

² "Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and will not be afraid; for the Lord God is my strength and my song, and he has become my salvation." ³ With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation. ⁴ And you will say in that day: "Give thanks to the Lord, call upon his name, make known his deeds among the peoples, proclaim that his name is exalted. ⁵ Sing praises to the Lord, for he has done gloriously; let this be made known in all the earth.

⁶ Shout, and sing for joy, O inhabitant of Zion, for great in your midst is the Holy One of Israel."

With the beginning of Advent, we sang, "Come Thou Long Expected Jesus." The people waited for a Messiah. Some waited with EXPECTATION. Some waited with EXPECTANCY. There is a difference.

EXPECTATION is a predefined waiting. William Paul Young defines EXPECTATION as that line below which no gift is acceptable, regardless of the effort of motivation behind it. If it doesn't live up to the EXPECTATION, then it is unacceptable.

Contrasted to Expectation is EXPECTANCY. **Expectancy** is an air of excitement that something is going to happen that will be a good thing, something that is worth anticipating, something surprising that you can look forward to without specific definition of what will satisfy you.

The people who sat in darkness were going to see a great light, said Isaiah. But the Gospels tell us how Jesus did not live up to many of their EXPECTATIONS, so they killed Him. The disciples, however, lived with Expectancy, and were always being amazed.

The CANDLE for the first week of Advent was HOPE. Here, there is a connection to the EXPECTATION/EXPECTANCY dichotomy, when we realize that the contrast to HOPE is WISHING.

Wishing
that something in particular will happen that will satisfy you.
"the line below which no result is acceptable, regardless of intent or effort.

vs.

Hoping
that a result hitherto unknown is going to happen which will occur at the hand of someone, or something, that is trustworthy; that your present situation which seems less than desirable will turn out OK, although you have no idea of what nor how.

Little children WISH that Santa will bring them something in particular, and will often make a WISH-list. Their grandparents HOPE for Christmas with grandchildren,

and leave the rest open to expectancy.

See the connection? Expectations and Wishes are **SELF**-defined. God and others can only be satisfactory to us, when God and others hop through our defined hoops.

Last week, the Candle was Named PEACE. And we learned that the PEACE OF CHRIST, as Jesus says, is not as the world gives. **The PEACE Jesus brings is not based on circumstances; it is based on the relationship with Jesus.**

Expectations and **Wishing** are OUR predefined Circumstances that we believe will bring us Peace.

Expectancy and **Hope** are based on a **relationship of Trust with Jesus**, in which we have confidence that God really does love us and wants us to have the very best. There is great peace in that relationship, where we really believe that *all things work together for good for those who love God and who are called according to God's purpose*. (Romans 8:28)

Well, the Candle for today is **JOY**. And it is often confused with something called **HAPPINESS**. You may have already figured out how these two similar but very different things are like the other dichotomies Advent has shown us.

Happiness

vs.

JOY¹

Meaning: Happiness is an emotion in which one experiences feelings ranging from contentment and satisfaction to bliss and intense pleasure.

Joy is the emotion of great delight or well-being caused by something exceptionally good or satisfying.

Causes: External sources: Events and "circumstances"

Inward sources: Contentment and "relationship with someone trustworthy"?

Time frame: Momentary

Long lasting

When I hear so many parents say that they **only want their children to be happy**, perhaps they would do better to say they only want their children to have **JOY**.

¹ Happiness versus Joy chart copied from http://www.diffen.com/difference/Happiness_vs_Joy

But, in reality, the avenues they so often follow (when happiness of children is the parents' only/primary goal) do indeed seem more attuned to the very transitory goal of happiness and not of **joy**.

Uh-oh! I'm sorry. I ended up preaching this morning. I'm not supposed to be doing that. Let me get back on track here.

You all know Dasher and Dancer, Prancer and Vixen, Comet and Cupid, Donner and Wolf Blitzer, and of course you remember: the three Magi – Persian aristocracy, wise men, makers of kings – commonly known as Caspar (or Gaspar), Balthasaar, and Melchior. You will also remember from two weeks ago that “Magus” is the singular of Magi. And scripture does not tell us how many magi there really were. In fact there is evidence in very early Christian art for there being anywhere from one to eight magi.

Our Saint Marks' journey through Advent is going to focus on Magus Lauer – the fourth Wise Man, who is solely a creation of the imagination of the Worship Committee of Saint Marks. Each week we are going to look for him on that journey to Bethlehem, asking the question: **WHERE IN THE WORLD IS MAGUS LAUER?** But this fictional account will nonetheless reveal some of the great truths about Advent and about God's Kingdom, that Magus Lauer discovers as he moves along that trail shown on the map in your bulletin.

The first week, Magus Lauer had laid over in Babylon. And last week, he was in Dura Europos. The journey of the Magi is getting closer to the birthplace of the new king; today they are in Gerasa (shown on your map as Jerash.) It is located in the northern part of present day Jordan. Gerasa was destroyed mostly by an earthquake in 749 A.D., and later rebuilt as Jerash. But it was a booming metropolis during the Roman Empire. Indeed it may have been the fine reports from Magus and his comrades that trickled down through history to later cause his native Persia to attack and conquer the city a few centuries later.

At any rate, the journey for our Magi friends is nearly 75% complete when they get to Gerasa. They are tired, and apparently stayed here for several days,

recuperating for their long trek around the horn of the northern side of the fertile crescent.

Luckily, because I am a resourceful preacher, I was able to locate the very scroll upon which Magus Lauer wrote his journal entry from this part of the trip to find the new king born under the sign of the star:

I am SOOOOOO tired of this trip. We finally made it to Gerasa; it seems like it's been a year since we left Dura Europos. But it's only been three months; although it's been nine months since we left home in Persia.

I have to tell you that I am not very happy about this.

About two weeks ago, as the camel saddle was wearing blisters on top of blisters of my back side, I talked to my Uncle Caspar about this trip not living up to my expectations. He stroked his beard and said, **“Uh-huh. You know expectations can be a problem. Usually they are recipes for disappointment. I just live with EXPECTANCY, knowing that the God, Who made the star we follow, is going to do something great on this trip, but I don't have an idea what.”**

“Hmmm,” I said, but had no beard to stroke.

The next day, I talked to Uncle Caspar's good friend, and mentor, Bathasaar. I told him that I had hoped that I would learn more about the meaning of life on this trip. He stroked his beard – (is that what Persians do when they think, always stroke their beard?) – and said to me, **“No, my son. I don't think you HOPED. I think you what you did was to WISH for something in particular, and when that particular thing didn't occur, you probably missed something else that was at least as important, if not more so. WISHING sets limits on what you will receive as acceptable. Just HOPE open endedly, and let the God of the Star we follow to the King fill your HOPES as He thinks is best.”**

“Hmmm,” I said, and began to consider growing a beard.

Our third day in the Gerasa found us visiting several of the merchants and sights in town. I wandered into the tent of an old, old woman, who seemed older than the ground on which she sat. I thought I was accompanied by Melchior, but somehow he and I had gotten separated.

She invited me to sit, and gave me something cool to drink. Then she offered me a little cake like thing – she called it a cookie. I took it in my hand, smelled it, and then put a bit of it into my mouth. It was wonderful! I finished eating it, and told her that it tasted extraordinary. **SHE ASKED ME IF I WOULD LIKE ANOTHER?**

May I?

SURELY!

I ate it, thanked her, and pronounced that for the first time in several weeks, I felt happy.

SHE TOLD ME THAT I WAS WELCOME AND THEN SHE SAID THAT SHE WAS SORRY.

“What do you mean, ‘sorry’?” I asked.

“WELL, YOU SEE, YOU ARE HAPPY BECAUSE YOU HAVE EATEN A COOKIE. BUT TOMORROW, THE COOKIES WILL BE GONE, AND SO WILL YOUR HAPPINESS.

“WE HAVE A PROPHET, WHOSE NAME IS ISAIAH. HE WROTE THAT HAPPINESS IS NOT SO IMPORTANT, BECAUSE IT COMES AND IT GOES. JOY, SAYS ISAIAH, IS WHAT COMES FROM THE WATERS OF YOUR OWN WELLS. LIVING WATER DOWN INSIDE YOU, WHICH GIVES YOU JOY, REGARDLESS OF WHAT YOU HOLD IN YOUR HAND FROM THE HAND OF OTHERS OR THE NATURE OF CIRCUMSTANCE.

“HAPPINESS FROM A COOKIE WILL COME AND IT WILL GO. JOY FROM THE WELLS OF LIVING WATER WILL NEVER RUN DRY, AND WILL GIVE YOU REASON FOR GIVING THANKS EVERY DAY.”

“How can I find this living water?” I asked.

“AH, KEEP FOLLOWING THAT STAR,” was all she said.

Well, at least, she did not scratch a beard.

I wonder if the JOY from our own well that this Isaiah spoke about has anything to do with this King, we are going to visit?

Well, that's where Magus Lauer's journal for that day ended. What do you think? Would that new king's life make any difference? Would his coming – would this Cosmic Event of **God putting on flesh so that we can put on divinity** actually show people of today to know JOY that does not come and go with the gifts of cookies from others?

Let me ask: What difference does the King make to our JOY today?

Introduce speakers [John Britton](#), [Rod Blackstone](#), [Alex Bunn](#) and [Sydney Williamson](#).

So be it.