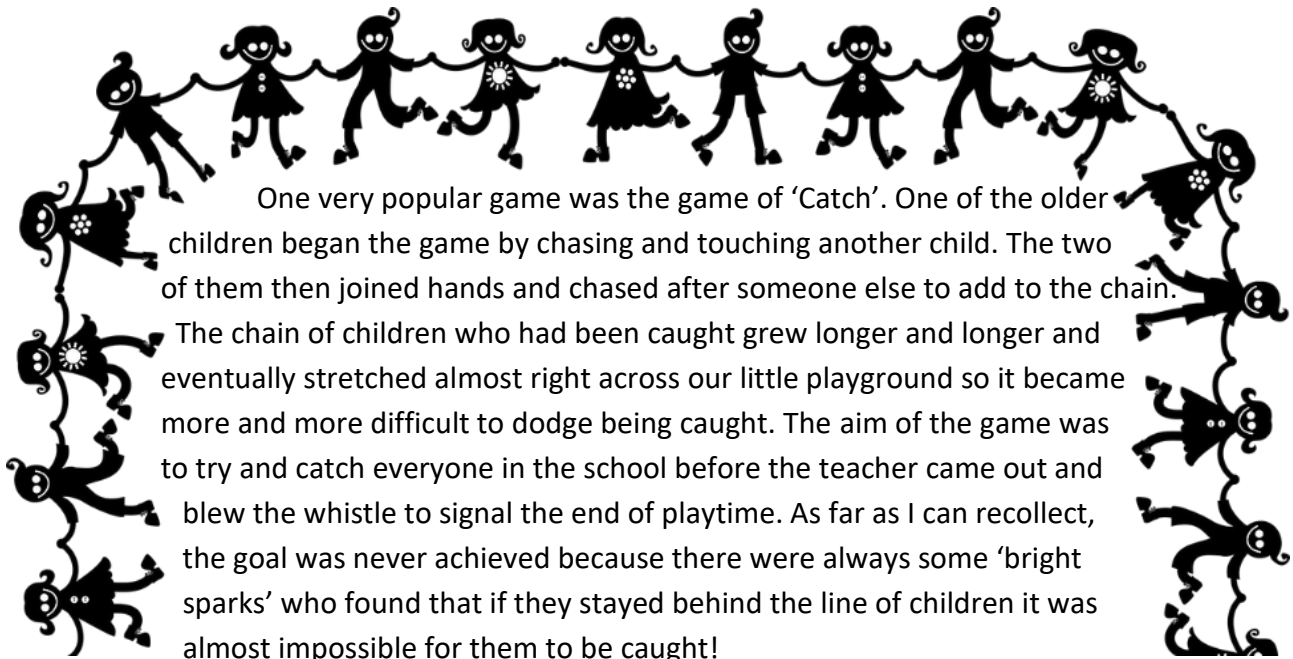




When I first started attending our little village school at the age of four, there were only about 30 – 35 pupils with ages ranging 4 – 14 years as it was before the Senior School was opened in the nearest town. Unlike today, there was not a teacher on duty on the playground during playtimes. This meant that the older children were expected to keep an eye on the younger ones so the games we played often involved the whole school.



One very popular game was the game of 'Catch'. One of the older children began the game by chasing and touching another child. The two of them then joined hands and chased after someone else to add to the chain.

The chain of children who had been caught grew longer and longer and eventually stretched almost right across our little playground so it became more and more difficult to dodge being caught. The aim of the game was to try and catch everyone in the school before the teacher came out and blew the whistle to signal the end of playtime. As far as I can recollect, the goal was never achieved because there were always some 'bright sparks' who found that if they stayed behind the line of children it was almost impossible for them to be caught!

Have you been 'caught' by Jesus? There is no-one in the whole world who is absolutely perfect and Jesus came down to the earth to specifically bridge the gap between unholy people and a holy God. Although Jesus is no longer on the earth, He is still alive and functioning in the same way. His aim is to 'catch' everyone and draw them into a closer relationship with God the Father. He does not force Himself upon us and every person is given a freewill in order to decide if they wish to follow Jesus or do their own thing. Many people take up the challenge, but there are also many who decide that it is not something that they wish to do.



As a human being living on earth, Jesus spent His time changing people's lives by healing their physical minds and bodies, but His main goal was to tell folk about the Kingdom of Heaven and change their spiritual lives. The 'catching' done by Jesus is not a game; it is very serious business. It is only via Jesus that we will be allowed into the Kingdom of Heaven about which He speaks. Our Bible tells us, '**He went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and preaching the gospel of the Kingdom.**'

(Matt. 4:23) What was Jesus telling them? The word 'gospel' means 'good news' or 'good telling'. The thing that Jesus was telling people was not just **good**, it was **brilliant!** He explained the meaning of

'Kingdom of Heaven/Kingdom of God'. He encouraged everyone to accept that they were not perfect people. Today we might call people 'criminals, wrong-doers or law breakers', but the word that Jesus used was 'sinners'. It is a strong word that is not often used in our vocabulary today. We may not be criminals or law-breakers but the word 'sinner' means much more than that and includes all of us because our basic nature is sinful. We are not suitable to be in the Kingdom of Heaven with a God who is absolutely blameless and perfect. ***'All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.'* (Rom. 3:23)**

Jesus tried to explain what to do about getting into the Kingdom of Heaven, even though we do not qualify. The following is what Jesus taught. It is as easy as :-

ACCEPT: The first hurdle is to accept that we are sinners. Accept that we are born that way. Accept that we are not perfect. Accept that we are unable to get into the Kingdom of Heaven by our own efforts. We might be excellent at attending church, helping others or giving to charities etc., but none of these things takes us out of the 'sinner' category. If we were filling in a form about this on the internet we would not be allowed to proceed until this first hurdle has been overcome. I personally feel that this is one of the hardest parts of accepting Jesus into our lives. We can find it difficult to accept that we are sinners. It is not that we are ignoring this fact, it is that we are often unable to recognise that this is how we would be classified according to Jesus.



BELIEVE: The next step is to believe. What are we to believe? Everyone reading this has probably heard about the death of Jesus on the cross. Do you believe that as a fact that actually happened? More than that though, do you know why it happened? By going to the cross Jesus said, "Sorry" to God on our behalf. He did not go through the crucifixion for His own sake, He did it for each one of us. Do you believe that Jesus did that for you personally? Believing this as a fact is essential to becoming a Christian. Jesus Himself said, ***"I am the Way, the Truth and the Life. No-one comes to the Father except by Me."* (John 14: 6)**

COMMIT: When we have accepted that we are sinners and believe that Jesus died for us on the cross, then we can commit our lives to Him because a way has been made for us to connect with God the Father and receive the promise of a place in the Kingdom of Heaven. Our future is secure. Whatever we go through in this life on earth, we are guaranteed to be in the Kingdom of Heaven for eternity.

***'Whoever believes in Jesus will have eternal life.'* (John 3: 16)**

Just like the game of 'Catch', it is the intention of Jesus that every person will be caught. Sadly though, this does not actually happen. For whatever reason, there are millions of people living today who have not yet been caught and when the final whistle is blown at the end of their lives there will not be a place for them in Heaven. Make sure that you are not left out. Be assured of a place for which Jesus made such a sacrifice on your behalf. He preached about it. He died for that purpose. It is not a game but a reality of something that will affect every one of our lives. Jesus referred to eternal life when He said, ***"I have come that you may have life and have it abundantly."* (John 10:10)**

DON'T AVOID BEING CAUGHT!