

It's Not Too Late, Part 2

Scripture: John 21:1-14 –

Introduction: Last week, Easter Sunday, we considered the thought, “It’s Not Too Late,” in regard to Jesus rising from the dead. Today, we want to continue that theme as we look at another resurrection appearance. The good news – the best news – of the Resurrection is that God is a God of second chances. It’s not too late to begin again.

Many years ago, a very dear lady by the name of Mary Anderson, whom I affectionately called “my adopted grandmother,” shared with our family that she had prayed for many years – I am thinking 35+ years – for her brother’s salvation. She prayed, and she prayed, and she prayed some more. It appeared that he was going to die and go off into eternity without putting his trust in Jesus. One day, however, she received the wonderful news that at 85 years old, he had finally and joyously received Jesus as his Savior and Lord.

Another intriguing story is the thief on the cross who was being put to death because of his crimes. He knew that Jesus was innocent while he himself was definitely guilty and deserved punishment. He asked Jesus to remember him when he came into his kingdom. Jesus saw the man’s faith and replied, “I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise.” (Luke 23:43) That thief received mercy and grace even while hanging on a cross, dying for punishment for his wrongdoings.

Today, we want to consider the stories of two men – two of Jesus’ disciples – two who had sinned grievously against the Lord. One gave up in hopeless despair. One found healing and restoration. One is remembered only as a thief and a traitor. One became a great leader in the early church.

1. It is Too Late When We Turn Our Back on Jesus and Reject Him and His Love and Forgiveness -- Judas

Matthew 27:1-5 -- Early in the morning, all the chief priests and the elders of the people came to the decision to put Jesus to death. They bound him, led him away and handed him over to Pilate, the governor.

When Judas, who had betrayed him, saw that Jesus was condemned, he was seized with remorse and returned the thirty silver coins to the chief priests and the elders. “I have sinned,” he said, “for I have betrayed innocent blood.”

“What is that to us?” they replied. “That’s your responsibility.”

So Judas threw the money into the temple and left. Then he went away and hanged himself.”

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Matthew records for us the gut-wrenching, heart-stopping, story of Judas Iscariot. After he had betrayed Jesus for 30 measly pieces of silver, he was overwhelmed with remorse and regret. He brought the 30 pieces of silver back to the chief priests and elders with the acknowledgement, “I have sinned by betraying innocent blood.” Judas knew exactly what he had done. He knew he had sinned. He knew he had done wrong. He knew that Jesus was indeed completely innocent, and that he, Judas, had betrayed innocent blood. David Guzik wrote, “By throwing the money into the temple (the “*naos*, properly the inner sanctuary, where only the

priests were allowed to go” according to France), Judas wanted to implicate the priests in his crimes. It was his way of saying, ‘*You* are guilty of this.’” And they were, but that did not negate Judas’ part in the awful scheme to betray Jesus.

Let me make note here that Judas’ remorse did not lead to confession of his wrong-doing or even to repentance. In his anguish and in utter despair, he went out and hanged himself.

As I was preparing for this sermon, I realized that Judas hung himself without knowing the rest of the story. Judas hung himself not knowing that Jesus was actually dying on the cross for his sins. Judas hung himself not understanding that Jesus would be raised to life to give life to all who believed in Him. Judas missed out on the greatest news of all time when he threw his life away.

Let me remind you that just as the Bible had foretold Judas’ condemnation, it also foretells ours. Without Christ, we all stand condemned – hopeless – helpless – unable to save or rescue ourselves. We have all sinned and fallen short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23). “The wages of sin is death, *but* the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Romans 6:23)

Let me also remind you that it’s not too late for YOU. Today, as you hear this message, the God of all grace and mercy is giving YOU another chance – another opportunity to hear and respond to His message.

2. When All Seems Lost and Hopeless, It’s Not Too Late

John 21:1-14 -- Jesus and the Miraculous Catch of Fish

Afterward Jesus appeared again to his disciples, by the Sea of Tiberias. It happened this way: Simon Peter, Thomas (called Didymus), Nathanael from Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two other disciples were together. “I’m going out to fish,” Simon Peter told them, and they said, “We’ll go with you.” So they went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing.

Early in the morning, Jesus stood on the shore, but the disciples did not realize that it was Jesus.

He called out to them, “Friends, haven’t you any fish?” “No,” they answered.

He said, “Throw your net on the right side of the boat and you will find some.” When they did, they were unable to haul the net in because of the large number of fish.

Then the disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, “It is the Lord!” As soon as Simon Peter heard him say, “It is the Lord,” he wrapped his outer garment around him (for he had taken it off) and jumped into the water. The other disciples followed in the boat, towing the net full of fish, for they were not far from shore, about a hundred yards. When they landed, they saw a fire of burning coals there with fish on it, and some bread.

Jesus said to them, “Bring some of the fish you have just caught.”

Simon Peter climbed aboard and dragged the net ashore. It was full of large fish, 153, but even with so many the net was not torn. Jesus said to them, “Come and have breakfast.” None of the disciples dared ask him, “Who are you?” They knew it was the Lord. Jesus came, took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish. This was now the third time Jesus appeared to his disciples after he was raised from the dead.

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From a human perspective, all seemed lost for those early disciples, so why not go fishing? Some of them were fishermen by trade. Others were not, but why not go? Why not join in? It was something to do.

But that night ended in failure – no fish! Not one single, itty-bitty fish! What an awful reminder that there was no turning back. There was no going back to the old way of life and living. Life had turned from one failure into another. But had it? It had until . . . they saw the man on the shore, and He urged them to throw the net on the right side of the boat. The result was a miraculous catch of fish – 153 large fish. There were so many fish, that they could hardly haul their net in. That man on the shore was Jesus, and He beckoned them to come and have breakfast with them. Oh, what a time of fellowship they must have enjoyed!

3. It's Not Too Late to Begin Again

John 21:15-22 -- Jesus Reinstates Peter

When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon son of John, do you truly love me more than these?” “Yes, Lord,” he said, “you know that I love you.” Jesus said, “Feed my lambs.”

Again Jesus said, “Simon son of John, do you truly love me?” He answered, “Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.” Jesus said, “Take care of my sheep.”

The third time he said to him, “Simon son of John, do you love me?” Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, “Do you love me?” He said, “Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you.” Jesus said, “Feed my sheep.”

I tell you the truth, when you were younger you dressed yourself and went where you wanted; but when you are old you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go.”

Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God. Then he said to him, “Follow me!”

Peter turned and saw that the disciple whom Jesus loved was following them. (This was the one who had leaned back against Jesus at the supper and had said, “Lord, who is going to betray you?”)

When Peter saw him, he asked, “Lord, what about him?”

Jesus answered, “If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you? You must follow me.”

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After breakfast, it was time for Jesus to address Peter. I can imagine this must have been the time that Peter dreaded. He knew he had failed Jesus when he had denied 3 times that he knew Jesus. He knew he had failed miserably when he failed to acknowledge that he was indeed one of His disciples. After that third denial, he had gone outside and wept bitterly. (Luke 22:62) But Jesus loved Peter too much to let him go. He loved Peter too much to not help Peter find restoration.

Three times Jesus asked Peter, “Simon son of John, do you love me?” Note, Jesus used Peter’s old name – Simon. – not the new name He had given him (Peter). He had not yet proven himself to be Peter the Rock. Note also that Jesus addressed the issue of Peter’s devotion and dedication – “Do you love me more than these?” “Do you truly love me.” The word Jesus used was the word agape – the highest form of love there is. Peter couldn’t quite bring himself to that

kind of a commitment. After all, he had failed. And he had failed miserably! But guess what? Even though Peter had failed, Jesus had not given up on him. Embarrassed and hurt, Peter was willing to acknowledge that he loved Jesus with a friendship kind of love. That's all he felt he could offer at that point.

Jesus challenged Peter and reminded him that He still had work for Peter to do. "Feed my lambs." "Take care of my sheep." "Feed my sheep." But Jesus' greatest challenge to Peter was the one He had originally given to Peter and the other disciples, "Follow me." What a lesson: **It was not too late for Peter!** Peter could and would go forth from there and to be mightily used by God. He would be empowered by the Holy Spirit and would go on to become a great leader in the early church.

Conclusion: Let me remind you today that it's not too late for YOU either. Today, as you hear this message, the God of all grace and mercy is giving YOU another chance – another opportunity to hear and respond to His message. Maybe you have failed Him – denied Him – sinned against Him. Today, He is inviting you to come back to Him and find forgiveness, healing, restoration, and a new start. It's not too late for you to come to Him. It's not too late for you to begin again. Don't forfeit your soul by neglecting or wasting this opportunity.

