

TRINITY SUNDAY EVENING - A Brush with Shame

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[0 : 00] Well, many years ago, I used to occasionally listen to a radio show on the ABC when I was travelling at night. It was one of those talkback shows that sort of beloved of the ABC, and it was called A Brush With Fame. Now, the show consisted of people ringing in and telling the world about the famous people that they had met by chance. There would be stories of accidental meetings with politicians, movie stars, sportsmen and women, and even associated criminal elements. Now, I wonder whether you have ever had a brush with fame. Who have you met that might be famous or perhaps infamous? What impact did that meeting have upon you?

Now, apart from the meeting itself, is there anything you remember about the person you met that shaped your future existence? Now, we're going to do a little exercise tonight. You are going to get together with somewhere between six and ten people around you. I think this might work. If it doesn't, well, that's not too bad. We haven't lost too much. I want you to see if anyone in that ten group of people has had what you might call a brush with fame.

And tell the others the story and tell them if it had any long-term impact on you. So, you know, ten people. You've got five minutes to do it. Someone, hopefully, in your ten group of people has had a brush with fame.

Thank you. so you can play the camera.- She had a gun when they ■■■ led you to your camper, sk ConstTime, not to tell the the wine will CG in front of the park. She says that she was amazing. Don't forget to understand them. wurden and they'll try to think of them and still listen.

Oh, my gosh! So, time for the years that we're going to do that with Village? Thank you.

[2 : 50] Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. All right, friends.

If you've still got stories to tell, you can tell them over supper or whatever. Now, friends, tonight we're going to have a look at a meeting between an ordinary person and not just a famous person, but an extraordinary person.

[4 : 49] This is a fisherman's encounter with the most famous man in history. And so let's have a look at it. Let's see what happens and let's see what impact this has. So first of all, let me tell you a bit about our fisherman.

Now, most of us know him quite well, but his name is Simon. And fishermen in his day were just fairly ordinary people. They were working people. They were considered to have some sort of artisan skill.

Simon and his friends were doing OK in their particular exercise of this skill. Most fishermen in those days were hired laborers, but not Simon and his friends. You see, they owned the boats that they worked in.

And they had, it appears, some sort of cooperative business partnership that they were engaged in. He and his friends were therefore skilled fishermen and they were good at their work.

And they had, it appears, done quite well in it, particularly if they'd been able to buy their boats and so on. They knew what they were about. They were doing OK. They had a decent income.

[5 : 50] They were undoubtedly comfortable, if not well off. Now, this is Simon. And chapter five, verse one tells us that once or in another translation, one day, some incidents happened to him.

Now, we don't know whether they occurred before the incidents of the previous section where Jesus was in Simon Peter's house or not. We suspect they occurred after.

We don't know whether Simon and Jesus have ever met before or not, although it appears to say they probably have. But what happens here is profound. You see, imagine the scene.

Apparently, Simon and his mates have been out fishing. And as verse two says, they've dragged their boats up onto the water's edge. Now, the men are therefore, they're about cleaning their nets. Now, we're not told this, but there is every chance that the nets that they are cleaning are night fishing nets. They've been out all night. They were therefore made of linen. And they were not usually used during the day because they could be seen by the fish, linen nets, and therefore seen by the fish during daylight hours.

[6 : 53] And they were, they, anyway, they were heavy. And if that's what they were, linen nets, they were heavy and difficult nets. And it usually took two to four men to deploy them.

And they needed rigorous washing every morning. You had to make sure he did all the right thing by them. Now, as Luke tells us in this story, he notes in verse six that it had not been a good night for the men.

You see, they had been through a long and fruitless night of fishing. They had fished without success and were now tidying up their gear before heading home.

You've got to remember this was their livelihood too. So it's not been a good night for them. Up all night, you're doing your livelihood and you've got no, nothing for it. They'd fished without success, tidying up.

And they're undoubtedly tired, undoubtedly ready for bed. And verse three tells us that it's into this situation and to these men that an itinerant preacher appears on the scene.

[7 : 49] Now, we already know a little bit about this preacher from the preceding story. We know, of course, his name is Jesus. He's been in Nazareth. He's been in Capernaum. He has a growing reputation as a preacher.

What's more, he has a growing reputation as a person with an amazing gift of healing and casting out demons. And so you can imagine people are gathering from everywhere around in order to hear him.

And on this occasion, he has chosen to preach in the open air beside a lake. And there's lots of pushing and shoving perhaps. And Jesus is in need of a place to sort of withdraw from them to stand and preach.

And so it is that he spies the boats. And he makes personal contact with Simon. And he asks if he can make use of one of the boats. And Simon agrees. And Jesus hops on board. And Simon pushes out from the shore.

And I can imagine Jesus sitting down out of arm's length and teaching the word of God from the boat. Now, in my mind, I can just imagine the scene. Simon would be pretty weary, wouldn't he?

[8 : 53] Possibly down a bit because he's not had a good night. We're not told that the sermon takes makes any particular impact on him. But we are told that when Jesus finishes, he speaks to Simon and says, put out into the deep water.

And look at Simon's response. Verse 5. So Simon says, look, master, we have worked hard all night long, but have caught nothing. Yet if you say, I will lay down the nets.

Now, these words, I think, give us a little glimpse into Peter's mind. We get the impression Peter feels that Jesus might be teaching grandmothers to suck eggs. Now, let me explain that a little bit. In other words, here is someone unskilled telling a skilled person how to do their job.

OK. And after all, Jesus, you see, is simply a preacher and a carpenter. And Peter is what? Well, Peter is a fisherman. Now, he knows when to use nets.

He knows how to use nets. And he knows it's not these nets during the day. He knows where the fish are. And they are just simply not there today. He knows he's been out there all night.

[10 : 03] He has worked hard all night. He has had no success. He has clean nets. And letting them down into the water again will mean having to go through the process of cleaning them again.

And now this raw preacher is telling him, the fisherman, the man who makes a good living out of it, the man who owns his own boats, give it another shot, will you?

Now, we're not told why he agrees to it. But he does. Perhaps it's out of respect for the preacher. Perhaps he owes him something for helping out his mother-in-law a chapter earlier.

But he agrees he does. And Simon thinks, well, I will give it another shot. And he agrees. He puts out into the deep. And he lowers the nets into the water.

And then the absolutely extraordinary thing happens. The nets, as it were, just spontaneously fill with fish. They are just enormously laden with fish.

[11 : 03] And there is much excitement and urgent signaling to the other boat to, you know, get on out here. Give us a hand. And the men engage in the task that they know so well. They're good fishermen.

They work the nets. They manage to get the whole lot on board, even though the number of fish threatens to sink both boats. And Simon is overwhelmed. His brush with fame has turned into a brush with shame.

He realizes that the man he is dealing with is no ordinary itinerant preacher. He's not an ordinary man. This man is somehow some special agent of God.

Somehow he's inextricably linked with God. And in the face of this, Simon's character is so patently obvious. He is confronted with who he is.

And he's confronted with the Lord of fish and fishermen. The Lord of nature. The Lord of men. The Lord of their daily work.

[12 : 06] And a few minutes ago, Simon Peter had presumed to tell the Lord of fish that he didn't know what he was doing. In the face of such a revelation, Peter knows his nature.

He's patently a sinner. And sinners have no place in the presence of God or God's messengers. And so he sinks to his knees in humility and in shame.

And look at him in verse 8. He blurts out to this extraordinary man. Go away from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man. But you know what?

Jesus doesn't depart. Jesus has so far met with Satan, who tried to tempt him to leave the correct path that God had chosen for him.

He'd met with some people in his own hometown who tried to kill him. He'd met with people who wanted him for what they could get in terms of miracles. But here, finally, he's met someone who understands who he is, or at least a little bit about him.

[13 : 06] In this raw fisherman, he seems to think he's found something he can work with. He perhaps sees an attitude and ability that could be used in a great cause. And so he comforts and encourages Simon and his friends with these words.

Don't be afraid. From now on, you will be catching men or people. In other words, don't worry. Can you hear what he's saying? Don't worry. Don't let sin and shame so overwhelm you.

In spite of it, in spite of your sinfulness, I can make something of you and use you. And from now on, you are going to be turning your ability at fishing into a new cause.

You will be catching people. And Simon Peter's life and the life of his partners, friends, will never be the same again. And so they pull up their boats on the shore.

It's a really poignant moment. And they leave them. They've met something far more important than filling their stomachs. They've met Jesus. They have met his purpose in life.

[14 : 11] They have met his mission. They have been integrated into it. And this is worth leaving fishing for. And so in verse 11, we're told that Peter and his mates bring their boats to the shore.

And they just leave them behind. They leave everything. And they follow him. So there's the story. I mean, this is a remarkable story, isn't it?

It's a remarkable encounter. What's it all about? Well, at its core, this story is about a normal human being like you and me. That's what I think we're meant to do as we read it. It is about a normal man. Like, you know, and like all of us, this human being is just consumed with the everyday. You know, he's a worker. He goes out. He does his work every day.

He's good at his work. He's related to real people. He has a family. He has friends. He has relationships. He's interested in religion. He attends the local synagogue.

[15 : 13] He's undoubtedly a believer in God. We know that much. He's even a believer in the one God of biblical faith. So he's a good believer. But something happens to this man this day that changes him.

You see, on this day, he's confronted by God in a special way. And in some way, his existence assumes a new and sharp reality.

Somehow, this incident causes him to become aware of reality as God perceives reality. You see, what is the reality of life? Well, the reality of life is that God is God.

God is the king of the world. He is the ruler of the world. He is the ruler of nature, of physical existence, and of spiritual existence. God is the only one who knows how life is to be lived.

God is the only one who knows who I am. And God is the only one who knows who we are. And he knows who you are. And he knows who Peter is.

[16:19] God is the only one who knows what is best for us and our world. God is, you see, ultimate reality. And what happens in this story is that Peter gets a glimpse of that.

Somehow, in this encounter, he sees that. He realizes that what has happened to him on the boat is a small picture of his entire existence. For on the boat, he heard God tell him something to do. He also heard himself say back to God that that's pointless doing. He heard himself telling God that he didn't know what he was doing.

And that he, Peter, did know. He may have humored God and his representative. He may have gone fishing at God's suggestion or at his representative's suggestion.

But his underlying attitude was one of independence and self-assertion. He, Peter, knew what was good for him and what worked for him. And God did the incredible thing. God acted.

[17:19] And God, the creator, filled his boat. He filled it with fish. And the awful reality filled Peter's brain and his existence.

God did know what he was doing after all. God did know where the fish were. God did know more about the world and how it functioned than he, Peter, did. God did know what was good for him. And God's reality, he found, was infinitely better and fuller than his, which would have been going home with an empty net. What's more, Peter realized in this that he was utterly sinful in doubting it and questioning it from God or his representative.

God was right. And he was wrong. And God knew best. And he did not. God's way is full of richness and blessing.

And his was not. And at this, can you see, at this brief moment, the penny drops for him. And so everything just falls into place.

[18:26] And all of a sudden it dawned on him what life was about. Life is knowing and loving and serving the true and living God. And so Peter did the manly thing, I think.

He fell to his knees before God and his representative and reality and he acknowledged the truth. Life is not about small and limited existences such as the one he was pursuing.

It's not about that. It's about determining, him determining your existence. It's about saying to God, you call the shots. It's about going where God directs.

It's about doing what he does. It's about saying what he says. It's about being concerned with what he is concerned about. It's about being at his beck and call to live.

It was necessary to eat. And being a fisherman had been as good a way as any to put a bit of meat on the table and to put food in his stomach.

[19:25] And such an occupation was good, honourable in God's world, a good thing to be doing, which means there is more to life than... But now Peter realised that there was more to life than just eating, more to life than putting food on the table.

Such an occupation was good and honourable, but now Peter realised that there is more to life than fishing, even done with right motives. Life is about relating to God.

It's about spiritual fishing. And so Peter left his secular employment to devote himself to spiritual work. Now friends, I want to say that, I want to close this talk by reminding you of some great facts tonight.

You see, we Christians know the God of all the earth, don't we? We know he who created the world. We know him.

We know he is the Lord of heaven and earth. We know that he has a great purpose for his world. And we know that that purpose is that people be brought into relationship with him and live in that relationship for eternity.

[20:35] That is God's great good for his world. Him and us living together in restored relationship with him and with each other for eternity.

This is the great good God that we worship. And this good great God sent his son into the world. He sent him to live as a human being among human beings like us.

He sent him to live. He sent him to tell people what God really is like. And he sent him to die so that we can enter into the good things that God has.

God sent Jesus for this great purpose for us. To seek and to save us, the lost. To seek and to save the lost. He is, you see, this God still seeking to save the lost.

And he still calls people out of ordinary life to join him. And he still comes to fishermen. To carpenters. To trades people.

[21 : 40] To doctors. To engineers. To IT personnel. To nurses. To physios. To students. To people in every walk of life.

And he still invites them. Will you come with me? Will you leave ordinary life with its ordinary pursuits? He still challenges people to forfeit their small ambitions.

And he still calls people to join him in this great task. Friends, that call of Peter's here is an invitation for us as well. Friends, God still calls us.

He calls you. He calls me. And he calls us to leave our safe suburban existence. He calls us in safe and secure Doncaster.

In the leafy suburbs of Doncaster, the surrounding area. And he confronts us with himself. That is what he does in his word even now. And so I ask you on his behalf tonight.

[22 : 41] Do you hear this, God? Please don't misunderstand me. I have worked in the secular workplace. Just like you. I know that God regards it as valuable.

And as important. We still need strong, well-taught, faithful, keen Christians in the workplace. We desperately need them. But tonight I want to challenge you to think just a little laterally if I can.

To think about not pursuing a career in the workplace. Or stopping it if you're in the midst of it. I want to challenge you, some of you here. Not everyone, but some of you. I want to challenge you to take your gospel commitments and the gifts that God has given you.

And turn them to the most urgent task that there is in this world. I want to challenge you to give your life to the Ministry of Full-Time Gospel Proclamation Ministry. You need to do it.

You need to think about this. You see, my own view is that most modern young Christians ask the wrong questions. See, most modern young Christians just get on the conveyor belt of a career.

Then the keen ones might ask themselves sometime about whether they should go into Christian ministry.

[23 : 49] But I think that's the entirely wrong way around. I think that the good news of Jesus invites us to become gospel proclaimers.

The default position ought to be that you are looking to do it full-time. And the question you should be asking is if there is some reason why you ought not to. Is there some reason why you ought not to?

You see, if you think that there is a good reason not to do full-time ministry, you should never think, though, that it's a second-class option. However, if you don't go into full-time ministry, you should use all the resources that you have to support those going to this critical ministry and to ensure that they can do it well and properly.

And what's more? I should just stop at this point and tell you a little story. My father-in-law once decided that he didn't have the gifts for full-time Christian ministry. So he decided how much they paid the clergy in his congregation and how much, if you added the house to it, that was worth.

And he decided that any money that he gave beyond, that any money that he came into his hands beyond that, he would give to the ministry of the gospel. At times in his life, he was giving over 60% away.

[25 : 05] I probably shouldn't have told you his name, should I? But you see, he was committed to this task, though he wasn't equipped for it. Do you understand that? You see, the Christian ministry here at church should never get the short straw in your priorities.

Christian ministry should never be a second option for you to consider. You see, Christian ministry is not an adjunct to the rest of your life that you sort of tack on the end.

If you are gospel people, you will give all of life to ministry. Friends, do you see what I'm saying?

Can you hear it? Have you met Jesus?

Has he met you in encounter? Have you been forgiven by him? Have you been captivated by him?

Do you see reality as he sees it?

Do you hear his word to you this evening? Has the penny dropped for you? If it has, then your life will never be the same again.

[26 : 07] It will change. It will be fluid. It will be flexible. It will be filled with the dynamic and moving God who moves through the world doing his work through his people.

It will be shaped by his concerns. It will be dominated by his attitudes and his ministry. Friends, I hope tonight that in this sermon you have met God again. That you have heard him speak to you.

I trust that he's been at work in you through his word and his spirit. That's what I've prayed that he would be tonight. But what I want to ask you is what impact this meeting has had.

What impact will your meeting with Jesus have on the rest of your life? Will it change your life? Has it changed your life?

Well, if it doesn't change your life, let me tell you, I don't think you've been listening hard enough. If it has changed your life, then don't let it go.

[27 : 05] Book a meeting with Jono or Chris or Wayne or myself or any other mature Christian leader and talk it through with them. Pray it through with them. But please, friends, if God speaks to you, don't let it go.

Pursue it. Let's pray. Father, we love this snapshot of a man just like us.

We love this snapshot of you confronting him. We love, Father, the fact that you, as it were, surprised him in the midst of ordinary life.

We love the fact that you surprise us. We love the fact, Father, that you call us into your great purpose for your world.

We love the fact, Father, that there is no greater place to be than with you in your work of promoting your son. Father, we pray that you would give us a passion and a thirst for this work more and more as each day passes.

[28 : 18] And that you would draw us into it. And that we'll gladly give ourselves to it. And that we'll enjoy being in your presence doing it. Father, thank you for this ministry.

And, Father, we pray that even in ordinary life and in ordinary church life, we might give ourselves to it with all our hearts.

And, Father, we pray that as a result, your word might come to your world, we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.