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10:30 a.m. MT Worship
Easter Sunday

Calvary Baptist Church
Denver, Colorado

How “Christ is Risen” Changes Our Algorithm

NOTE: A sermon is a spoken word event. This manuscript served as a guide but is not exact to what was preached in the moment. My manuscripts often include more material than what I preached in the worship service.

Matthew 28:1-10

New Revised Standard Version Updated Edition

The story of Easter morning is recounted in all four gospels. And every Easter, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John remind of four old friends who gather annually to reminisce about a pivotal event they shared together decades ago gone by, but nobody can *quite* agree on the details. Everyone remembers things a bit differently. Who was there and who wasn't. What happened and in what order. Who said what and who saw what. Each timeline is a bit different, the cast of characters a bit different, the way the events played out, a bit different...and a few things, *a lot* different. But at the end of the day, they agree to disagree on whose memory is better or worse, who is right and who is wrong, and just laugh and smile together because the lasting *Good News* of the Old, Old story that they love to tell, the Story that will be their theme in Glory, and our theme in Glory too, remains still yet today as crystal clear and true as it was 2,000+ years ago: the

tomb is empty, Christ is Risen, Pain and Death do not have the Last or Lasting Word. Thanks be to God!

And because neither the gospel writers nor the Bible compilers worried about reconciling the details or fact-checking their accounts against each other, I figure we shouldn't worry about it either. The Bible is not a history book and it doesn't have journalistic standards to uphold. The Bible holds spiritual truths that speak to the big questions and longings of life that humanity has been wrestling with and curious about for generations. So our curiosity today is perhaps best directed toward questions like: why does each one tell the story the way they tell it?

To use a social media metaphor, each gospel writer is trying to make the Easter story “sticky” for their listeners. Memorable. Engageable. Relatable to them.

In the Algorithms of social media, a post is "sticky" when it's content or elements grab attention, increase engagement, and keep users on a story longer. If you stay and don't swipe past it, it's sticky. It's *extra*-sticky if it gets liked or shared or re-posted. The more people engage with the post, the more people the post will reach and the more influence the post will have—not just on the user for the one time they see that post—but because social media uses Algorithms to learn our human behaviors, preferences, and patterns of engagement—if we engage with a post of a certain kind of content, our Algorithm will feed us more of the same. If we don't like what we are seeing, we can change our behavior, and change what we see, or how we interpret what we see, and when we change what we see, we change what we take in on a daily basis (literally, what we're feeding our soul) which might help us change what we believe and know to be true, and might even help us change how we respond and behave. You know how the cycle works.

Follow this metaphor with me this morning, will you? Whether you use social media or not, there is an Algorithm that

guides your life. The repeated patterns of behavior from your childhood, theologies from your youth, naggings from the little voice in your head, perspectives and life experiences that you hold that lead you to be a 'glass half full' or a 'glass half empty' type of person. Whether we like it or not, we all have certain programming as humans that we become so accustomed to in our life that we don't even know it's our underlying operating system. So assuming we all have things working within us and around us to influence how we see and interpret the world, I want to talk today about how proclaiming, believing, and engaging with *Christ is Risen* can change our Algorithm. For the better, of course.

But authentic and meaningful engagement is getting harder and harder these days. The average attention span of users on social media platforms dropped from 12.1 seconds last year to 8.25 seconds this year. You all, I know are way above average, as you listen to me preach each week. Lord have mercy, you'll know the kingdom has come on earth as it is in heaven when I preach an 8.25 second sermon. But apparently this 8.25 second attention span is shorter than the

attention span of a goldfish,¹ which is supposed to make us feel bad, but the only goldfish I ever see are in tiny little bowls in one location that never moves, often in a house where people are gone all day with not a lot to look at, so I'd like to cut us some slack on that one. We have a bit more information flying at us than goldfish do.

The news that is flying at us every day is heavy and huge with consequences that will far outlast our lifetimes. With all these headlines vying for our attention, and each news outlet telling us the story in a different way, who can blame us for not knowing where to put our focus, and how long to keep it there? Part of the strategy of oppressive systems is to keep us distracted so that we do not linger long enough on any one thing to actually do anything to change it. So instead, we look Here, There, and Everywhere, and still yet do not see what we need to see: the Truth of God's Love and how it transforms everything we think to be an ending into a beginning.

There's a reason our theme this Lenten season has been *Tell Me Something Good*. It's because

we desperately *need Good News* today. We need Easter morning to be Good News...and not just a one time, warm and fuzzy feel good story that drops in our feed today and hops out of sight like the Easter Bunny tomorrow. We need the kind of Good News that is lasting and lingering. The kind of Good News that actually interrupts our life and changes it. The kind of Good News that makes us click, like, subscribe, and share. The kind of Good News that overturns the way the world works—that turns what we thought was The Inevitable into The Incredible. We need “sticky” Good News...the forever alters our Algorithm.

Well dare I say, that Matthew gives us this kind of Good News today? Of all the Easter accounts, Matthew's is perhaps the *only* one that can hold its weight against the flashy, dramatic fast-paced news headlines of our day. Matthew's is the only one that has a chance to grab our attention and attempt to compete with all the other stuff scrolling through the Feeds of our lives.

Matthew knows how to make his Easter story “sticky,” not

¹ Robert A. Lee, “Social Media Attention Span Statistics 2026: Viral Content Data,” *SQ Magazine* (11 March

2026), accessed on <https://sqmagazine.co.uk/social-media-attention-span-statistics/> on April 5, 2026.

just for the people of his day, but for our day too. Matthew is all flash, bang, blitz and glitz—he knows what will stop our mindless scrolling and grab our attention. He knows how to work the Algorithm, which means, he knows how to ‘work’ us.

Matthew would have made it as an influencer in 2026. Surely would have gotten Brand deals and everything. Because he’s account is the only one that can compete with our culture’s obsession with the best, the biggest, the brightest, and the grandest.

Matthew’s Easter morning account is

- the only one with a “great earthquake” (how did no one else remember or fail to mention an earthquake??)...
- and the only one with an angel of the Lord descending from heaven—Captain Marvel style with an appearance like lightening (other gospels have angels or men, but they are sitting or standing calmly inside the tomb)...
- Matthew is the only one who has this angel act like Superman, pulling a CrossFit-Tire- Flipping-Style-Move and rolling away

what most scholars think was a 1.5-2 ton stone right *in front* of the women’s eyes (in the other gospels the stone is rolled away *before* anyone gets there; Matthew gives us the live stunt)

- and then, like the cherry on top of this miraculous feat, this angel hops up on the stone as if to say, “Yep, I did that. Angel of the Lord, aka; WWE Champion of the Cosmos.”

And to add even more drama to this moment, Matthew’s account is the only one that has a guard of soldiers present at the tomb when the women show up, and when all the natural disaster theatrics of the earthquake and superhero stone-rolling angel are finished, Matthew says these soldiers— these strong powerful military men who are to guard this body and tomb with their life— “*shook and became like dead men.*” They froze, paralyzed in fear. I mean, surely these men *have seen some things* in their military service days: a lot of dead bodies, a lot of crucifixions, a lot of cut off ears and scuffles—and yet the thing that knocks them to the ground, the thing that keeps them from doing their *one and only duty and mission* to guard the body of Jesus—is the

presence of a angel descending from heaven and rolling away a two ton stone? *That's* what makes them fall over? Not all the guts and gore of the previous events of the week?

Matthew's account of Easter morning, Matthew's version of "Christ is Risen" is perhaps, the only one, with enough UMPH and bells and whistles and triumph and might to cut through the cacophony of noise and narcissism and militarism and consumerism and egoism in our world to have a chance at changing our collective Algorithm.

To change—not just how long we linger at the empty tomb on Resurrection morning—but even how we begin to anticipate Resurrection in our lives every day. Algorithms respond to our behavior and our patterns. And if we want to change the Algorithm of our life—the predictable patterns and ways that we live and move in the world, the stories and experiences of pain and suffering that dominate our worries and anxieties, the normalized ways we accept injustice or become numb in overwhelm—if we want to change, even, how we are viewing and consuming the very

real hard and painful content of our own lives and maybe even see it or view it in a different light, or through a different perspective, then we have to change our engagement with Easter morning. This One and Done thing Once a Year isn't working. We only change our Algorithm, with Christ is Risen (He is Risen indeed) Christ is Risen (He is Risen indeed) Christ is Risen (He is Risen indeed) – again and again and again. No other proclamation has the power or truth or love to overcome the suffering, pain, grief, and difficulty of our lives.

No shade to the other gospel writers. I love the mystery and unresolved tension of Mark's account, the therapeutic, spiritual-director approach of the men in the tomb in Luke's account, and the clear Act I and Act II of John's account, but let's be real...were Easter morning to have happened today and be shared on Social Media, we might very well have scrolled right past Mark's account (if it popped into our feed at all). It is about as short, mundane, and non-descript as you can get: women walking and talking on their way to a tomb, then more talking to some men inside the tomb, then women walking away mute, not

saying anything because of their fear.

Luke's account has a bit of theatrics, but it's 3-4 verses in—too late for the average scroller—we would have seen the first few seconds of the women walking with their spices, and probably thought it was just an ad for the latest greatest burial preparation product on the market, and scrolled on by before the good stuff started happening.

John's post would have had a lot of racing around at the beginning, Mary, Peter, and John running to and from the tomb, so we may have stayed a bit longer on his post to see who 'won the race' but when it gets to Mary crying outside near some gardener who's just watering the flowers, we would keep scrolling, especially if we didn't have our 'sound on' to hear the gardener say Mary's name. (Which is too bad, because we would have missed the fact that Mary becomes the first preacher post-Resurrection with her one sentence sermon: *"I have seen the Lord!"*)

I mean, I'm not normally one who loves flashy, but—if I had to pick one gospel account for our world right now in this

moment, April 5, 2026 it would be Matthew. 1,000%. It's the Imax, Laser Show version of the Resurrection that has just enough flair for people to actually stop and linger long enough on this story to see what it is all about. And—it meets the conspiracy of the moment with undeniable, unquestionable Proclamation and Truth.

You heard me right, the *conspiracy* of the moment. The Bible never fails to be relevant.

You see, one reason Matthew had to be so dramatic with his resurrection story is because the drama behind closed doors in Jerusalem was something akin to Washington D.C. today. Matthew's gospel is the only one that tells us about this whole conspiracy and cover up plot that's going on that first Easter morning. Right before today's text, the night before Easter morning, the *chief priests and Pharisees (the religious leaders in power) go to Pilate and say, "Sir, we remember what that imposter said while he was alive."* (those are the actual words, no exaggeration). The imposter said, *"After three days I will rise again."* So they plead with Pilate to make the tomb secure because they are worried about the disciples stealing

Jesus' body so that they could go around telling people Jesus had been raised from the dead, while he's still dead. Pilate simply says, "*You have a whole guard of soldiers; go with them and make the tomb as secure as you can.*" In other words, here take all the military resources that you want to ensure this tomb is secure. This administration is behind you 100%...take whatever you need of our men...seal up that tomb. And keep it on the DL.

Then after today's text, while the women are running off to Galilee after they have seen the Risen Christ, the guards who had been "*shook as if they were dead*" get un-shook and wake up and go and tell the chief priests what happened, and the chief priests assemble with the elders and behind closed doors these religious leaders come up with a cover-up, a conspiracy, a plan to cover up the Truth that's too big and scary for them to face.

They give a ton of money to the soldiers—essentially bribing them to cover up the Resurrection. They say to the guards tell people that the disciples of Jesus came in the night and stole the body of Jesus, while the guard were

sleeping. They ask the soldiers to take the blame and shame of falling asleep on the job because they are so scared by the truth of the Resurrection and what it means...that they put the blame on the soldiers and on the disciples so that no one knows that God actually raised Jesus from the grave. They even go so far as to say, if word gets back to the Governor about this, don't worry, we'll cover for you. My, my.

We know all about conspiracies and corruption. Pay offs and bribes. Fake News and fear-filled leaders. We know how Truth—Truth as powerful and illogical and uncontrollable as Love that Rises up and Walks around Out in the Open with its wounds and vulnerability on display—scares those who hold Power—turning their Power into Cowardice, their Leading into Scrambling, their Hearts into Hubris.

And it seems to me that in this kind of environment where Conspiracies and Lies are confused for Truth, the only way that the Good News can truly turn over the world order, is for it to come in with a huge unmistakable display of a complete world-order reversal, complete with the guards (the

ones who “think” they control life) becoming like dead men at the sight of it all. No mystery here. Obvious Truth. The Power and Love of God on full, flashy display.

Nothing about the Resurrection in Matthew’s gospel is subtle because nothing about the brokenness of Matthew’s world or our world is subtle.

Sometimes, we need a big announcement, a breaking news report, a wake-up call to snap us out of our sleep-walking and stop our mind-less scrolling.

Sometimes we need some really incomprehensible, head-scratching, curiosity-inducing news to get us to stop, engage, linger, read again, watch again, and share again with others—the Good News that Life defeats Death, that Grace rolls over Sin, and that Love shakes

Oppression to the ground.

Sometimes we need to be reminded that the Resurrection is Revolutionary, not Evolutionary, as my pastor and mentor George Mason says.

“Christ is Risen” is the ultimate Algorithm buster. Think about it: The Resurrection does not follow a predictable pattern of human behavior. Dead bodies do not rise from the grave. That is not the way things work. The

Resurrection of Christ, then, declares a new creation. A new realm. A new world. The Resurrection is not just an encouraging sign of hope that moves us one step closer to a healed and peaceful world. The Resurrection IS the embodiment of a healed and peaceful world walking around in the flesh on the roads of our everyday lives.

The Resurrection is not, even, just one more “win” in a line of social justice protests or civil rights actions that help the arc of the universe bend a little more toward justice. The Resurrection is THE Justice that the arc is bending toward. Empire loses. Love wins.

Many of our efforts to march, protest, community organize, vote, and effect change in policy (which are all critical and important) create change in a more evolutionary way Gradual. Bit by bit, little by little, one step forward, two steps back, change is made (and unmade). But the Resurrection is not an Evolutionary iteration of human behavior encouraged by God’s leading. The Resurrection is a Revolutionary declaration of a new world order.

As Dr. George Mason wrote in an Easter article this year, “The

new creation of God's kin-dom does not grow out of the old in an evolutionary way; it breaks into the old in a revolutionary way. The Resurrection was earth shattering. The stone was rolled away. Old certainties (like death) gave way to new possibilities (like life). If the grave cannot be trusted to hold the dead, what else might be in danger of being changed or overturned?"² This is what the People in Power were so afraid of. If this is true, what else is true? If this crucified and marginalized man can rise to life again, what other crucified and marginalized people are rising even now? You see, "The Resurrection is a destabilizing event that changes the world, and therefore has the possibility to change *us*."³

If we let it. Will we let "Christ is Risen" change our Algorithm?

The choice is ours. Will we scroll past the Resurrection story, dismissing it out of our feed by tomorrow morning, or will we hover on it, linger in it, like it, share it, subscribe to it, re-post it? Even ask questions of it and comment on it, dialogue with others about it? All of that

counts. Any way we engage the Resurrection means we are letting the Resurrection engage with us, it changes our behavior and even our belief, to practice believing that Hope is real that Life does have the last and Lasting Word that Love conquers all. Will we engage with the Resurrection in such a way that we not only experience it's Truth today, but so that it changes the experiences of our tomorrows?

Because, the *really* good news, in the midst of this showy loud display, is that there is a quiet, yet powerful detail, tucked into Matthew's Easter story. The women who walk to the tomb on Easter morning are empty-handed. Did you notice that?

They do not carry spices to anoint Jesus' dead body like the women in the other accounts do. They come empty-handed. Could it be that Mary Magdalene and the other Mary walked toward that tomb on Easter morning *anticipating* Resurrection? *Expecting* resurrection? Could it be that they had lingered long enough with Jesus while he was alive, and truly heard and engaged

² Dr. George Mason, "Look! A New Creation: Easter Preaching as Glimpses of the World Set Right," ed.

Mark Ramsey, *Journal for Preachers Volume XLIX Number 3: Easter 2026*, pg 21.

³ Mason, *ibid*.

with his words when he told them he would be crucified and rise on the third day that they knew that they need not fear death? That they need not be stuck in grief? Could it be that while all the other disciples doubted and dismissed, or misunderstood and mistook Jesus...that these two women actually heard and understood?

And because they had lingered long enough on Jesus' words and engaged with him in a personal way, the algorithm of their lives was already changed...so much so that they could walk to that tomb on Easter morning, not expecting to anoint a dead body, but expecting to find a Risen Savior, an empty tomb?

And could it be that because they came to tomb anticipating and expecting resurrection, that *that* is why they actually got to see, in person, in such a dramatic fashion, the stone being rolled away and the angel of the Lord coming down? In the other stories, the women come to the tomb expecting death, and find an open, empty tomb already announcing Resurrection. Could it be that when we anticipate resurrection, we are able to move through our grief a bit differently, or walk to

the tomb a bit earlier so that we see something that other people miss? Not because it didn't happen or wasn't meant for them, but because when the feed of your life is only showing you death, what would you ever expect to find in a tomb but a dead body? And why would you rise even earlier only to go see death and be let down and disappointed yet again?

In Matthew's Easter story the women come to the tomb *expecting* Resurrection and get to see the reality of it right before their eyes. And what happens next? The angel tells them to go to Galilee...Galilee, the place where their home and homies are...the place where all of Jesus' every day ministry happened...the place where they lived life with him...the angel says, "*Go to Galilee where you live your regular life and there, there, in the midst of your regular life, you will see Jesus. You'll see the Risen Christ where you live the moments and hours of your days.*" There, in the midst of your scrolling through the everyday scenes of your life, shared meals around tables and teachings in the Temple, walking to get water and tending to your home, there, there in Galilee, that is where you will see the actual Risen

Christ, not just the show. In your everyday life, in your hometown. You came here expecting Resurrection, and you saw it. You saw the opening of the empty tomb. But that is just the beginning. **Now your eyes are trained to see...now you have new vision...you are ready to begin seeing Resurrection where it really matters – in the hours and places where you live your days.** This is not just a one time ticketed event, this is an all the time reality. Use your new vision, and see the posts on your feed anew. More and more, see and choose and engage with the scenes and stories of your life in a new way. Hope, not despair. Love, not hate.

So the women go—with fear and joy—(note that both fear and joy are present, normalizing all the feelings that something as life-shattering as the Resurrection invokes)—they go and lo and behold they SEE Jesus. In this kind of seeing in the Greek, the word means “*beholding, allowing oneself to be seen.*” It’s a deeper kind of vision. Not a surface level scrolling vision, but the kind of seeing that we all crave and long for...seeing the beauty of life and others in its fullness and allowing oneself to be seen in

that authentic fullness too. A kind of seeing that does not hold fear about what is not *yet* seen, or *cannot yet* be seen on this side of life, but a kind of seeing that trusts that there is SO much more than we can see or know or understand, but that if God can raise Jesus from death, then God can raise us from death too. Not in this life, as a kind of magic trick, but in the eternal mystery of All that is Life. All that is Cosmos and Everlasting and Eternal Love. Knowing that this life we are living today is just one kind of seeing and knowing. And that there is so much more to come.

I love how when the women see Jesus he says, “Greetings,” (*chairo* in the Greek which means cheer-filled, grace-filled, full of wellness, calm). This kind of greeting holds two meanings at one and the same time. It’s a greeting as familiar and personal as one would expect when seeing an old friend, while at the same time it’s a greeting that one says as if they are meeting for the first time.

When we let *Christ is Risen!* change our Algorithm, we not only see new things come across the “Feed that is our Life” we also start to see the same things

that we were already seeing, differently. Because we engage with them differently.

When we sit with the mystery and gift of the Resurrection, we begin speaking and seeing truths we maybe never even knew were within us. I've experienced this in my own life this week. All week I sat with the reality of this text and sermon on my mind, while I sat with two beloved members of our church who were dying. And every time I sit in front of death, holding the Truth and Hope of Resurrection before me at the same time, the more I release and relax into the Truth and Hope and Love of a God who does not let Death be the end of the story. Resurrection does not happen apart from death. Resurrection only happens through the reality of death first, literal or metaphorical. Death and Resurrection are inseparable.

Resurrection will change the Algorithm of your life, if you let it. Just as an algorithm doesn't eliminate bad news – it's still in other people's feeds, it's still 'real' in the world. And Resurrection will not stop bad things from happening. But it will contextualize them in a grander narrative, a greater

story, a repetitive refrain that will find ways to rise up from the crevices of your pain and brokenness to say, "*Christ is Risen.*" Love wins. Hope prevails. God holds us all. God is with us. Do not be afraid. There is something Beyond THIS that is the Original Algorithm of the World...Love, Peace, Wholeness, Justice, Oneness, Belonging, Being, and God.

And here's the best news of all: Easter does not ask us to "do" anything to change the reality of the world. Easter asks us to stop and like and subscribe to the Truth that Easter has already changed the world, and if it's changed the world, it still can yet change us.

Will *Christ is Risen* change our Algorithm?

Will we anticipate and expect resurrection and not walk to the tombs of our life with spices in our hands expecting to see death, but walk to the tombs in our life empty-handed with an illogical courage that says, I know this is not death forever. I know this is not injustice forever. I know this is not pain or suffering forever. And because I know that...I can

stand here as long as I need to and bear witness to what is before me. I can see Resurrection even in death. I can proclaim Resurrection even in doubt. I can click, like, subscribe, share, and re-post Resurrection as if my life, and our world, depends on it. Because it does. This is not a sugar-coating, or rose-colored glasses version of living. **This is the most authentic and vulnerable version of living there is. Walking to the tomb empty-handed. Choosing to believe that we will not see death in the places where we have been trained to see it.**

The Truth is – *Christ is Risen* has already proclaimed the New Creation. It's our behavior that hasn't changed. We are the ones who have not yet let *Christ is Risen* change our Algorithm. We are the ones who hover too long on the stories of power and pain, corruption and loss and let those infiltrate and fill up the feed of our souls, our lives. We are the ones, who can break the pattern, disrupt the expected, change the stories in our feed and maybe even the stories themselves.

For every time we proclaim *Christ is Risen*, we make way for our vision to change to see

one more way that *Christ is Risen* yet again. And when we let ourselves really begin to see and believe that THIS is not all there is, that there is a world beyond our wildest imaginations where peace and justice and love and grace reign...then we will begin to see, and create, that world ourselves.

This Easter, interrupt your Algorithm with Resurrection. Interrupt death by hovering over and engaging with Mystery. Interrupt suffering by sharing salvation. Interrupt grief by engaging with gratitude. Disrupt oppression by commenting on injustice. Post and re-post *Christ is Risen!* until you start to see your Algorithm changing.

Because when *Christ is Risen* changes *your* Algorithm, it also changes what the world around you sees too.

Amen.