

**“Easter Remnants”**  
**Acts 2:42-47**

The last of Easter sat in a Tupperware™ container with a green lid on our kitchen counter. I asked Allyson, “What are you doing with that?” “I’m throwing the turkey in the composter,” she replied. “Seriously?” “It’s five days old,” she said, “and there is really only a little left.” Now understand I grew up in a house where expiration dates were simply “suggestions” plus with 4 growing boys under one roof, I never knew what a leftover was, until I got married. So sure enough the last few fatty pieces of turkey were discarded, the last reminders, as it were, that Easter had really happened at all. I imagine the same is true for you. Maybe you had weekend company leave on Monday or maybe you returned home from being away. Maybe you only just put away the good china and your grandmother’s silverware that gets pulled out on such special occasions. Certainly your leftovers are all but gone, lest the turnkey broth that now lives deep within your freezer. But otherwise, all Easter remnants are no more and again you wonder if Easter really happened. Do you remember the video I showed prior to worship, the first Sunday after Christmas? It may have been the second year in a row that I played it. It was a video of a guy putting a Christmas tree into the back of his truck and driving to the local dump to discard of it. It’s there at the dump that he takes the tree from the truck and throws it into a green bin. But as he puts it over the side he notices a single Christmas ornament - that we can only assume in the family’s rush to take down Christmas - was overlooked. So he reaches in and pulls the nativity ornament off the branch and hangs it on his rearview mirror. “Yes,” the narrator says, “Christmas really did happen.” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nDfiNOPHEhY> As I came back into the office on Tuesday morning following Easter I did what I often do - straighten up a little around the church – clean the front table and put away used bulletins and then I noticed again the beautiful sunrise in the window and then the hope banner and the cross full of butterflies and I wanted to say, in my best narrator voice, “Yes, Easter really did happen.” For you see, like Christmas or Pentecost or any other significant seasons in the life of the church things return to normal “lows” after joy-filled “highs”. And Easter is no exception. It was not hard to get your heart pumping with so many great Easter hymns last Sunday or be hopeful for the future of our church with 27 kids gathered at the front for our children’ story. And I haven’t even mentioned the Easter story that seems brand new every time I hear it. But Easter was last Sunday, we whisper under our breath. And even though our Easter displays will soon come down soon and many will see the last reminders of Easter going, did you know there is still be an Easter remnant, even here? If you don’t believe me just ask the early church.

Acts 2 is the story of the Easter remnant – but not just the short passage I read to you but the entire chapter beginning with the disciples being together just after the crucifixion of Jesus. The Book

of Acts (that we have been looking at for a number of weeks now) is the post-Easter narrative. Acts is the story of what follows Easter for the early church but even more for us as well. In other words, the stories and lesson of Acts is the result of the six simple words we learned last Sunday: “Jesus is risen from the dead.” So here we are, just like the handful of people in Acts 2 (because remember we are early in the Book of Acts and early in the life of the church) figuring out together what it meant that Jesus had actually risen from the dead. The reality of Jesus’ rising is something we often either take for granted (simply believe because that’s what we have been taught to believe) or fail to understand the full ramifications of how our lives are now different, post-resurrection? Here were the remnants of the “Jesus movement” hiding in the same room where Jesus was celebrating what we now call the “Last Supper” but this time Jesus was nowhere to be seen but Who did show up was the One promised by Jesus – The Holy Spirit – who came upon the disciple and forever altered them – changed them so much that not just their Sunday routine but their daily lives were transformed, their life together was made new. That’s the story that happens just before the passage I read to you. Now we see what follows – the post-Pentecost, the post-Easter narrative for the disciples. One blogger writes that it’s important to note what follows, in our lesson this morning, is the “first descriptor of this fledgling church. “They are the first words ever written about the church and a springboard for the (followers of Christ) to launch into a new direction, to take a huge step forward and radically change the way people serve and worship God” (Source: Matthew McDonald) and also continue the Easter experience long after the grave cloths were folded up, the Easter lilies had wilted, and the empty tomb resold to someone else who could really use it. The Easter remnant continued when Luke says it this way - of the early disciples: “They were devoted.” (2:42)

Now that’s not to say the disciples were not devoted before. I’m sure some were “devoted” to their job while others were “devoted” to their spouses. Others were “devoted” to their kids and still others “devoted” to their favourite sports team – much like many are today. And no one would dare say the disciples were not devoted to Jesus when the gospel writers remind us that the “disciples left everything to follow Jesus.” So defining “devoted” is probably not necessary because we are all “devoted” to something whether we believe we are, or not. But our question then becomes what were the disciples “devoted” to or Who were the disciples “devoted”? As I have mentioned before, Jesus had quite a life-changing effect on the disciples and no incident had more of an effect, than the resurrection. And I believe, it was that event, that Easter experience that remained with the disciples for the rest of their lives – through the good and bad, even to their own persecution and death. It was a “new” devotion that forever changed the disciple’s lives and something we should strive to emulate in our own lives. So what changed in the disciple’s lives, even after Jesus was no longer “physically”

present to inspire the disciples and later the early church to remain faithful and change their world and ours?

Well Acts 2 tells us, when Luke says they were first devoted to the “apostle’s teaching.” (2:42) But what did they teach? The apostle’s taught about the meaning of Jesus’ death and resurrection beginning with the Old to the time of Jesus. At least that’s the Bible study that happened with two men and Jesus (but they did not recognize him) on the road to Emmaus (another post-Easter story). (Luke 24) The early church looked for a narrative that would not just shape but guide their lives. And the apostle’s teaching (which became our Bible) did just that. But the disciples also “devoted” themselves to “fellowship”. (2:42) The Greek word Luke uses here is “koinonia” which means “fellowship.” But understand this fellowship was more than just time together or a social time of hanging out but joint participation in something much grander. To quote the modern day prophet, Robert Munch, they “shared everything.” They shared their lives together; they shared their joys and challenges of following after Jesus Christ within a world that had no such understanding. They encouraged each other in the way of Jesus Christ despite all its challenges. They devoted themselves to the “community of God.” Thirdly, they devoted themselves to the “breaking of bread”. (2:42) Some say this meant, they “ate together” which I am sure they did – apparently living together daily. And there is nothing wrong with eating together. A special bond is made with those who share a common table. But in the first century and especially in the early church “eating together” took on a different meaning, especially after Jesus broke bread with the disciples to tell them about his body that would be broken for them and drank, telling the disciples that his blood would soon be poured out for them. The early church therefore, was devoted to this act of remembrance and celebration. And finally they devoted themselves to “prayer”. (2:42) Literally, it should be translated, “the prayers.” This tells me the early church prayed together “common prayers” like when we pray “the Lord’s prayer” together every Sunday morning. Their prayers were probably based on their Jewish faith of course (from many of the Psalms) but they may have been changed to reflect their new faith in Jesus Christ. But whether these were “formal” prayers or “extemporaneous” prayers, the lesson is that the early church spent time together with God in prayer. But if you read on you will see these were not just “acts” done out of duty but out of love. There is a person Allyson and I see walking in our neighbourhood often, as Allyson and I try to walk with Toffee at least once a day. I like to walk. I hate to run – unless someone is chasing after me. But I like to walk and to be honest its now one of the favourite parts of my day. One of our neighbours (and her husband separately) also walks daily and we usually see them but you can tell by her expression that she really doesn’t enjoy it. Her face tells us she really doesn’t like to walk yet she seems “devoted” to it. The disciples were devoted – devoted

to the apostle's teaching, devoted to fellowship, devoted to the breaking of bread and devoted to prayer but unlike my neighbour Luke tells us they did so with "glad and sincere hearts," "praising" and "enjoying." (2:47) Does this not sound like a movement worth following? Is this not something you would want to be a part? Well apparently it was enticing to others (many others) in the first century because this small remnant group of resurrection followers "enjoyed the favor" of "all" (did you see that) "all the people" and God "added to their number daily (did you hear that) "God added to their number daily those who were being saved". Onlookers were in "awe" (2:43) of this small remnant but even more because the Easter remnant cared not just for their own needs, or even just those within the church but "all" those who "were in need." I suppose you could say just as Christ sacrifice "cost" him everything the disciple's devotion cost them much too. Selling off their property and giving the proceeds away is a tremendous cost, if you think about it. It's the giving up of your present situation as well as your future insurance. But then again the early church was "devoted".

Easter has past. For many it wrapped up last Sunday. It 'seems' over with only a very few reminders here at KesPres that Easter happened at all. But you now know I am not simply talking about the few remaining decorations on our walls and window but us, the small group of imperfect people who have gathered here this morning and others at other places of worship in Keswick or around the world. We are part the Easter remnant! We are the reminders to one another and the rest of the world that yes, Jesus really is alive It might just be the only remnant people here in Keswick (or from whatever community you have traveled from this morning) see. So let us be devoted to Christ and one another. Devoted to the apostle's teaching, devoted to fellowship, devoted to the breaking of bread and devoted to pray together, so others may see that Easter is not just a day but everyday for we are an Easter remnant! Thanks be to God,