

group Bible Study – November 15, 2006

Read Luke chapters 22-24

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Who do you love? Me or the thought of me?
- John Mayer, *Continuum*

The words of Luke 22-24 describe the climax and dénouement to one of the most important pieces of our Christian Story. And although I've heard these words countless times in one form or another, I'm always drawn to what Jesus went through in the story. But as I sat with the text this week I couldn't help my mind from wandering to the inner worlds of Jesus' disciples and general followers, wondering what it must have been like to be one of the "chosen" during this episode of the story.

Imagine yourself there for a moment. You've spent the past three years of your life intimately with Jesus. You've seen his healings and miracles, heard his teaching, and spent private moments with the other disciples learning about the coming Kingdom of God. Everything in you tells you that Jesus is the very Messiah your Hebrew Scriptures told you to expect.

But then one evening Jesus is arrested by the Roman authorities. You watch as he is tried for unjust reasons and then beaten so thoroughly he is barely alive. You follow his footsteps to Golgoth, watching him struggle to carry his own cross, then ultimately nailed to it to suffer one of the most horrible deaths humans have ever created. As he breathes his last breath, what would be going through your mind? All the hope and trust you've put into Jesus as the Chosen One has been murdered on the same cross. This was not how the Messiah was supposed to be treated, this was not the King the Jews had anticipated! Just what have you given your life for? That evening and the following day are some of the darkest you can remember, as you try to sort the pieces of a shattered faith.

Reading this in the 21st century – and knowing "the ending" – we lose how confusing this event must have been for the disciples. Jesus' death was not what they expected from God at this point in the story. And similarly, there is much about the ways God writes our own story that we don't expect. In many ways we become so distracted by who we want Jesus to be that we miss who he actually *is*. So it begs the question, then...

Who do you love? Jesus, or the thought of Jesus?

Study Questions (for individuals or groups):

- What are some of the ways you worship the "thought of Jesus" rather than simply Jesus?