

4<sup>th</sup> January 2025

## Knowing

**Cassius:** Did Cicero say anything?

**Casca:** Ay, he spoke in Greek.

**Cassius:** To what effect?

**Casca:** Nay, an' I tell you that, I'll never look you i' the face again;  
but those that understood him smiled at one another,  
and shook their heads; but for mine own part, it was Greek to me.

William Shakespeare, *Julius Caesar*

Mentioning Greek yesterday reminded me that I've never been to Greece – though with Scotland drawn to play Greece home and away in two football tournaments this year, who knows? Given his use of Greek as a metaphor for something difficult to understand, maybe Shakespeare hadn't been to Greece either. But can't we all relate to Casca's lack of understanding? When words are strange to our ear because we can't understand the language, it's unintelligible. When someone uses technical or medical terminology that we don't get, "it's all Greek to me". Or even when English is spoken in a strong dialect, we're easily confused again.

It's not that the people who're communicating with us are unintelligent, or that *we're* thick because we don't understand! Knowledge isn't just about what we know or comprehend. We can still be bright when we are in a state of "not knowing". And a person who asks a question to which we don't have a pat answer isn't stupid in asking their question, nor does the lack of a quick response call into question our own education.

In our church's work with young children, this question came up, "If Jesus was born in Bethlehem in year zero, how old is he now?" (John Bell's hymn-lyrics came to mind: *Before the world began, one Word was there.*) There can never be a prescribed answer to a question like that. But not having a response didn't indicate our lack of knowledge. What mattered is that a child was comfortable asking a question. A trusting relationship had fostered an enquiry. *Our* state of "not knowing" was OK, and we will continue to create a climate of honest, open and on-going dialogue.

How old is Jesus? It's all Greek to me! But when a child and an adult, unlike like Casca and Cassius, can smile at each other and *not* shake their heads, it's a continuation of an open atmosphere of learning together.

### A prayer for today

*Lord, I know it's right to ask, to question, even to doubt, in our open relationship. Amen*

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