

CALL FOR PETER

Football has its own language.

You hear expressions related to football that you don't hear anywhere else.

Up go the heads.

A good looking ball.

It's a Stramash.

They set out their stall – early doors...

I actually looked up that expression "early doors" as to where it came from. It seems as if it's football people that have just made it up.

So football has its own language and expressions.

It also involves plenty of bad language whether from fans or players.

TV commentators will sometimes say to their viewers "*We must apologise for the colourful (or industrial) language.*"

Other times the camera will focus in on a player who is shouting something and someone like Arthur Montford would try to clean it up.

"And Black is asking the referee to tell his opponents to hurry up as the game is nearly over."

Of course its quite clear that Black is not using these words at all!

Bad language is so much part and parcel of the game that you occasionally can make a joke out of **not** using rude words.

A friend of mine was at a Partick Thistle (Pertick Thistle) match when he heard a fan shout out, "*Referee! Referee! There's a lot of simulation happening at this game!*"

But bad language isn't confined to football.

It's hard to think of an area of life where bad language might not just slip in...

For example, fishermen are pretty rough and ready types.

I remember reading an article by a man who worked as a port chaplain in South Africa. He related how if two fishing boats should pass each other in the southern African sea there was a tradition that the crews would hang over the gunwales and shout vile abuse at one other. He said that the abuse was often directed towards the mothers of the members of the other crew and was never exactly complementary....

Luke 5 puts it like this.

'Jesus said, "Push the boat out further to the deep water, and you and your partners let down your nets for a catch."

Simon Peter says "Master, we have worked hard all night long and caught nothing. But if you say so, I will let down the nets."

Its tempting to imagine that the conversation between Jesus and Peter might have been tidied up a bit in the telling.

Maybe there was a kind of “*Arthur Montford*” description going on here.

Its as if Peter can’t wait to get back out there. But maybe Peter was muttering curses under his breath.....

Think about it.

Peter has been out fishing all night – for nothing!

It’s disappointing – but he’s a professional – he’s been doing it all his life.

And suddenly this landlubber, (whom he has just let borrow his boat), is turning round and telling him to get back out there to the deep water once more and try again for a good catch.

What has he got - X-ray vision or something?

Who does he think he is?

I mean, he might be a great preacher.

He might be a wonderful teacher.

He might be the nicest guy on earth.

But what, exactly, does he know about fish and about fishing?

He’s stepping in to Peter’s world now.

This is the world that Peter knows. This is **his** specialist subject.

(Said in mocking tones) “*Oh yes - let me just get my boat out into the deep water..*”

So why does Peter agree? Probably because he’s desperate.

He needs a catch to make a living. He caught nothing all night.

He’s got nothing anyway.

What does he have to lose?

And the result...?

In short:

After letting their nets down they suddenly catch so many fish the nets are about break and their boats are about to sink. They need to get other boats out to help get this catch ashore.

Peter falls to his knees in amazement.

And Jesus makes his invitation.

This is a story about being called by God. And it’s in scripture so we can learn from it.

Isn’t it interesting that we so often wait till the last minute before we pay attention to Jesus and his offer of help and support?

We struggle and wait and wait till we've exhausted all of our resources, and then (almost as a last resort), we look to God for help.
God is like the last place we turn to.

On the one hand, we may claim that our faith is really important to us, we may believe that God has resources to offer us, and yet the reality is we just live our lives our own way, and we think about God only when our other options are used up.

One of the conversations I have with bereaved families is about music for the funeral. There's music that people will sing and there's music that might be played at the beginning or end of the service.

Sometimes the music picked is quite bizarre.
The last funeral I ever took at Woodside Crematorium in Paisley before coming to Langside Church was a case in point.
The family said they weren't going to bother with CD music. Then they changed their mind without telling me.
So I'm standing at the front and everyone is facing forward looking at me as the coffin is solemnly carried down the aisle. Then the music starts.
And what was the song?
"Who's sorry now!"

Anyway, one of the favourite choices for many a family is *"My Way"*.
It's usually requested for playing on the way out.
And it's usually requested for a man.

It's well known. It's popular with many people.
Now maybe you like the tune.
Maybe you associate the song with a particular good memory.
Maybe you like Frank Sinatra.

But one day you should take a moment and check out the lyrics.

A bunch of arrogant, pigheaded, selfish sentiments is what these lyrics are!

It's not that we should meekly copy others and refuse to have original ideas and cease to be individuals.
It's not that we should just do whatever we are told by other people.

But anyone who lives their lives believing that all that matters is their own opinion
and that there is no support they can gain from others
and no wisdom they can learn from other people –
anyone like that is a fool.

As we go through the journey of life and encounter all the challenges and adventures and trials that come at us, there is a God who journeys with us with resources to help us.

God with us doesn't mean we never get stressed or ill or that we won't have problems to face.

But with God's help and guidance and support we have resources to aid us, and we don't need to wait till we are totally desperate and totally stuck before we look to God.

Peter accepted Jesus' offer of help when there was no more that he could possibly do – when he was bereft of ideas and in deep trouble.
For those of us living on the other side of Easter (as we do) with a much better understanding of Jesus there's no need to wait that long.

There's another interesting thing about Peter.

When he witnesses this wonderful miracle in front of his face he has a strange reaction.

He feels unworthy – undeserving - and he backs away from God.

It's a common thing for us to feel unworthy.
We aren't important enough or special enough.
God's favour is for other people.

We've been told we're not good enough in different ways. It maybe began when we were young.

At school by teachers.

At home with exacting parents we seemed never able to please.

When we've lost that job,

when our marriage fails,

when we go off the rails and get found out then we feel pretty low.

As for God – how could **we** be worthy of a call from God?

Are you kidding!!!!?

We know what we are really like.

And so, (like Peter), we back off.

But here's the thing...

Peter needed some rough edges taken off him.

He really needed to clean up his act,

control his temper,

control his language (perhaps)

and certainly his impulsiveness.

He needed to learn more about the scriptures.

But Jesus doesn't say to Peter, *"I want you to work on these things and I'll be back later to see how you're doing."*

Jesus says *"Come with me now"*.

With all your faults and annoying traits and with all you've got to learn.

Come now and work and live alongside me.
I'm not calling you when your act is cleaned up and you've got it together and you feel that you're ready.
I'm not calling you when you deserve it - when you've earned that call.

I'm calling you now with all your imperfections.

And that is the call of God made through Jesus not just to Peter, but to all of us.
That is what God is like.
This is what God says to you and me.

God calls us today. God calls us now.
God isn't waiting till we deserve it or we've got it all together or we feel we are ready. Maybe that day will never come.

God calls us now with all our faults and imperfections and asks us to line up with Jesus. As we go (and the adventure unfolds) God will teach us more of what we need to know and who we need to become.

So what does Peter and his friends do?
They pull their boats up on the beach, leave everything and follow Jesus.
Once you hear the call you can only say yes or no.

They said, "Yes" to the adventure.

They weren't "ready." They weren't "worthy."
They weren't deserving of the honour.
But they took the risk of listening to Jesus. And the rest is history.

And the only question that remains now is for you and me.

What will **we** say - what will **we** do -
how will **we** respond to Jesus' invitation to us?

Luke 5:1-11

February 7 2016