

We've been studying holiness, what it means for us and what it means to God. It is a setting apart from the world and a setting apart for God.

We saw how important it is to make good choices to be set apart for God and we also saw how God, in grace, sets us apart for Himself.

But what about those who are not there yet? Those people are important to God too.

If this is you, I want you to know, "It's Not Too Late." We are going to see a man today, who by sight, it looked like there was no hope for his soul, but he discovered something. And that was "It's not too late."

Let's go back to ancient Rome where they arrested and crucified the One they called Jesus of Nazareth.

The Apostle Peter walked with Jesus and later on preached about Him. Acts 10:38 He said; *You know of Jesus of Nazareth, how God anointed Him with the Holy Spirit and with power, and how He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him.*

He spoke of God's Kingdom.

He healed diseases.

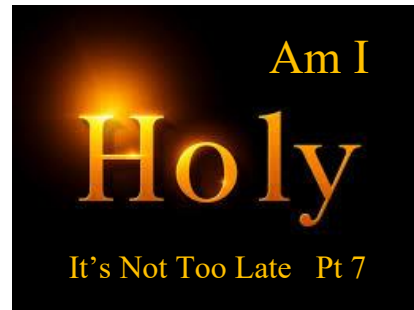
He released people from demonic oppression.

And they killed Him!

So Jesus was:

- Arrested
- Beaten
- Whipped
- Crown of thorns
- Carried a heavy cross up a hill
- Nailed His hands and feet to that cross

Lu 23 but He was not there alone



Something about this day was prophesied.
It was Isaiah, about 700 years before this day.
He said that Jesus would,
poured out Himself to death, And was numbered with the transgressors; Yet He Himself bore the sin of many, And interceded for the transgressors. Is 53:12

And that is exactly what happened.

v.32 *Two others also, who were criminals, were being led away to be put to death with Him.*

"criminals" perhaps zealots,
Jewish freedom fighters

Rome was going to kill all three. When one gets to this place, it is usually a hopeless situation.
Perhaps there was a time, you felt like you were in a place like this.
But it doesn't have to be hopeless, as you will see.
And that is because "It's not too late."

v.33 *When they came to the place called The Skull, there they crucified Him and the criminals, one on the right and the other on the left.*

v.34 *But Jesus was saying, "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing." And they cast lots, dividing up His garments among themselves.*

Ha!

In the face of death, Jesus prays; He talks to God.
Good lesson, wouldn't you say?

v.35 Now look at the opportunity these people had to reconsider who Jesus was.

And the people stood by, looking on. And even the rulers were sneering at Him, saying, "He saved others; let Him save Himself if this is the Christ of God, His Chosen One."

v.36 *The soldiers also mocked Him, coming up to Him, offering Him sour wine,*

v.37 *and saying, "If You are the King of the Jews, save Yourself!"*

They couldn't understand why someone, anyone, would willingly remain on a Roman cross of crucifixion, especially since they are the ones who inflicted the pain.

Paul was right when he said;

*For indeed Jews ask for signs and Greeks search for wisdom;
but we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block and to
Gentiles foolishness,*

I Cor 1:22-23

So for this group it's still, "Not too late."

The difference between two men:

v.39 *One of the criminals who were hanged there was hurling abuse at Him, saying, "Are You not the Christ? Save Yourself and us!"*

"hurling abuse" same word *blasphemeo* –

To speak impiously, defame, revile,
speak evil

Imperfect tense – he kept on doing it

Perfect means complete – his was incomplete

One writer said, "He was trying to get on the good side of the others.(Jews and Romans"

In hopes of getting some mercy.

v.40 *But the other answered, and rebuking him said, "Do you not even fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation?"*

This is why I believe these men were not robbers but zealots. This man had a fear of God. The Jewish zealots were patriots of Israel.

He is saying;

There you are, mocking a man on a Roman Cross when you are on the same cross!

Take the log out of your own eye before you take the speck out of your brother's eye.

Something is taking place in this man's heart – sanctification. He acknowledges that he is a sinner and also that Christ is the Savior.

v.41 *"And we indeed are suffering justly, for we are receiving what we deserve for our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong."*

v.42 *And he was saying, "Jesus, remember me when You come in Your kingdom!"*

How many times was this man present when Jesus spoke about the Kingdom of Heaven?

It is like:

- A mustard seed

- A nobleman throwing a dinner party
- A treasure hid in a field
- A pearl of great price
- A wedding

Something stirred in his heart, just it did in your heart when you heard.

Though the seeds of the kingdom were planted, they hadn't yet taken root.

He continued to live his life the way he thought and his mistakes were many.

But this scene teaches us one thing: "It's not too late."

Sometimes it takes a while for the seed of God's Word to bear fruit.

Don't give up. If it's planted, it will grow.

For someone today, the seed is being sown in your heart right now.

And as it was true for that man, so it is for you, "It's not too late."

v.43 Jesus said to him; *"Truly I say to you, today you shall be with Me in Paradise."*

"Paradise" a Persian word which means a walled garden.

When a Persian king wanted to honor a special subject, he would make him a companion of the garden;

Meaning he was chosen to walk in the garden with the king.

Jesus promised this penitent man more than eternal life but he promised him the honored place of a "companion of the garden" in the courts of Heaven.

Many opportunities have come and gone in your life, but the greatest still remains.

It's not too late to be a companion of Jesus now and forever. Amen!