Today’s message takes a unique approach to the typical Easter Sunday sermon. Instead of focusing on the events surrounding Jesus’ resurrection, we will explore its impact on our lives.

The story of Easter and Jesus Christ’s resurrection offers hope, freedom, transformation, and a life unbound through faith. As Jesus said, “If the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed,” and “I came that they may have life and have it abundantly” (John 8:36; 10:10).

Despite this faith, we might feel stuck, held back by fears or past mistakes, or preoccupied with planning the future. We can become trapped by past events or worries about the future, that we miss the blessings of the day. If this is you, I have good news for you: the resurrection of Jesus offers a way to break free and live an unbound life.

To delve into this “Life Unbound” theme and how Jesus’ resurrection empowers us to break free and live fully, we will examine Lazarus’ story, who was raised from the dead by Jesus before his own resurrection. Lazarus’ story in John 11:1-44 showcases the life-changing power of Jesus’ resurrection for us all.

This story is about a family close to Jesus—Mary, Martha, and their brother Lazarus, who died. They were known for their devotion to Jesus.

Here is the context of this Scripture: While Jesus and his disciples ministered near Jerusalem, they retreated to the countryside due to opposition. Meanwhile, Lazarus fell gravely ill, prompting his sisters to ask Jesus for help. But instead of rushing back to Bethany, Jesus continued his ministry in the countryside for a couple more days. Finally, however, Lazarus passed away, and Jesus decided it was time to return to Bethany.

Then, upon Jesus’ arrival, Martha quickly approached him, saying, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.” Martha’s concern was legitimate. She expressed her belief that if Jesus had been there, her brother would not have died. I can only imagine that a part of her, though she loved and believed in Jesus, was disappointed that he did not get there on time to save Lazarus. “If only you had been there, my brother would not have died,” she told Jesus.

The only way we can truly grasp the emotions of this moment is by trying to put ourselves in their place. These people are experiencing profound grief of loss, and the person they believed could have helped them did not get to them on time. “If only you had been there!” Just think of the struggle Martha and her sister Mary experienced as they tried to keep Lazarus alive, hoping that Jesus would arrive in time to save him, but Jesus did not show up, and Lazarus died.

What does all this mean to us in relation to an unbound life? First, when Martha told Jesus, “If you had been here…” I think she really meant, “Where were you?” In a way, she was questioning Jesus about where he was when her brother died. Her focus on the past highlights the struggle many of us experience when attempting to reconcile our harrowing past experiences with God’s love and grace.

For example, for some, the past is a heavy burden on their hearts, making it difficult to comprehend how a loving God could have allowed abuse, neglect, or other dark moments. Often, we can’t reconcile a loving God with what is behind us. We can’t reconcile that God would love us because of what we have done or God being loving when we consider what has occurred to us. And like invisible chains, the past keeps us bound, prompting us to say, “Where were you, God? If you are good, kind, and for me, where were you when I needed you the most?”

Do you recognize any of these questions? How can we address these experiences? By granting Jesus complete access to our hearts and memories for healing and liberation from invisible chains. This involves facing tough questions with faith and allowing Jesus to untangle our past, providing peace and freeing us from constraints holding us back.

The second thing Martha said speaks about the future. When she says, “I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day,” I believe she was trying to find strength by hoping for a better future. Martha is hopeful, she is forward-thinking. As she grieves the pain of human loss, she thinks about the future, “Everything will be fine… one day.”

At simple sight, this is commendable. This forward-thinking kind of faith leads us to live in the light of eternity, granting us the strength to endure hardships and suffering. That is what we believe and say to find encouragement, “Everything will be fine… one day.” But do we always have to wait? While this forward-thinking faith is important, it is also an incomplete understanding of the life God wants to give us right now. Think of it this way: Focusing solely on the future can detach us from the present, causing us to miss what Jesus is doing now. Living too far into the future means we might miss the blessings of today. God’s plan isn’t just for us to achieve peace, forgiveness, love, or fulfillment someday but also to change our lives in the present.

In practical terms, this means that God’s plan for us is not to have peace one day, to experience forgiveness one day, to know we are loved one day, or to find fulfillment one day. Or how about being a good parent or spouse one day, a good student or worker one day, or getting serious about our faith one day, or just a decent person one day? As much as God can untangle our past and give us hope in the future, God also wants to change things for us in our present. If we are waiting for a better future, we should question what is holding us back and whether it is us prolonging the blessing or genuinely waiting for God’s intervention. Sometimes, a “one-day” attitude is merely procrastination disguised as hope, and we must evaluate if we are dwelling on past grievances or constantly thinking “tomorrow.”

What kind of person would you say you are most of the time: One who dwells in past grievances or one who only thinks “tomorrow”?

I am not so much a person of the past myself; I am more into the future kind of stuff. I forgive and forget easily, but I am a worrier when it comes to planning the future. For example, when I think about the future, my concerns are my kids’ education and a good retirement plan, so they would not have to worry about us. But more than that, I think about health and death. I think about death quite a bit, actually. “Will I be around long enough to be there for my kids? Will I live long enough to be with Evelyn?” My fear is not dying but not being present for those I love. However, if I am not careful, I can get consumed by my futuristic thoughts and miss the life happening before me. So, I need to make a choice, the effort to focus on the present because that is what is real right now.

The same thing can be said about the past. If you are a person that tends to dwell on the past instead of being a worrier, you risk becoming bitter and resentful with many regrets for the things you did or did not do or the things that happened to you, trying to find relief by finding someone to blame. Either way, dwelling in the past or focusing solely on the future can inhibit the blessings of the present.

Whether you tend to dwell on the past or the future, Jesus offers us a better way. Consider what Jesus said to Martha, “Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?” My understanding is that he is talking about the resurrection as less about a future event and more about what happens to us right now because we believe. He is saying the resurrection is the life we receive the moment we choose him. Though we believe in the resurrection when Jesus Christ comes back, we also believe that the power of the resurrection is already available to transform our lives. The apostle Paul explained this to the Corinthians, “So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; look, new things have come into being!” (2 Corinthians 5:17)

Do you believe in Jesus? Do you believe in the resurrection? Do you believe Jesus is the medicine to heal the hurts of your past? Do you believe Jesus is the hope of your future without pain, suffering, and death? Do you believe Jesus is also your present blessing to make you whole right now so you can experience the healing of the past and the blessings of the future today?

My friends, this is a story about bringing someone back from the dead—not likely to happen to us. I know. But it is also a story that encourages us to reflect on how we approach Jesus and deal with our challenges. It is a story of the power of Jesus to set us free and give us a good life in the present. It is a story of how Jesus untangles our past and brings our future hope into our present life without delay.

Here is the good news and invitation: By believing in Jesus and following him, we can experience the same power that raised Lazarus from the dead and breaks the chains that hold us back so we can step into the fullness of an unbound life today. No need to wait; this life is available to all today. Though many blessings will happen “one day,” there are other many blessings that are also available “today.” So, don’t miss what God is doing for you and your family today.

John 11:1-44,

“Now a certain man was ill, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. Mary was the one who anointed the Lord with perfume and wiped his feet with her hair; her brother Lazarus was ill. So the sisters sent a message to Jesus, “Lord, he whom you love is ill.” But when Jesus heard it, he said, “This illness does not lead to death; rather, it is for God’s glory, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it.” Accordingly, though Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus, after having heard that Lazarus was ill, he stayed two days longer in the place where he was. Then after this he said to the disciples, “Let us go to Judea again.” The disciples said to him, “Rabbi, the Jews were just now trying to stone you, and are you going there again?” Jesus answered, “Are there not twelve hours of daylight? Those who walk during the day do not stumble because they see the light of this world. But those who walk at night stumble because the light is not in them.” After saying this, he told them, “Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I am going there to awaken him.” The disciples said to him, “Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will be all right.” Jesus, however, had been speaking about his death, but they thought that he was referring merely to sleep. Then Jesus told them plainly, “Lazarus is dead. For your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him.” Thomas, who was called the Twin, said to his fellow disciples, “Let us also go, that we may die with him.” When Jesus arrived, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb four days. Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, some two miles away, and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them about their brother. When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, while Mary stayed at home. Martha said to Jesus, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But even now I know that God will give you whatever you ask of him.” Jesus said to her, “Your brother will rise again.” Martha said to him, “I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day.” Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?” She said to him, “Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one coming into the world.” When she had said this, she went back and called her sister Mary and told her privately, “The Teacher is here and is calling for you.” And when she heard it, she got up quickly and went to him. Now Jesus had not yet come to the village but was still at the place where Martha had met him. The Jews who were with her in the house consoling her saw Mary get up quickly and go out. They followed her because they thought that she was going to the tomb to weep there. When Mary came where Jesus was and saw him, she knelt at his feet and said to him, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.” When Jesus saw her weeping and the Jews who came with her also weeping, he was greatly disturbed in spirit and deeply moved. He said, “Where have you laid him?” They said to him, “Lord, come and see.” Jesus began to weep. So the Jews said, “See how he loved him!” But some of them said, “Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?” Then Jesus, again greatly disturbed, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone was lying against it. Jesus said, “Take away the stone.” Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to him, “Lord, already there is a stench because he has been dead four days.” Jesus said to her, “Did I not tell you that if you believed you would see the glory of God?” So they took away the stone. And Jesus looked upward and said, “Father, I thank you for having heard me. I knew that you always hear me, but I have said this for the sake of the crowd standing here, so that they may believe that you sent me.” When he had said this, he cried with a loud voice, “Lazarus, come out!” The dead man came out, his hands and feet bound with strips of cloth and his face wrapped in a cloth. Jesus said to them, “Unbind him, and let him go.”