**Low Threshold-High Ceiling**

I went back to school last week. In both senses of the word. Not only did I return to my primary school to teach one day a week, but the staff also had some professional development (otherwise known as teaching for teachers) on how to better teach maths to the poor little blighters.

A useful task to give children is one called ‘low threshold-high ceiling’, which means the sort of task that's easy to access to begin with but does not remain limited; children can pursue the task according to their ability and motivation. Some of the best tasks are open-ended: they have no limit, no ceiling.

If you think about it the success of football is down to the same factor. The low threshold is that no special equipment is needed. How many of us when completely desperate have played with a screwed up ball of paper in a classroom? Jumpers for goalposts ring a bell? All you need is something roundish and a couple of mates and you have a game.

Compare that to the gear and facilities you need to play other sports and you see what I mean about low threshold, and the high ceiling is as high as you want to make it: it’s so popular that I’ve heard some people even make a career out of it.

My friend Jay Lawrence, who some of you may know from his time in Plymouth, moved out to Canada a few years ago to work with young people over there. He was struck by the craze for ice hockey amongst school age kids. Just to get a game their parents had to fork out hundreds of dollars for all the kit, pay expensive subs to get them in a team, and run them large distances several times a week for practices and games. We have a few ice hockey leagues in the UK but the high threshold prevents many from even thinking about getting involved.

Following Jesus is the ultimate low threshold-high ceiling activity. His basic summary on how to live is to love God and love others: imitate me he was basically saying. To follow me I want you to do what I did, live as I lived. Very simple and straightforward. We can all have a go at that. It’s once we try to do it we realise that the threshold is low but the ceiling is heaven itself – it’s a life-time adventure that leaves us more humbled and more aware of our own frailties the further we progress. Being a Christian is a downwardly mobile occupation and let no-one tell you otherwise. It leaves you increasingly more aware of your need for grace, and I suppose therein lies its beauty. But it doesn’t make it any easier!