

Television is awash with catch phrases that wind their way into everyday life, isn't it?

Maybe for me, someone who grew up in the 1970, one of the most famous is to boldly go where no man (or as the revised version has it) no one has gone before.

It's from the original star trek series and according the internet search engines it has the honour of being the most famous example of a split infinitive. Certainly, every week my mother would shout out remember it should be to go boldly where no one has been before or Boldly to go where no one has been before. Never to boldly go.

But language changes with usage and the shape of that phrase at the introduction of a supposed science fiction television series shaped how we were to view the programme.

To boldly go emphasises the way the crew of the USS enterprise was to go about things in a way that makes to go boldly seems clumsy and ordinary. This was to be no ordinary story of space fights, this was about attitudes and of course as you think about the programme you discover that it is more about suggesting a bold way by which we should live

respectfully together than it is about simple stories of defeating aliens.

To boldly go suddenly becomes a statement of how we are to change our view of life. For Star Trek, the world was a very humanist world and we were to boldly go in our lives building up relationships and living good helpful accommodating lives and if sometimes we had to be ready to defend these ideas well that was what had to happen.

But it is good advice isn't it? To boldly go and build what you believe in. At the end of last week's reading we left Peter and John and the followers of Jesus. Luke in the acts of the Apostles, his book describing how his view of how the early church spread, we read that after Peter and John were released from their arrest, they were banned from speaking and teaching in the name of Jesus. What did they do they prayed for the holy spirit and spoke the word of God with boldness.

They decided to boldly go out onto the streets and even into the temple and speak boldly about Jesus.

When they do this of course things don't go well with their relationships to those who had banned them from speaking and they are arrested again and put in jail.

This turns out to have something of an echo of the Easter story about it. The stone was rolled away from the grave but they did not find Jesus. While the dungeon was firmly closed on Peter and the other followers, when the gates were opened next day, their cell was empty. The grave cannot hold Jesus. Neither it seems can the preaching of the gospel be imprisoned.

The apostles are boldly sitting and continuing to teach in the temple and a little later Peter and his friends are back in court. When reminded they were ordered not to teach in Jesus name, Peter says simply that they had to. We must obey God not any human authority.

A very bold claim.

Remember the people accusing the disciples actually do honour people and believe in the Eternal one, God.

These are wise men who have studied the scriptures. What they hear Peter say is something along the lines of You are explaining your vision of God to us and in this chamber, there are already different views about whether or not people can be raised from the dead. Some of us say yes it happens, others of us say no it doesn't happen. You seem to be saying God and you

are of a mind. How can you be so sure of God's agreement with your opinion?

It has a feeling of a very valid questions, doesn't it? One we as the church face from others each day, don't we?

You must obey God more than other people do, says Peter. Luke in his history of the early church is describing his view of the point at which the church is threatening to break from what, for them, had been traditional religious practice.

The discussion is getting heated. Is there anyone who can step in and cool things towards a decision?

Well one person did stand up. A well known, wise Pharisee whose name was Gamaliel. He stands up to calm the situation. We should lodge in our minds that Gamaliel has an influence on the whole New Testament story since later we will discover he is the teacher of Paul, the writer of so much of the new Testament.

What he says is look if we're going to discuss this, it's best if we do so without the apostles being present. Then we can speak our mind. Maybe he even added after all you know how much of a hot head Peter is, he

will just wind us up. He's the kind of person who will hold fast to his bold opinion right to the last tear.

So once Peter and his friends are removed, the law makers calm down.

What does Gamaliel say? How does he calm the situation?

He reminds them all that the question is simple. Is what we hear from god or not?

It seems to be the important question for us today too, doesn't it?

Then he goes further

Shouldn't we leave the judgement of this to the eternal one, to God?

Now Gamaliel is the one boldly going where no one has gone before.

His argument is basically. If God sits behind all that these people are doing, then it will be done. Don't you remember this is not the first time we've had to make these decisions, he says.

Remember Theudus. He claimed to be the Messiah. He had fanatical followers. That man was killed too, but where has he gone? Even though the people believed

him, he disappeared into nothingness. After him Judas the Galilean rose up and got people to follow him. He too has disappeared.

I tell you keep away from these men. You will see the situation will resolve itself. If it is the work of people, it will bleed itself to death and if it is really from the eternal one, from God that is, you won't be able to do anything against it and it will turn out that we are at war with God. Although we firmly believe that this is not from God, only God actually knows.

The gathering was convinced by wise Gamaliel. The apostles were not killed, but they were banned once more from speaking.

The Apostles continued their work. They didn't consider quitting. They continued boldly proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Messiah and soon Luke will start to tell us one version of how the good news spread from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth. The new Testament contains three versions of this same story. The spread of the early church. All are proclaimed boldly.

It makes us think, doesn't it, as we face the future of spreading the message,

as we too help others to live the way Jesus asks us to.

Praising God, yes

Helping out those in need too.

We do it with a bold attitude that acknowledges that in the end God sits behind it all. If what we do is really from God, we can't do anything about it. We firmly believe that we can see the future shape of the church, but only God actually knows.

Until he makes things clear we focus on praising god and helping those in need in the name

Of God who loves us

Jesus who died for us and so ensured we have hope for the eternal future with him which starts here

Now as we take our turn spreading the good news of God, Jesus Christ's God's message to us.

Peace be with you.

Amen.