

Tuesday 6th April 2021 (evening)

**Rev.Gordon Elliott
Brightons Parish Church**

Well it's lovely to be with you again this evening and um I wasn't going to ask I'm going to ask anyway I wonder if you did your homework I'm not asking any questions about that we're going to be looking at a very different um area of Peter's life but not only Peter we're going to do a wee bit of a tour into some old testament characters but first let me just pray

father we thank you for your love for us we thank you for open bibles that you've given to us and we just pray that as we walk through its pages and learn from your servants of old that you would lead and guide us in our thinking in our personal lives in our church life and just ask that you would open this your word to all our hearts in Jesus name amen I've got two bible readings there's actually will be three shown up on them on the screen but I'm not reading from the third one at the moment I might later on it's Matthew 14 but let's look at Luke chapter five Luke chapter five verse one one day as Jesus was standing by the lake of Genezaret the people were crowding around him and listening to the word of God he saw at the water's edge two boats left there by the fishermen who were washing their necks he got into one of the boats the one belonging to Simon and asked him to put out a little from the shore then he sat down and taught the people from the boat when he had finished speaking he said to Simon put out into deep water and let down the nets for a catch Simon answered master we have worked hard all night and haven't caught anything but because you say so I will let down the nets when they had done so they caught such a large number of fish that their nets began to break so they signaled to their partners in the other boat to come and help them and they came and filled both boats so full that they began to sink when Simon Peter saw this he fell at Jesus knees and said go away from me lord I'm a sinful man for he and all his companions were astonished at the catch of fish they had taken and so were James and John the sons of Zebedee Simon's partners then Jesus said to Simon don't be afraid from now on you will fish for people so they pulled their boats up on shore left everything and followed him and then our other reading taken from Matthew chapter 9 just from verse 9 down to verse 30 verse 13. as Jesus went on from there he saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax collector's booth follow me he told him and Matthew got up and followed him while Jesus was having dinner at Matthew's house many tax collectors and sinners came and ate with him and his disciples when the pharisees saw this they asked his disciples why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners on hearing this Jesus said it is not that healthy who need a doctor but those who are ill but go and learn what this means I desire mercy not sacrifice for I have not come to call the righteous but the sinners I was not brought up in a Christian home even a church going home we never went to church in fact that's not strictly true the only time I went was when we went with the school and every Christmas eve when I went alone with my mother it was sort of more a tradition than anything else my parents lived in Edinburgh they lived in Johnson Terrace in a tenement it's the street or the road that runs down the side of Edinburgh Castle and while they lived there my mum my mum was actually pregnant at the time with me next door to them they had two lady Salvation Army officers

perhaps just perhaps and I don't know this if this is true or not they prayed for that unborn child I don't know but it was through the Salvation Army that I became a Christian it was through the witness of three salvationists that I worked with and then I became a Christian actually in the Salvation Army hall in Leith in Edinburgh mind you luthers wouldn't like to be called people from Edinburgh but anyway you'll know what I mean but that was the first time in my office that I actually met people who followed Jesus

you ever think about it the most place or the place that most of us spend most of our time most of our days is in the workplace not the church

i don't know about you but perhaps at the most we may spend one two perhaps three hours a week in church but then again for those working or have who have worked it could be 38 40 50 perhaps even more hours at work and we're amongst unbelievers mostly not church people I know you're looking at the whole area of church within not only your own church but the churches in the braze and that's great to look at it but remind yourself even as you go through that that church is not the final place that you will be witnessing in worshipping in many of you will also have the place of work now I haven't done this or planned this in the light of what you'll be looking at yourselves but the workplace needs to be taken account of they say that 90 of believers never witness to Jesus Christ in the workplace

it's a difficult place to work in it's a difficult place to witness in and we'll look perhaps a wee bit later as to why last month we looked at Peter and the first impressions we had of him and now we're going to briefly look at Peter in his workplace that wasn't where he first met Jesus that's in Luke chapter 5 but it's where he saw the power of Jesus it's where he was called to follow Jesus I can imagine that he and his brothers and his friends James and John were good at their jobs but church is often where we think that's where people meet with Jesus but see beyond the church building it's very important and has a very important place in our lives but we need to remember where we meet most people who are not Christians you might almost say that actually the workplace the boat Peter out fishing was his comfort zone this was his domain as a fisherman yet see how at this time again going back to Luke chapter five and later on in um Mark Matthew chapter 14 his whole world was turned upside down by a carpenter so let's briefly look at Peter's feelings because this place that was his comfort zone was taken charge of by this carpenter by someone else to the shock of Peter now remember let me remind you if you need reminding that Peter wasn't a big religious figure he wasn't a leader in his synagogue as far as I know but the shock he was about to experience was in his workplace

it's a place I think many of us enjoy going to but the thought of witnessing there well that's a non-starter for many of us but for Peter it's where he really got out of his depth literally a number of times it happened when storms arose now I'm sure as a fisherman he was used to storms but whether this was a different storm it's certainly terrified him and of course he had gone through the night fishing and that had been a big disappointment to him I'm not a fisherman the rod kitten or any kind but he had caught

no fish that night that was uh pretty bad for him because that was his livelihood that's where he made his income no fish and then this storm arose but I think it was I don't know if he was annoyed but the fact that a carpenter then tells you look throw your net on the other side now one it was the wrong time of day two it was the wrong side of the boat so what does a carpenter know about fishing well this one certainly did but it was bringing Peter out of his depth out of his comfort zone and as you perhaps start to think about your comfort zone the church and for many of us it is a comfort zone think about that place of work where you meet many people who are not believers or not church goers and remind yourself as to who they are let's just briefly then turn to Matthew for a moment as far as um the other disciples are concerned we're not really sure what a lot of them did burden James and John but here was Matthew the tax collector now you'll probably know this he had been hated and despised as all tax collectors were because they were often thieves and con men they were robbing the people and they were really lackies of the Roman conquerors now we don't hear much about what Jesus said in fact we hear very little he just simply said follow me there was no big demonstration of his power to Matthew at this time but notice what happened not only did Matthew leave his workplace but he then went home with Jesus and had a house party with his friends

the same type of despised people as he was now I don't think his idea was he had started to follow Jesus I don't think his idea was how am I going to get these people to the synagogue or we would say to church that wasn't his thinking his thinking was to invite or they invited themselves the other tax collectors because they would know one another it wasn't to bring them under the preaching of the minister it was to bring them to the preaching of Jesus now let me remind you about your own workplace as it was my workplace where I met with people who knew Jesus but it's that little phrase again in Matthew chapter 9 when Jesus said it's not the healthy who need a doctor but those who are ill but go and learn what this means I desire mercy not sacrifice for I've come to call the righteous not the righteous but sinners so when you go into your place of work it's not like going into the church where you meet with like-minded people mostly it's not a place where you need to think too much about I wonder who I'll witness to today it may be I wonder who I don't know and I'll talk to today but there is a comfort there's a there's a safety in the church that you don't have to worry about your evangelism too much but that's very different when you then on a Monday or whichever days you go to work you've got to think that these people that you're going to be working with are just like what I was still am but what I was in my workplace I was one of those sinners that knew nothing about Jesus I believed there was something or someone up there but that's as far as it went but here is your community where you will spend most of your days most of your time with non-Christian folk we have a problem often within the church within our own Christian life is the division of the sacred and the secular in other words what we are as a Christian and what I do as um as a person at work so for Peter his secular life was he was a fisherman and as we as you read on we would find that Peter's sacred life was he was an apostle now we mustn't divide up the sacred and the secular we have responsibilities in the church our place of worship we have responsibilities to people out with the church whether it be in our workplace or our neighborhood who are not believers Matthew he was a different kettle of fish he we don't really know very much about him baron the little there but he obviously had a big

change in his life are following Jesus but he was also a hated man I don't know how long we don't know how long it took him to overcome the feelings of hatred that people must have felt towards him the workplace but I want to digress quite a bit not from the workplace but these stories of people in the workplace of Peter and of Matthew are really not unique they're not unique to bible stories

we're going to look at just different places not and with a great sense of degree but in the university

in the government civil service in the palace monster hierarchy or perhaps on the building site now you may work in some of these places and so it's recorded in the scriptures about a number of people from the old testament who worked in such places who witnessed in such places now let me remind you if you need reminding that the recorded stories are not just for exciting stories or not just to teach children though they're important to teach children but they're about people's lives and these people are in the workplace so the person at university was young Daniel you find this in Daniel the book of Daniel chapter one now he was there because he had been brought into exile taken away from his home taken away from his family and taken to Babylon and there he would go through a very thorough teaching it would be as good a teaching as any of our universities and of course in some ways it would also be as Godless a teaching as many of our universities it wouldn't be a Christian university it wouldn't be where he learned about God but in another sense while he was there he learned very much about God his story of course you'll probably know if not take time to read chapter one that he was this young man and he was a young man probably just a teenager he was taken away from his home from his family and brought into this Godless empire and it was Godless and he was set to training but he took his stand immediately he took his stance with some of his friends that were there because he had to eat things now there's a dilemma sometimes he was prepared to have his name changed from the Jewish name to um Babylonian name and he didn't seem to have a problem with that he would obviously learn things that were true but he would also learn many things that were ungodly but the thing he had a problem with was the food he was offered was his dietary needs they offered him the best the richest and he totally refused it because it went against his beliefs and he took a strong stand he could have lost his life by doing this but he stood firm he stood fast in his workplace for that time and it's obviously a reminder to each of us that our young people who go to university it can be a very difficult place very difficult place for them to stand up and believe and tell others that they're a Christian but that's their workplace for a certain amount of time and then we move to his older life to Daniel who moved from being in the university and you have to read the whole book to find out where he went to actually being in the government and very high up in the government probably next to the king he was in charge but it didn't mean to say life got any easier for him even though he had got older he still had to take his stand and this time was against idolatry

now many of us live and realize we live in a world that's full of idolatry we're okayish in the company of other believers within the church but go outside and perhaps you don't even realize how often we are faced with the Godlessness of our society and Daniel

was definitely faced with that and he had to take his stand and that would have cost him his life if God hadn't intervened we read about in Daniel 6 Daniel in the lion's den so his new job I don't know how long he'd been in it probably quite a while and the government was going to lead to his demise even though his boss the king didn't want it to happen but he couldn't even change the law so there you have one man in two different areas of his life in his workplace having to take his stand and what about you what about me I can't say I was an expert at being um a witness in in the workplace when I worked and I was a civil servant for my sins um but I'll tell you this in some ways it um it was very different than being a minister very different sorts of um problems different sorts of background but you still had to take your stand that's where these Salvation Army people now one young girl particularly who was only going to be there for a few months because she was going on to train to be a Salvation Army I had never met anybody that was quite as vocal and she was vocal she was quite weak firebrand for Jesus the other two were well one was like the core sergeant major that had been like the chief elder I suppose um lovely man but he wasn't as outward in his place of work but everybody knew he was a Christian and that was my first encounter with people so remind yourself that as you go into your place of work you have a witness to do now often it's through our lives but at times it needs to be through our mouths as well and then we move on to someone you can see I'm going through these quite quickly then you move on to someone who was in the palace and that was the story of Joseph he hadn't always been in the palace at the time we're looking at just now he had become the prime minister again someone that really moved up through the ranks from being a prisoner to being a prime minister quite a story but again you need to read that for yourself in the book of Genesis that um but you see how people took their stand and witnessed to this person called our God called the Lord and we know also as Jesus

and they're amazing stories their amazing stories not of what on of what the people did but of how God moved in power as they yielded their lives to him and the last one is the butler who became a building site manager Nehemiah he had been the butler that was his job in in um Babylon I think it was Babylon SCOTT keep me right if it's not he'd been a butler but he had head of the terrible plight of God's people in Jerusalem and he yearned to do something about it and the Lord led him to Jerusalem and his boss let him go the testimony must have been incredible these things just didn't happen but here was someone whose job changed very dramatically and that happens within people's work lives but in both places they had to be witnesses to who the Lord God of heaven is and was to them now we haven't got time to go into it all but if you read through them each of these men were in a place where actually they didn't want to be they'd never asked to be Daniel had never asked to go to Babylon Joseph had never asked to go to Egypt Nehemiah had never asked to go back and rebuild they were in a place that was not really of their choosing but the Lord had led them so think about it your place of work may be the place you really don't want to be and sadly a lot of people are in that that they're in a place they don't want to be but if that's where the Lord's led you to you seriously have to think how does he want to demonstrate his power and lives through you now one of the other things that you read um through these stories and through Peter stories is that there were battles there was trials there were difficulties in the workplace and I'm sure that is perhaps why many of us find it very difficult to witness

there's a sense of fear what will people say well I overstepped the Mark after all I'm there to work I'm there to work for my employer I'm not there to be a preacher or a teacher but we don't all I was going to say we don't always do our work 24 hours a day or eight hours a day if we're working there can be very hostile places and with some people and some believers that are extremely hostile and you would almost be terrified to even mention to even suggest that you went to church never mind even witness about Jesus the church is a very different place than our workplaces but let me remind you again the workplace is where we spend more of our time here was young Daniel a slave in a foreign country and as a young teenager stands up and was counted he wouldn't go against his principles now he had favor with the other servants that were looking after him uh I think they were probably dreading and fearing that they would lose their heads if it was found out that they weren't he wasn't following the instructions the orders of them of the king and it was the same with the lions' den people trapped him they conned him they betrayed him they were determined to get him and boy they certainly went out of their way to do it you might say they were whistleblowers in one sense your majesty you remember the law you made remember what you said if people do not bow down and worship this idol of you they will be thrown to the lions they were whistleblowers

but you know not even the king could rescue him it was a law that was unchangeable so as you read the story and we know the story of Daniel and the lion's den so well it's almost unbelievable it's almost incredible but here was the power of God seen as he shut the lion's mouth and perhaps you might be in a place where you might see the lord shutting people's mouths that you want to witness to but it's fear isn't it it's the same with Nehemiah the hostility now he was on the lord's business and yet the hostility that he faced as people undermined him undermined his work but he stood firm and it cost it cost probably him a reputation but you know he stuck faithfully to that word and Peter going back to him well he had a bit of a bumpy ride through his life he wasn't always the big dynamic bold Peter he had tremendous disappointments but you remember the story I think it was another one later on where Jesus was walking on the water and Peter opened his mouth and Jesus had said to him Luke come because Jesus uh Peter wanted to follow him

what a fully get out of the boat and walk on water and he did until he saw the waves and he started to crumble now that in one sense was in his workplace amongst his um his other friends and disciples or apostles I often wonder what they used to think I think you know here he goes again you know putting his big foot in it but he did it he did it and even though he fell even though he had these bumpy rights and of course later on he'd have a very bumpy ride and denying that he ever knew Jesus so the workplace as life can be a very bumpy place to live in but we can't stay in the security of our churches and amongst God's people and forget that there are people out there need to be reached we haven't looked in Moses but um just in the passing do you remember when um he thought he was doing the people of God a favor by going to the pharaoh and asking that his people could go out and worship and all that resulted was that they were given more work to do and harder task masters to follow slave drivers I wonder if you feel a bit like that in your work a bit of a slave driver and then the company starts to um

dismiss people so you've got a smaller workforce but still the same amount of work the quotas still have to be met that's your story that's your story their quotas still had to be met they were stretched to the limits and they complained and they were discouraged but the lord helped them to build so many stories around the workplace not within the church but it's there in these situations that God displayed his power to them and to a Godless world and let me remind you that when you become a Christian you're a person who has been set free from sin to follow the lord and to allow him to show his power to you his people I don't know if you've read the book I'm sure Scott's probably read it by a man called John Ortberg if you want to walk on water you have to get out of the boat of course there's an illustration of Peter if you want to walk in water you have to get out of the boat we have to get out of the safe place and to get into the area where it can be bumpy where we can feel we're going to think where we have all sorts of fear in our hearts and our lives but we need to do it

and you may come into church and be amongst the people who mostly are believers but remember what Jesus said in Matthew sorry yes in Matthew chapter 6 that he came to call

not the righteous but sinners

I've been a Christian for many years so it's hard to look back on the days where I didn't go to church where I didn't learn about Jesus where I didn't meet with God's people but what it's not hard to forget I'm a sinner but I found the savior but you'll be working with many people who are sinners but have yet to find the savior and you will be reaching people day by day that Scott will never reach because he's not in your workplace he has a different job in a different role in a different workplace but we need to be reminded that we are a people who have to go out and win sinners for our savior so as you start to look at the role of the church what the church is just let me remind you to have a look also at what your workplace is too let's pray father as we come before you we do thank you for the many people that we rub shoulders with day by day either in our neighborhood or in our workplaces we thank you that that you've placed us there to be your witnesses through the way we live through the way we act and through the way we speak so help us lord because we can be and are often a fearful people we feel safe in the church we feel comfortable in the church but we pray that you might help us to launch out into the deep and see souls one for Jesus we pray in his precious name amen

our thanks to Gordon for opening up God's word to us this evening and bringing both a message of encouragement and challenge reminding of us of our high calling to be ambassadors of God's kingdom messengers and witnesses to those around us who are who don't yet know Jesus and we've to somehow share that with them both through our actions and through our words now many folks in our congregation and the wider brace churches would count themselves as being retired you don't have a job but all of us have a vocation even in retirement it may be through friendship circles it may be through areas of service it may be with family or local groups that we're a part of it may be simply with neighbours and these are all contexts and contacts through whom God is

calling us Gordon said in his message that sometimes we're placed in a difficult position and what might God want to do with us there to show and reveal his power and the same is true if you would count yourself as retired you are in a context a place God has you there so how is he calling you to show his power and share his message with the people around you so don't write off tonight's sermon simply because there was a lot of talk about jobs and work everything Gordon said is just as applicable to anyone listening to and we hope we'll all engage now Gordon has left some questions for us to think about and we'll put these on screen and in the description below the video to get us thinking and taking the principles into the week ahead and even the month ahead who knows he may ask us next month have we done anything about it and hopefully we will thanks for joining us for Tuesday evening sermon we look forward to sharing and worship with you again soon