

LEARNING JESUS: Part 2

When Christians are described as followers of Jesus, it is important to be clear that we follow, not the Jesus of history, not just a set of teachings, but someone who is our contemporary, and who, because of the resurrection, is alive.

I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the sharing of his sufferings by becoming like him in his death, if somehow I may attain the resurrection of the dead.

Philippians 3:10

Luke Timothy Johnson says it is better to speak of "**learning Jesus**" than of "knowing Jesus" - for we are "concerned with a process rather than a product". In Paul's passionate longing to experience Jesus, and to "become like him", we get a glimpse of what is involved in learning Jesus: a life of mystery, reciprocity, respect, openness, silence, reflection, patience, suffering, openness to the other's truth, and creative fidelity - the "willingness to trust, be attentive and suffer with the other even as the other changes".

I am the way, and the truth, and the life

John 14:6

What Jesus offers is a way of being in the world that is real and authentic, and one which is genuinely life-giving and freeing. The only absolute is the absoluteness of unconditional love. So Jesus is not offering us a credal statement or a proposition - but a way of being that is utterly truth-full and which waits to be **learned**, practised and lived. Talk about it, and we are tempted to make exclusive claims: live it, and we discover his grace-full and inclusive way of life.

Be compassionate just as God is compassionate.

Luke 6:36

This is not a task or a duty. It is a discovery of not only who we are, but **whose** we are. It is nothing less than living the intimacy and mystery of God, in whose image we are made. It is **learning** to live without anxiety, and without competition. Compassion is our proper identity. It is the heart of the new community of God, the new way of being-in-relation.