"Today Everything Changes"
John 20:1-18
April 16, 2006, 9 am, Easter Day

We all have moments in our lives where it seems there is a clear divide: yesterday, life was like this; today, my life is like this. Moments like when either you or a family member is diagnosed with cancer. As soon as the words leave the doctor's mouth, your life changes drastically. Words like chemotherapy and radiation and malignancy become something more than simply medical terms you picked up on ER. Every day seems like a countdown. Everything changes. Trips that you were thinking about for next year are way on the backburner – your focus becomes on the now. Instant gratification becomes a need, not merely a want.

Or the positive side of that is the birth of a baby. Or meeting the girl of your dreams – I don't why I thought of that one. Or buying your first house. Life seems to pause, slow down, and then start back – but it's not the same as it was. Nothing is the same. Everything changes.

History has such events as well. The day Neil Armstrong stepped on the moon. The day JFK was shot. September 11th. The Challenger explosion. In those moments, the world stopped. History changes. Writers say that in some of those instances that our "innocence is lost." Something definitely is lost. The focus of a nation changes from lowering interest rates to watching the television screen.

I am here to tell you, though, that TODAY, everything changes. Right here, right now. That is exactly what this day is about. When we left on Good Friday, our Lord had died, but today we find that the tomb is empty … and our souls are filled. When we left into the darkness, the night seemed an apt metaphor for our hearts. Today, though, we rediscover our hope. The sun has re-emerged. The night has been shed to the morning light. Just as Peter ran in His excitement to the tomb to discover that which the women had already seen, so we have a skip to our step as well as we come to celebrate the empty tomb today. Something has changed. What went before is yesterday – but today is Sunday. Everything has changed since we have been gone from this place. Or at least, that is how it might seem.

You see, we come here today to celebrate our risen Lord. We don't come here to talk in metaphors. We don't come here to talk in theological proofs. We come to preach Christ crucified and yet risen. We come to proclaim that death has no more sting. We come to share in the Truth, that our Savior has come – He has died, but returned, and will return again – and yet, has promised to never leave us. We come in believing beyond belief. We come to celebrate Easter – the day EVERYTHING changes. I don't mean that in the past tense – I mean that in the present. This day EVERYTHING changes.

You see, Easter wasn't simply a day back around 30 AD. It is every day since. Even today. We are called "Easter people" because that is what we are to be – people living in present witness to our Risen Savior. People living like there is no tomorrow because there is no tomorrow – there is only eternity. We have no fear of death because death has lost its power

over us. We have no fear of Satan because through Christ, the bonds of sin have been broken. We have no fear of darkness because the light has overcome it. All the promises have been kept; all the dreams have been made a reality. The Kingdom of God has been and is even now breaking forth into the world. It is more than a kingdom with geographical boundaries or historical records, but one that is without end and is only limited by our capacity to love and be loved.

Everything changes this day. That is what we have gathered to celebrate. We come to celebrate the NEW LIFE that we have gained in Christ. And if we truly believe we have been given a new life, then we have had one of those moments where everything changes. What went before was the old life, but what we have been given a "do over," a new chance, a clean slate, and a rebirth.

Now, if you haven't experienced that, or if you have in the past but things seemed to have gone back to the old "normal", this day is your wake up call to the New Life Christ has proclaimed from the beginning of His earthly ministry to this very moment. Paul described this life as running a race without looking back but pressing forward to the goal which is Jesus Christ. It is time to truly come alive in your spirit, in your soul. Christ came not so that we could come to church and be bored, but that we might have life and life abundantly. That means far more than just being part of a church. That means far more than simply calling yourself a Christian – or checking the appropriate category when asked what religious affiliation you are. It means living the life He called us to live – one of boldness, of excitement, of righteousness, of being constantly seeking to be filled with the Spirit, of seeking God with our every fiber of being, of seeking to love the world as our Lord has loved us. Our Lord is risen – and that means that we have a reason to hope after all. It means that the world changed – and all the rules of biology and psychology and physics and chemistry and history and every other natural law and every other assumption that we might have about how life is to be here on this planet- all of that is now up in the air. The reality we live in is, "If Jesus Christ could do that, what else might he do on my behalf? If He who is the Son of God calls me friend, what might I do on his behalf?" Everything changes when we realize that. Everything changes when we ask ourselves that.

Yet, we live in a world that increasingly doubts that anything happened that day at the tomb. If you watch the news or read the papers, you will see how popular books like "The Da Vinci Code" or "The Jesus Papers" or "The Gospel of Judas" have become. You will see how people have theorized that Jesus didn't actually walk on water. You will see a world like that in 1st Corinthians, where Paul says that we who believe in the resurrection are seen as fools by those who do not believe. The "wise" of the world write books denying Christ's death on the cross – instead, speculating about deals with Pontius Pilate or swooning on the cross – or granting death on a cross but not the resurrection. They say, "People don't come back to life after they die" and will not deviate from that point. And then they suggest, "Show us some evidence that Jesus died and rose again and I will believe."

But, we gather here together as the Body of Christ to say that each of us is a witness to risen Christ, to the change that he has brought. We have experienced His love, His presence, and His Truth within us. Our witness is not some warm fuzzy feeling or some psychological

sensation that might be replicated with blinding lights and chocolate. We know our Savior, and He is our Lord. And we know that the moment we confess that fact, everything changed. We are not the same – we have been marked by His love. And the memory of the moment we realized the truth of Easter, we will never forget. Maybe we will or have forgotten the day it happened. Maybe we forget all the details. But we will never forget what it meant to know that Jesus is more than a figure of history, a teacher of old, or a crazy man leading believers to their deaths. He is the very Son of God. He is the redeemer of our souls. Without Him, our lives will not be complete. Without Him, we rediscover the darkness of life. Without Him, there is no victory worth winning, no life worth living, no hope for our despair.

Today, everything changes. Today, we realize and remember the change that He began within us. Today, we might seem foolish to the world, but we know the Truth in our hearts. Today, we discover that the Lamb is worthy to receive honor, and power and glory forever and ever. Today, our Savior lives! Hallelujah!