



**FROM: THE DESK OF PASTOR CARUANA**  
**TO: The People of Zion Lutheran Church**  
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### **WHAT DID THE DISCIPLES DO AFTER EASTER**

Hello to all of you. I pray you are all doing well during this life-changing time of stay-at-home isolation; food stores with so many empty shelves; and the inability to jump in the car and visit friends, go to Park City and do some shopping, go to a movie, or go get a haircut. And how about all these doctor appointments being done via video or phone calls? Some call it “the new normal.” I prefer calling in craziness fraught with frustration and, I must admit, I don’t enjoy it at all. But the good news is that in time this will be in our past and maybe we all will have learned something new about ourselves and our world, about cooperation, and the value of a life dedicated to Christ.

All this makes me think about Christ’s disciples and what they did after Easter. They were also functioning in a life-changing time. I know we’ve all heard the Easter story so many times we think we know everything about it. But there are some aspects of life after that first Easter that are not as well known, particularly the actions that the followers of Jesus took in the days and weeks after the resurrection.

**Let’s take a look at five specific things the disciples did after Easter that may surprise you.**

**#1. The disciples were skeptical.** The Gospel records are clear: Many of Jesus’ closest followers were openly skeptical of the early reports of the resurrection. When the women who first saw Jesus alive reported what they had seen, the other followers dismissed it as “an idle tale” and “did not believe them”. Thomas, one of Jesus’ closest followers refused to believe that God had raised Jesus to life. He insisted that he would have to put his finger in the nail holes in Jesus’ hands before he would believe such a thing. Some of the disciples had **doubts** even *when they saw Jesus with their own eyes*.

So what does that mean for us today? It means that we should acknowledge the skepticism they encountered. We’re told in 1 Peter 3:15: “Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have.” “But, remember to do this with gentleness and respect.”

**#2. They broke bread in Jesus’ memory.** It appears that the Last Supper rite that Jesus bequeathed to his followers was put into practice very early, perhaps within *days* of the Crucifixion.

A story in Mark and Luke concerns two followers who had an encounter with the risen Jesus near the village of Emmaus. The disciples didn’t recognize the risen Jesus but invited him to eat with them. At the table, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and, Luke says, the disciples’ eyes were opened.

Christian denominations differ on how they interpret what the Last Supper means, but it’s clear from the New Testament that Jesus’ earliest followers followed Jesus’ command to “do this in memory of me.” In fact, according to Acts, after Easter the disciples in Jerusalem “broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts”.

**#3. They searched the Scriptures.** With a few exceptions, the earliest followers of Jesus were devout Jews, steeped in the traditions and laws of their ancestors. It was natural for them to search their ancient holy books (or holy scrolls) to find explanations for the extraordinary events that had happened in their midst.

It's clear from the New Testament that Jesus' followers did search the Jewish scriptures, often using the Greek translation known as the Septuagint.

The meaning for Christians today is that we should not only receive the Gospel message with great eagerness but search the scriptures every day seeing truth and hope.

**#4. They took care of the sick.** A major component of Jesus' mission on earth appears to have been free healing. Twenty-five of the thirty-seven miracles attributed to Jesus in the New Testament are miracles of healing.

One of the first things the gospel of Mark says about Jesus is that he was a healer: *[Jesus] healed many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons.* What is less well known is that Jesus commanded his followers to do the same.

According to Matthew, Jesus called his twelve apostles and instructed them to heal "every disease and every affliction". And in Luke, Jesus sends out seventy-two of his disciples as emissaries of the kingdom, instructing them specifically to *heal the sick who are there and tell them, "The kingdom of God has come near to you"*.

The very first miracle recorded in the Acts of the Apostles after Easter is the healing of a lame beggar by Peter who was seated on the steps leading up to the Beautiful Gate, probably the spectacular bronze doors donated to the Temple a few years earlier.

Ever since, Christians have been involved in medical mission work – building hospitals, establishing medical organizations such as the Red Cross. In a time like we're living in today, we must remember that medical missions have been an essential part of the Christian witness from the very beginning.

**#5. They invited others into their fellowship.** In the 20th century, some New Testament scholars claimed that Jesus never intended to launch a movement or form a fellowship. But that's precisely what the earliest Christian records say. The Gospels and the rest of the New Testament are emphatic that Jesus instructed his followers to "make disciples of all nations".

From the very beginning, it appears, this was Jesus' intention for his followers. Within weeks of Easter, Jesus' followers were inviting everyone who would listen into their fellowship. This is surprising because in the ancient world religious groups were often exclusive.

Not surprisingly, the rapid growth of the Jesus movement was also due in large part to the other steps the disciples of Jesus took after Easter – their willingness to patiently answer the skepticism of their critics, break bread with strangers, search the scriptures and take care of the sick.

These things done by the disciples after that first Easter proclaimed to the world what Jesus and his followers were all about. It's something worth pondering in today's world. What do you think? Does any of this resonate with you today? Are we being disciples as Jesus intended?

*Peace be with you, my friends!*