's a whole step where you take an inventory of your life and say, "Here is all of my junk. Let's address it. Let's remove it." For a long time I didn't get that. I thought, "That's a beautiful picture. It's accurate. Yes, I want a more genuine faith. I want the junk in my life removed." I thought it was about making me a better version of me. I wanted to be a different Adam, a better Adam, an Adam who's a better discipler and a better dad and a better husband.

I didn't realize Scripture doesn't talk about me becoming a better and better version of me. It talks about me becoming more and more like Christ. Not a better version of Adam; a version of Christ. A sanctifying work is not to have the best Adam I can be; it's to be more like Jesus Christ. I don't look into the mirror of
me and go, "How am I doing? I want to be more like a better version of me." I look into the mirror of Jesus Christ and go, "How can I, like Christ, pick up my cross and follow him and be more and more like him?"

That's what I want for all of us: that that dross comes to the surface, the junk in the refining fire that happens through suffering that is so beneficial for us, and then that junk is removed so we can more perfectly reflect the life of Christ for those around us who may not know him, who may not see him except through you. That's the refining fire of your faith. That's why it says "Its tested genuineness through trial, through temptation, through suffering, through the birthing pains."

If I understand my suffering like that, I never look at my suffering and go, "Why?" I look at my suffering and say, "Thank you, Jesus Christ, you've caused me to be reborn, that I have an inheritance imperishable, and that you have brought my dross to the surface to be addressed so I can more perfectly reflect you." Then verse 8 says, "Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him..."

Though you have not seen him (that's in the past), you love him, and though you don't now see him (that's in the present), you believe in him. I love this. Again, I want to call to your memory this is Peter writing this. Remember, Peter did see him. Peter saw him walk on water. Peter saw him heal a man born blind. Peter saw him put an ear back on a guy when Peter had cut the ear off. Peter saw him transfigured on a mountaintop, where he glowed like the sun. Peter saw him crucified and buried. Peter saw him raised to life. Peter saw him ascend into heaven.

So part of me reads those verses and goes, "Peter, it is so easy for you to say, 'I love him.' I've not seen Christ. For a long time it threw me for such a loop to say, "The greatest commandment is to love God," because I grew up with this very American idea of love, that it was like butterflies in your stomach, like an infatuation, and I had trouble feeling that way about Jesus Christ. Maybe it's the man in me, maybe it's the sin in me, but I just didn't feel infatuated with Jesus.

I know that is a real aspect for some people, and that's great, but understand that love does not shrink down to butterflies in your stomach. That's not all-encompassing love. Love is a decision of the will to commit to something. Love is a desire for a deeper and deeper relationship. Love is self-sacrificial. In other words, those three things put together, love means no matter what. When I promise my wife at the altar I love her, what I'm saying is, "No matter what, I'm with you." That's what love means.

You say, "Though I have not seen him, I love Christ." I say, "Yeah." Why? Because I know, no matter what, I'm with Christ. Yes, I love Christ. Do I feel affections for him? Do I feel a butterflies-in-my-stomach type of infatuation? Sometimes in worship, absolutely, but not feeling that is not the guilt in my life. No, I am with
Christ no matter what. I'm willing to walk through resistance for him, walk in suffering for him. So yes, I love him, even though I have not seen him. Though I do not see him now, I believe in him. I trust him.

What I love about these Scriptures is it says, "You have not seen him in the past, you do not see him now," but what Peter does not talk about right there is the future tense. The context of this verse is all in the second coming, that one day we will see him again, not a baby in a manger, not a sheep come to be slaughtered, but a reigning King, and then we will love him perfectly. There will be glory, praise, and honor for our Lord Jesus Christ.

If you keep reading in that verse, the end of that, and then into verse 9, it says we "...rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls." I love that. Inexpressible. I've really struggled with joy inexpressible. How do I express that joy? Am I able to express that joy?

I know for a lot of us in this room, we would go, "I don't know that joy." A lot of us would say, "I hear what you're saying. I see what the Scripture says. I don't feel joy when we talk about the second coming, when we talk about Jesus. There's no joy there. When Peter says you have joy inexpressible, I go, 'Man, I just don't have joy at all.'"

Perhaps you've heard this before. The level of your gratitude is often equivalent to the level of what has been done for you. When somebody holds a door for you and you say, "Thank you," that's enough. You don't need to do something for them. When somebody buys you dinner, you say, "Thank you," and maybe you feel like, "I need to buy them dinner back or do something kind for them."

When somebody pays your mortgage, when somebody pays off your student loans, that's a whole 'nother level of gratitude. If somebody buys you a car, that's a whole 'nother level of gratitude. If somebody gets you a job, that's another level of gratitude. What level of gratitude do you express for someone who has purchased your eternal soul? It's inexpressible, isn't it?

So yes, there is a joy inexpressible for what Jesus Christ has done by causing me to be born again, to have a salvation that's ready. That's joy inexpressible. For those in here who still go, "Man, I don't land there," I think this would be a great week for you to spend some time... There's a Scripture I would commend you to meditate on.

In Psalm 51, there's a king, David, who has just been busted for having an affair with a woman he got pregnant, who then, to cover it up, killed her husband, and then a prophet came to him and busted him on
it. He wrote Psalm 51 in response to that, a psalm of repentance, saying, "I've messed up. I need to be made new."

In the middle of that psalm, in verse 12, he prays to God, "God, restore to me the joy of your salvation." Maybe that's our prayer for you this week, that we just sit under that. "God, restore to me that joy of my salvation. This world is messed up. I've been messed up. I'm constantly messing up. God, restore to me the joy of your salvation." That's where we camp out. Let me finish out 1 Peter 1:10-12 here.

"Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully, inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories. It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in the things that have now been announced to you through those who preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look."

Why do angels long to look at your salvation? It seems beautiful, but doesn't that seem a little confusing? An angel longs to look at your salvation. An angel has a different perspective on you than probably you do. An angel can look at the world and go, "Look at this massive depravity. Look at this sin that is rampant. Look at the way they devour one another," and then knowing God will come to judge and yet forgive that. They long to look on the grace of Jesus Christ, that he could look on my life and go, "I see him as righteous through my son Jesus Christ." Angels long to look into that.

For you in this room who maybe are going, "I don't believe this," or "I don't know what I think about this," let me share with you a couple of stories Jesus shared with us. In Luke 15 he shares three stories right in a row. One is about a woman who had 10 coins and then lost one and then found it again. One is a guy who had 100 sheep and one wandered off. He left the 99 to go get that one and found it again. One is about a father who had two sons. One of his sons rebelled, rejected him, ran away, and then returned and found him again.

In two of those three stories, the way he ends his story, he says, "Do you know when a sinner repents there is great rejoicing and joy in heaven?" He says, "Do you know when a sinner repents the angels have joy? We celebrate that person." Then in the third story, the prodigal son, you see in the midst of that story, they welcome back the Prodigal Son with a huge celebration, a party for him.

I will tell you at this church, where God is living and active, The Village Church, Dallas Campus, we would celebrate with such joy if you were to confess Jesus is your Lord with your mouth, if you were to get baptized, if you were to repent and say, "Man, I have been walking in this way, and now God has caused me
to be reborn, and now I'm walking in this way." We, like the angels, would love to find joy in that with you. It would bring us inexpressible joy to see the salvation of Jesus Christ come upon you to cause you to be reborn.

I pray if tonight you're going, "I want to know what that looks like. I want to know how that works. I have questions about that. I have suffering in my life I want to address," that after Communion tonight, when there are people up here to pray for you, you would come up and address that with us, or go to your Home Group leader, or go to the person you came with, and say, "Man, what is that?"

I would commend you if you're here tonight and you've been invited by someone, or maybe you just wandered in, I can almost guarantee there have been people either praying for you by name, or I know for a fact we've been praying for you in general, to say, "Lord, save. Lord, this salvation you've said is ready, apply it to our friends we are bringing or who we know are in the room tonight." We have prayed God would reveal himself to you, that though you do not see him now, you would love him and trust him. Let me pray for us.

God, thank you for the mercy you've applied to my soul, that as a broken and messed-up man you would give me opportunity to know you, to know more and more of your salvation for me personally. God, I pray for us as a church, specifically this service tonight, God, that in this room you would move and make yourself known. God, I thank you that your Scripture is so good it requires no man to expound upon it, but rather we can just sit under its truth.

God, I pray the truths herein you would apply to us, that, God, we would walk in boldness in spite of resistance under the banner of your name in our workplaces, in our schools, in our homes, that, God, you would make us more and more like you, that, God, like John the Baptist said so eloquently, we would decrease and you would increase, both in this church and in our hearts.

God, that you would be mighty to save in this place, and that, God, tonight in worship we would express a joy that's inexpressible, that, God, we would call on your name and, God, we would lean towards you, that, God, we would be mindful of the fact you are coming back, and that, God, that would give great explanation to all the suffering we here encounter until then. We pray these things in Jesus Christ's name and for his sake, amen.

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