

Jesus, authentic human being.

The issues facing me in my daily life include the following:

What to eat and where to buy it?

What to wear and where to buy it?

How to respond to those immediately around me, including family and friends and those who for one reason or another are now part of my life. ?

How to respond to issues in world I am aware of and which concern me? War and weaponry, climate change, refugees, poverty.

How to spend my time? How to prioritise?

What books, people, events, activities really sustain me in living in ways that mean I answer those questions in ways that do justice to their seriousness?

Human beings are all limited, some much more so than others, by history, by our cultural and religious contexts, by our physical strength and intelligence, by our close relationships and the way all of those affect our emotional well being. 'Life is a peep hole, a single tiny entry into a vastness' (Life of Pi by Yann Martel). We all however have to work out how to live within all the limitations of place and time we experience and many of the above issues are common to all human beings.

Jesus for me is one of the people I turn to in seeking to discover how to live. This is because throughout my life there have been other significant people around me for whom Jesus is such a key person. I have increasingly realised all claims to know the mind or heart of Jesus are based on interpretations and there are now layers and layers of such interpretations so no one can claim to know the 'real Jesus'. The 2 great commandments Jesus affirms as the basis of human life (Mark 12 v28-31) seem to me to mean we are to live in both the widest possible context but also in the very immediate context of our daily living. However what the detailed interpretations of that mean for a particular human life at a particular time and place is less clear. It will mean struggle, truthfulness which may be painful, and preparedness to be challenged about what love really means.

That does not mean however that any interpretation is valid. Some things about Jesus' life seem to me to be verging on absolutes for a human being wishing to live a life of love of which all human beings are capable.

- Nothing is solved by killing. Only a change of heart and mind can bring about caring relationships.
- It is good to live simply, with few possessions and in touch with the natural world.
- Relationships with other people are central to a fully human life and are to be marked by mutual care and compassion but also challenge.
- Refusing to accept the views of other people however great their status or power may be important if one is to be genuine ie true to one's own deepest feelings and insights. This can have costly implications.
- All human beings need to find a way of dealing with the fear of death if they are to live courageously.

I do not think Jesus expected followers to be clones of himself but sometimes the question 'what would Jesus do' may be enlightening. However, many really significant issues for us in our context just cannot be dealt with totally in this way as life is so different. In the end if obedience to apparent authority is prioritised over personal conviction the outcome can be very destructive of things that make for our humanity. I think that is in fact a truth Jesus upheld himself in his critique of laws or thinking which hindered or prevented healing and mutual dialogue even with those often disregarded or vilified.

There have been many influences on the way I see life, the way I make decisions about actions and what I say. Reading the gospels and trying to understand what the life of Jesus was about has been very formative. . This has included an understanding of his life expressing something of the nature of God, the God Jesus prayed to. This gives an extra dimension to his humanity and affirms that all human life, though it is always limited and that limitation needs to be acknowledged, is more than a temporary blip on the landscape. Human beings to express their full humanity need to be open both to the immensity of the wider context of all life, and also to the everyday experiences of their own immediate context. The responses of love, compassion, indignation, challenge and delight as seen in Jesus all affirm such 'mindfulness' leads to a treasuring of all life. It also leads to an urgency to change things which militate against all human beings living such lives of truth, courage and love.