He is risen, INDEED! Today, we join together in rejoicing with 2.2 billion believers around the world who are celebrating our Risen King. Church, Easter is not only a day of celebration or the message of our faith to declare. It is a reality to dwell in! The hope of the Resurrection lies not only in the future, but the pure power of it is also something we experience now. This event changed our world—our present and our future. Phillip Brooks says, “The great Easter truth is not that we are to live truly after death but that we are to be new here and now by the power of the resurrection.” The same power that raised Jesus from the dead lives in you. St. Paul writes, “We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life” (Romans 6:4).

Imagine the emotion of that morning—a morning on which occurred an utterly life-changing moment. Paul reminds us in his first letter to the Corinthians that the virtues of the Christian are faith, hope, and love (chapter 13). John and others have undoubtedly felt that they have lost all these characteristics of their lives. The landscape of John’s heart must feel left in ruins: His master and teacher is dead. But then everything changes in John 20:8 when John sees the grave clothes and the folded face cloth. He sees this evidence and *believes*! Now, listen, Family The word in verse 5 used for “seeing” simply means that John observes them. He takes a glance. Jesus is gone, but the grave clothes are still there. The word “see” in verse 8 in the original language means to “investigate and then understand, to ‘grasp what you are seeing.’” All the truth of Christ—the faith, the hope, and love—return to John in an instant. The grave clothes preach a powerful message. First, their condition affirm that the body has not been stolen. The grave clothes give no hint of having been disturbed. The face cloth is neatly folded. Add to these bits of evidence the fact that nearly one hundred pounds of spices used for his burial preparation would have encased the body. And there would have been a hundred feet or more of linen strips to encircle it. These are not unwrapped; the grave clothes remain undisturbed. Then, too, the tomb has been guarded by two Roman soldiers. Couple all of these facts—taken in by John—recall for him the words of Jesus before his crucifixion. Yes! He is ALIVE. HE IS RISEN!! The grave clothes hold the message. John doesn’t understand everything he sees, but he believes!

I wonder how many of us stop at a glance when it comes to Jesus—failing to be truly impacted by the truth. “But, Pastor Chris, I said a prayer when I first believed. I’m good to go.” The evidence and the encounter mark a new beginning for the disciples. For them, this evidence required more than a glance; no longer will their lives reflect business as usual. The empty grave, marked by undisturbed grave clothes, meant their own spiritual freedom. It means the removal of their own grave clothes. They are freed from bondage—because He is not there. HE IS HERE. His resurrection means victory over death, sin, and the grave. Their uncertainty—and ours—is replaced with joy. The message of the empty tomb and the grave clothes is forgiveness of sin and is available to them and to us. The grave clothes that bind us in our past sin and shame can be removed because He “gave himself for our sins to rescue us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father” (Galatians 1:4). In the resurrection, He gives us freedom and declares His glory. He gives us full freedom and unending forgiveness. Listen, believers. You cannot out-sin the grace of God.

For us the invitation of Easter is the same today as it was twenty centuries ago—an invitation to encounter the living Christ! It is an invitation to come and see His empty tomb, His undisturbed grave clothes, that we may believe as well. Christ invites each believer to reach out in faith and take hold of Him, the One who takes hold of us. Your freedom and forgiveness were bought as a great price. Because of the empty tomb, guilt does not have the last word. Shame and despair to not have the last word. Death does not have the last word. The empty tomb of Christ is the cornerstone of our faith. The grave could not hold Him. The empty tomb and the resurrection change everything. Sin no longer defines us, death doesn’t hold us, and the story isn’t over. The resurrection is the symbol of VICTORY!

So, let me just ask, “Is your view of Jesus better defined as a glance or a life-changing beholding? The message of the grave clothes calls us to live transformed lives—lives of freedom and victory, lives of faith, hope, and love, The embracing of the truth changes how we see everything from our identity to our mission, to our eternal destiny. HE IS RISEN, INDEED, is not just a church slogan. It is a life-transforming truth, empowered by the same truth that raised Christ from the dead. Without the resurrection, there would be no hope for the forgiveness of sin. Take a look again. Look at the purpose and the power of the empty tomb. This is the culmination of the Good News of the Gospel: HE IS ALIVE FOREVER!

Passages in support of this sermon:

Acts 10:37-43

37 You know what has happened throughout the province of Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John preached— 38 how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, and how he went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with him.

39 “We are witnesses of everything he did in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They killed him by hanging him on a cross, 40 but God raised him from the dead on the third day and caused him to be seen. 41 He was not seen by all the people, but by witnesses whom God had already chosen—by us who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. 42 He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one whom God appointed as judge of the living and the dead. 43 All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.”

John 20:1-9

20 Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the entrance. 2 So she came running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus loved, and said, “They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don’t know where they have put him!”

3 So Peter and the other disciple started for the tomb. 4 Both were running, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. 5 He bent over and looked in at the strips of linen lying there but did not go in. 6 Then Simon Peter came along behind him and went straight into the tomb. He saw the strips of linen lying there, 7 as well as the cloth that had been wrapped around Jesus’ head. The cloth was still lying in its place, separate from the linen. 8 Finally the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went inside. He saw and believed. 9 (They still did not understand from Scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead.)