A close-up photograph of a stone architectural detail, likely a frieze or cornice, featuring intricate carvings of acanthus leaves and scrolls. The stone is a warm, reddish-brown color with some weathering and discoloration. The background is a blurred outdoor setting.

Huddle, Winter 2020

Tim Collins

*The Surpassing Knowledge of
Knowing Christ*

Opening with prayer, followed by song

Be still and know that I am God,
be still and know that I am God,
be still and know that I am God.

In thee, O Lord, I put my trust,
In thee, O Lord, I put my trust,
In thee, O Lord, I put my trust.

How would you describe Abraham Lincoln?



How would you describe Abraham Lincoln?

- Other-centered:
 - ❖ Didn't generally talk about himself; had political goals beyond his own success)
- A spinner of cracker-barrel aphorisms:
 - ❖ "Character is like a tree and reputation like a shadow. The shadow is what we think of it; the tree is the real thing"
- Politically savvy:
 - ❖ Cabinet formed from adversaries
- Self starter:
 - ❖ Log cabin beginnings; Library of Congress records show he checked out a book on war theory while waiting for his generals to act



- Personable:
 - ❖ "So you're the little woman who wrote the book that made this great war!"
(to Harriet Beecher Stowe)

Would it surprise you to know this last quote was a fake?

- Lincoln met with Harriet Beecher Stowe, but historians doubt he ever said the quote most famously attributed to him, *“So you're the little woman who wrote the book that made this great war!”*
- Why are we so ready to believe Lincoln said this?



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Who can identify the most famous passage about Jesus in the gospels which doesn't clear the bar for all the basic rules of textual criticism?

The woman caught in adultery, John 8:1-11. The only pre-8th cent. text which includes it is known for its interpolations.



Do we know Jesus well enough to tell authentic teaching from fake?

“There is a fascinating example [of a noncanonical saying of Jesus] in what is known as the Western Text ("D") of St. Luke's Gospel. It comes just after the pointed words of Jesus "The Son of man is Lord of the sabbath" (Luke 6:5).

"D" then offers a short narrative which is complete in itself and thoroughly fits the context:

“When on the same day he saw a man doing work on the sabbath, he said to him: ‘Man, if you know what you are doing, you are blessed. But if you do not know it, you are accursed and a transgressor of the law.’”

“It may well be authentic.” (Michael Green, scholar and author of *The Books the Church Suppressed*)

And if we are tempted to wonder if *all* extra-biblical accounts sound authentic...

- Around the time of Dan Brown and the Da Vinci Code, there was a resurgence of interest in the extracanonical writings
- There's a good reason why these were not included in the canon...
 - ❖ Luke's version the banquet parable also appears in the Gospel of Thomas. In the latter version Jesus concludes that the problem isn't the excuses per se, but that they are all related to business transactions; he ends by saying, "traders and merchants shall not enter the places of my Father."
 - ❖ In the Gospel-of-Thomas (107) version of the parable of the lost sheep, Jesus retrieves it because it's the biggest and it's his favorite.
 - ❖ "The non-canonical Gospel of the Hebrews finds it helpful to vilify the third servant in its version of this parable. He is painted as a reprobate who squanders his master's money on 'harlots and flute girls.'"
- Our greatest tools are *contrast* and *context*

Why should we want to know Jesus better?

- He is our treasure and the ultimate goal of our faith:
 - ❖ Philippians 3:7ff: “Yet whatever gains I had, these I have come to regard as loss because of Christ. 8 More than that, *I regard everything as loss because of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and I regard them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ* 9 and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but one that comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God based on faith. 10 *I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection* and the sharing of his sufferings by becoming like him in his death...”
- And from Jesus’ own words:
 - ❖ “Behold, I stand at the door and knock. *If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me.*” (Rev 3:20)
 - ❖ “I do not call you servants any longer, because the servant does not know what the master is doing; *but I have called you friends*” (John 15:15a; see also 15:13-14)

Why should we want to know Jesus better?

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Is your relationship with Jesus closer than it was five years ago?

Does Jesus feel like a friend to you?

- And from Jesus’

- ❖ “Behold, I stand at the door and knock. *If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me.*” (Rev 3:20)
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What words would you use to describe Jesus?

- And from Jesus’

- ❖ “Behold, I stand at the door and knock. *If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me.*” (Rev 3:20)
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Based on the primary source material, what is Jesus like?

- If we go by 20th century scholarship, there are a dozen Jesuses depending on our focus (Barnett, *Jesus and the Logic of History*, 17)
 - ❖ If we focus on the miracles stories we find Jesus the healer and exorcist (Vermes)
 - ❖ If the “sayings” are central we meet Jesus the teacher—the sage (Downing), maybe even a subversive sage (Borg), or even an eschatological prophet (Sanders)
 - ❖ If the Son of man sayings are primary we find a social prophet (Horsley)
 - ❖ If we focus on the rabbinic context we find Jesus the rabbi (Chilton)
 - ❖ If we focus on apocalyptic Judaism we find a “reasonable visionary” (Sanders)
- “Using the same texts and scholarly apparatus, dozens, perhaps hundreds of different Jesuses can be constructed” (Paul Johnson, quoted in Barnett)

Since our focus is personal relationship, we can narrow our focus to *what Jesus is like*

- Does Jesus seem to you:
 - ❖ Harsh or difficult? (Jesus and the Pharisees)
 - ❖ Distant (Jesus explaining to his disciples why he speaks in parables)
 - ❖ Cruel (Jesus when he heals the Syrophenician woman's daughter)
 - ❖ Arbitrary or angry (Jesus with the moneychangers, or cursing the fig tree)
 - ❖ Unsympathetic ("no one who turns his back from the plow")
- Too often we look away from these and create a flannelgraph Jesus
 - ❖ "We have very efficiently pared the claws of the Lion of Judah, certifying Him 'meek and mild,' and recommended Him as a fitting household pet for pale curates and pious ladies. To those who knew him, however, he in no way suggested a milk-and-water person; they objected to him as a dangerous firebrand." (Dorothy Sayers, *Christian Letters to a Post-Christian World*, 15)

Natural human biases can obstruct our view of Jesus

- A study of ~400 people were surveyed to determine their self-perception as well as their image of Christ using the five-factor model of personality
 - ❖ They found a “significant positive correlation” between their self perception and their perception of Christ, *but only for the Christians*
 - ❖ They conclude (in nicer language) that either the Christians are becoming more like Christ or they are engaging in self delusion

Pastoral Psychol (2008) 56:341–353
DOI 10.1007/s11089-007-0106-x

Correlation of Self-Perception and Image of Christ Using the Five-Factor Model of Personality

Brad D. Strawn • Matthew Alexander

This finding was supported by another study of Christians

- Additionally, Jesus was found to have many positive characteristics

Journal of Psychology and Theology
1997, Vol. 25, No. 3, 364-373

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Biola University, 0091-6471/410-730

RESEARCH

PERSONALITY CORRELATES OF ONE'S IMAGE OF JESUS: HISTORIOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS USING THE FIVE-FACTOR MODEL OF PERSONALITY

RALPH L. PIEDMONT
Loyola College
JOSEPH E. G. WILLIAMS
Eastern Illinois University
JOSEPH W. CIARROCCI
Loyola College

Table 1

Adjective Check List Items With High and Low Endorsement Frequencies (N = 115)

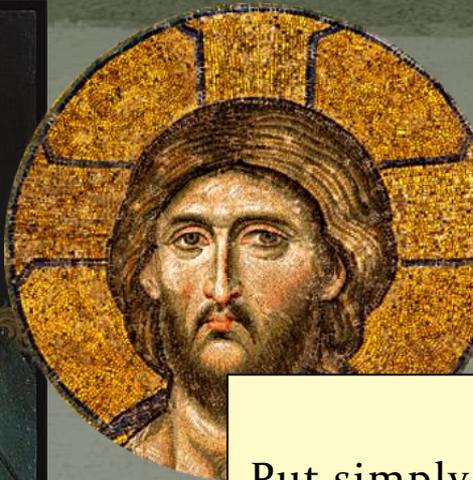
Adjective Check List Item Endorsement Frequencies			
High ^a		Low ^b	
active	alert	blustery	cruel
patient	understanding	quitting	rattlebrained
wise	peaceable	shiftless	unfriendly
capable	courageous	unintelligent	unkind
generous	warm	weak	dull
appreciative	considerate	hasty	infantile
intelligent	kind	slipshod	slow
gentle	dependable	smug	spineless
affectionate	friendly	undependable	whiny
honest	forgiving		

^a Adjective Check List items endorsed by more than 80% of the respondents.

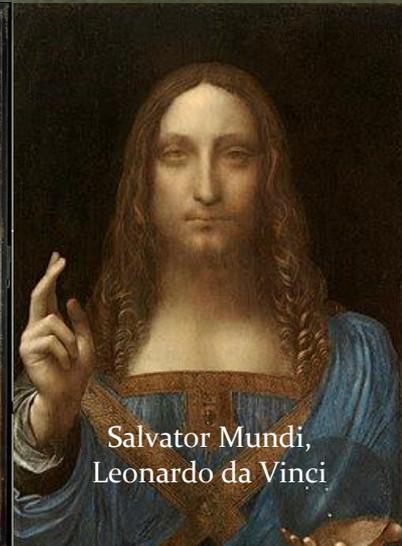
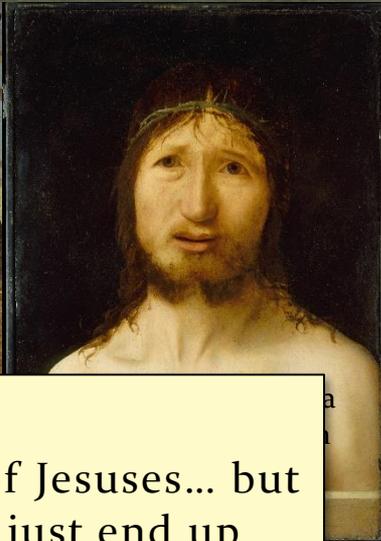
^b Adjective Check List items endorsed by 1% or less of the respondents.



Boticelli: Christ the Redeemer

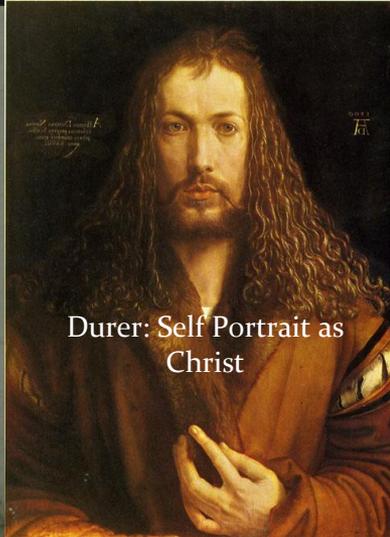


Hagi

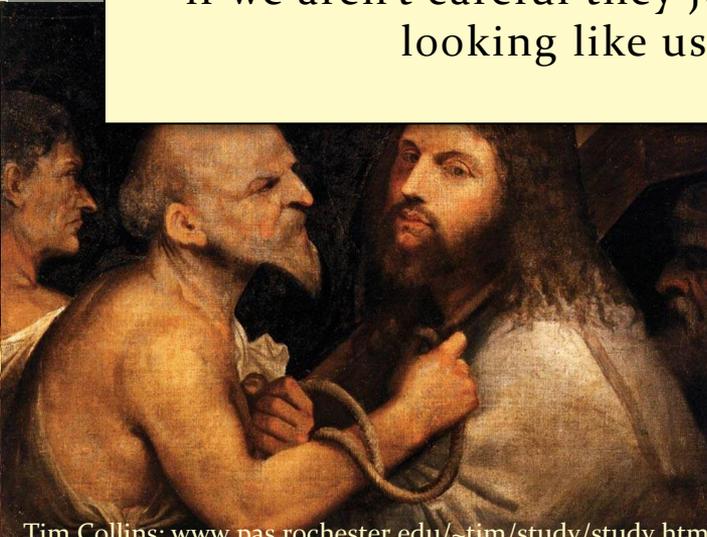


Salvator Mundi,
Leonardo da Vinci

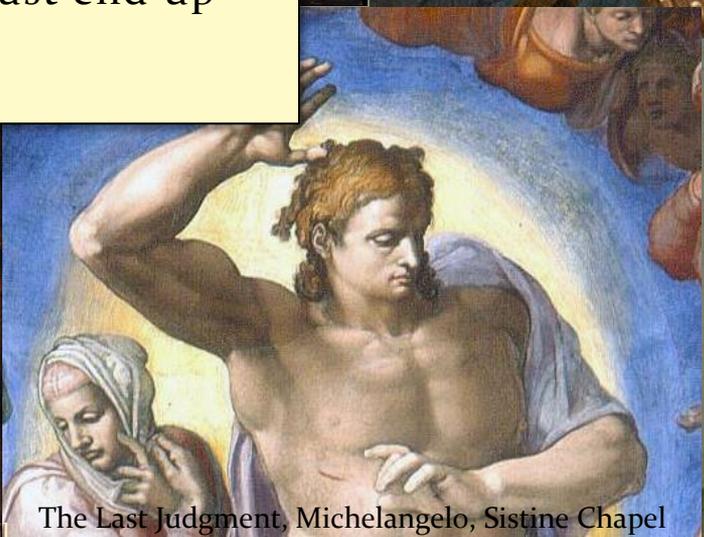
Put simply, there are lots of Jesuses... but if we aren't careful they just end up looking like us



Durer: Self Portrait as Christ



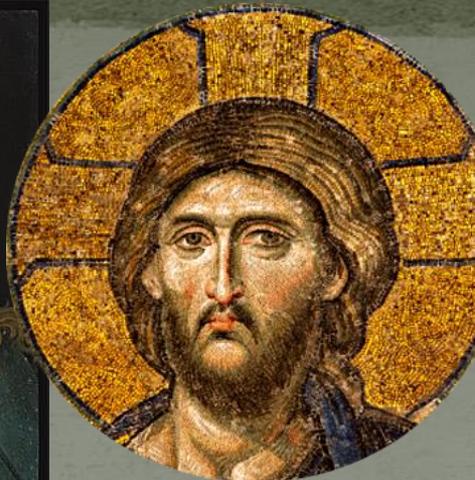
Tim Collins: www.pas.rochester.edu/~tim/study/study.html



The Last Judgment, Michelangelo, Sistine Chapel



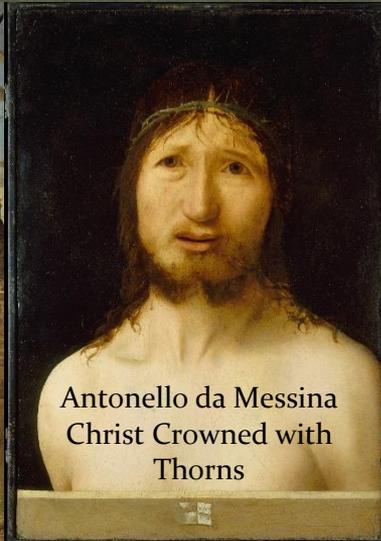
Boticelli: Christ the Redeemer



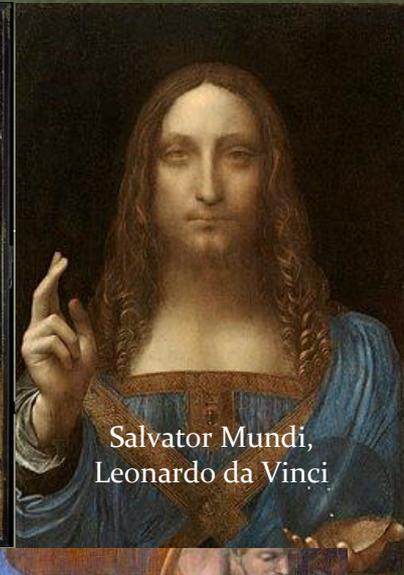
Hagia Sophia



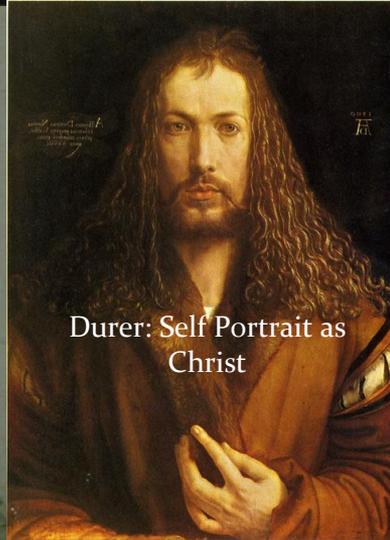
Andrea Mantegna
Christ the Suffering Redeemer



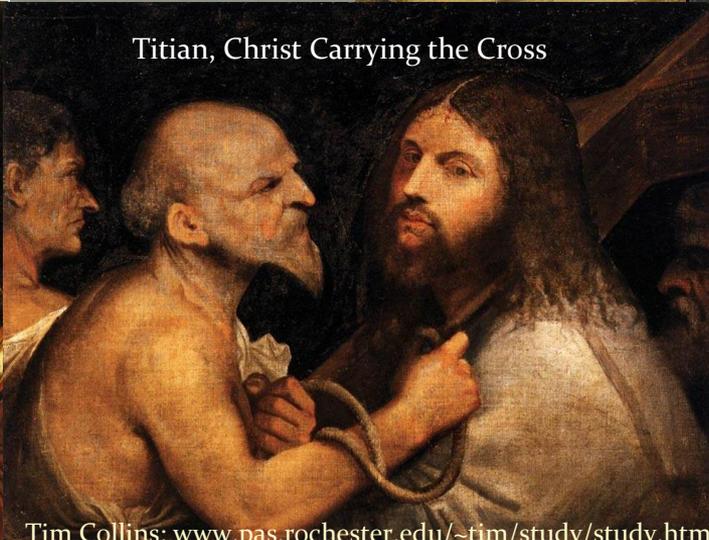
Antonello da Messina
Christ Crowned with Thorns



Salvator Mundi,
Leonardo da Vinci



Durer: Self Portrait as Christ



Titian, Christ Carrying the Cross

Tim Collins: www.pas.rochester.edu/~tim/study/study.htm



The Last Judgment, Michelangelo, Sistine Chapel

Fortunately, the biblical writers anticipated our problem

- Whereas we might be tempted, with Robert Browning, to despair:
 - ❖ “When my ashes scatter, says John, there is left on earth
No one alive who knew (consider this!)
—Saw with his eyes and handled with his hands
That which was from the first, the Word of Life.
How will it be when none more saith, ‘I saw’?”
(from *A Death in the Desert*, about the death of the apostle John)
- Can Jesus be known from this distance?

Fortunately, the biblical writers anticipated our problem

- Whereas we might be tempted, with Robert Browning, to despair
- In fact, the gospel writers *knew* they were writing to the second generation—as evidenced by passages like the walk to Emmaus, Lk 24:13-27
 - ❖ Jesus, meeting two discouraged disciples on the road after his crucifixion, first *teaches* them about himself: “Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures”
 - ❖ They *recognize* him *only when they fellowship with him*: “Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight. They said to each other, ‘Were our hearts not burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?’”
- This passage suggests that trying to know Jesus as a person is crucial

How can we grow in our relationship with Jesus?

- We can use the scriptures to try to understand better who Jesus actually is
 - ❖ What patterns are there? What can context tell us?
 - ❖ What can we learn about Jesus from the passages which are hard to understand—without explaining them away?
- I have identified the passages in the synoptics gospels which describe interactions between Jesus and others
- I propose we look at classes of interactions to see what we can learn about what Jesus is like, as a way to disabuse ourselves of false impressions (positive or negative)

Jesus' Interactions in the Synoptic Gospels									
SYNOPTICS	Leuke	John	Parties	Levgor	Seeker	Positi	Description		
Matthe Mark									
			Zacchaeus				Call of Zacchaeus		
			Mom				Young Jesus at the Temple		
2029-34	14:45-52	18:35-43	Bartholomew				Healing of blind Bartimaeus		
			Blind man				The blind man of Bethsaida		
08:27-31	19:45-52	19:35-43	Blind men				Healing of two blind men		
08:5-9	7:13-17	7:13-17	Centurion				Healing of the centurion's servant		
17:14-21	9:14-29	9:37-48a	Epileptic boy				An epileptic boy healed		
9:25-28	7:34-36	7:34-36	Genes				Healing of the Syrochenaean woman's daughter		
09:19-26	5:21-43	8:40-56	Leader/seeker				Healing of a man with leprosy		
12:22-27	3:19b-30	11:7-23	Leaders				Accusation against Jesus: houses divided		
12:34	2:16	6:51	Leaders				The healing of the man with the withered hand		
08:14	140:45	5:12-18	Lepor				Healing of a leper		
		17:15-19	Lepor				Jesus heals the leper		
09:1-8	2:11-12	5:17-26	Paralytic				Healing of the paralytic		
		7:15-17	Widow				The widow's son at Nain		
		14:16	Widow				Healing of a man with dropsy		
13:61-58	6:16a	4:8-30	Leaders				Rejection at Nazareth		
08:28-34	8:120	9:35-38	Demoniac				Expulsion of a demon (Jesus' compassion on the demon)		
08:23-27	4:35-51	8:23-25	Disciples				Calming the storm ("Why are you so afraid, you men of little faith?")		
14:15-21	6:29-44	9:10-17	Disciples				Feeding the 5k		
14:22-26	6:45-54	9:14-17	Disciples				Walking on water		
17:1-8	9:2-8	9:28-36	Disciples				The transfiguration		
21:32-33	11:25	11:25	Disciples				Jesus curses the figtree		
14:34-38	6:53-56	6:53-56	Genes				Healings at Gennesaret		
13:10-16	4:40-12	8:3-10	Disciples				The reason for speaking in parables		
16:1-21	8:27-33	9:8-22	Disciples				"Who does men say that the Son of Man is?"		
16:5-12	8:14-21	12:61	Disciples				Leaven of the Pharisees		
17:1-17	9:5-13	9:5-13	Disciples				The coming of Elijah		
18:1-5	9:33-37	3:46-48	Disciples				The dispute about greatness		
18:2-22	9:38-41	17:64	Disciples				Question Y's question		
12:48-50	3:31-35	8:19-21	Disciples and fam				Question Y's question		
17:24-27	9:38-41	9:38-41	Disciples				On forgiving your brother or sister		
09:14-17	2:18-22	5:33-39	Disciples				The dispute about fasting		
11:2-8	7:9-22	7:9-22	John's guys				Jesus' words about John		
11:9-16	7:28-33	7:28-33	John's guys				John's question to Jesus		
22:34-40	12:28-31	10:25-28	Lawyer				Question from John's disciples about fasting		
12:18	2:23-28	6:5-7	Leaders				Jesus' words about John		
12:38-42	11:29-32	11:29-32	Leaders				John's question to Jesus		
15:1-20	7:1-23	7:1-23	Leaders				The lawyer's question		
16:14	12:28-38	11:13-15	Leaders				Picking heads of grain on the sabbath		
21:23-27	11:27-33	28:1-8	Leaders				What defiles a person		
26:6-13	14:3-9	7:36-50	Leaders				The Pharisees seek a sign		
19:1-12	19:1-12	19:1-12	Pharisees				By whose authority do you do this?		
22:9-22	12:13-17	26:20-26	Pharisees				Is it lawful to divorce your wife for any cause?		
22:34-40	12:28-34	10:25-28	Pharisees				Question about tribute to Caesar		
22:41-46	12:35-37	28:14-44	Pharisees				The greatest commandment		
19:16-30	10:17-31	18:19-30	Pharisees				Question and P's aim 110		
22:23-28	12:18-27	20:27-40	Pharisees				Rich young ruler		
09:19-22	9:37-43	9:37-43	Scribe				Question about the resurrection		
20:20-28	10:35-45	22:24-27	Disciples				Nature of discipleship (from law holes, etc.)		
26:30-29	14:36-31	22:39	Disciples				Jesus and the mother of the sons of Zebedee		
28:1-10	16:1-8	24:3-11	Disciples				Miraculous catch of fish		
		10:29-42	Disciples				Jesus predicts the disciples will fall away		
		24:13-35	Disciples				The empty tomb		
		24:36-48	Disciples				Mary and Martha		
19:13-18	19:13-18	19:13-17	Disciples and kids				The road to Emmaus		
09:9-13	2:13-17	5:27-32	Disciples and Leaders				The appearance of the risen Christ in Jerusalem		
21:16-17	11:1	19:45-46	Leaders				Jesus blesses the children		
26:57-65	14:53-72	22:54-71	Leaders				Calling of Levi		
27:11-14	15:2-5	23:2-5	Leaders				Jesus and the moneychangers		
		16:14-15	Pharisees				Jesus' dispute with the Sadducees, Peter's denial		
		15:15-23	Pharisees				Jesus and Pilate		
		11:21-23	Satan				Hypocrisy of the Pharisees called out by Jesus		
04:1-11	11:2-13	4:1-13	Satan				Pharisees warn Jesus to flee Herod		
26:47-56	14:43-52	22:47-53	Soldiers and disciples				Temptation in the desert		
							Jesus taken captive		

How can we grow in our relationship with Jesus?

- We can also, in between our meetings, seek Jesus in prayer (to “fellowship” with him), so that this isn’t just another academic exercise
 - ❖ I will sent out regular passages for us to read and think about (if this is deemed useful)
 - ❖ Is there a set of questions we would like to meditate on?
 - ❖ Would it be useful to journal, recording our experiences?
 - ❖ Would *Lectio Divina* be a productive approach?

What would you like to do to complement our discussions?