

There's a lot of verses in the Bible that tell us things about Jesus. They tell us things about His birth, His ministry, His teachings. From them we get to see His travels and His prayer habits. We see how he interacts with those who object to Him, and those who worship Him.

For many Christians, the very things Jesus says are the most special of the verses we find about Jesus. Especially those where He talks about Himself. As being God himself. As being the fulfillment of all the OT prophecies and scriptures. Of being the Lamb of God who would take away the sins of the world.

There's only one place in all those verses where Jesus talks about His own heart. One. In Matt. 11:28-30, Jesus says, "Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."

When the Bible talks about the heart, it's talking about what makes us who we are. The heart is the essence of our being, not just a part of who we are. "It drives all we do. It is who we are."

What does Jesus say about the essence of who He is? "I am gentle and lowly in heart." The word "gentle" is translated as "meek" and "humble" in other NT verses.

Meek. Humble. Gentle. That's how Jesus describes Himself.

How would that attitude look in physical form, especially if that person is Jesus? Open arms. Definitely not someone who is angry, harsh, or does a lot of finger pointing.

Jesus says He is gentle.

He also says He is "lowly" in heart.

In the NT, this word is frequently translated as "humble". Humble in the NT almost always refers to being in a lower condition or circumstance, like when Mary says in Luke 1:52 that God exalts "those who are of humble estate." Paul uses it that same way in Rom. 12:16 when he tells Christians "not to be haughty, but associate with the lowly."

This is the word Jesus uses to describe Himself: lowly / humble.

What is He saying about Himself when He describes Himself this way? That He is accessible to us. Despite Him being the Son of God, the creator of the Universe, He makes Himself accessible to us.

What allows us to have access to Him?

“All who labor and are heavy laden”

He doesn't give us a bunch of hoops to jump through before we can come to Him

We don't even have to unburden ourselves first. Just come to Him

We don't have to give Him anything first

He says, “I will give you rest”

It's his gift to us, not something He gives b/c we did something first

We know that Jesus isn't weak or powerless. Gentle and lowly doesn't mean mushy. We know He got angry at Pharisees and at towns that rejected His teachings and disbelieved His miracles. So gentle and lowly doesn't mean “mushy” or “weak”.

He is gentle and lowly to those who come to Him, who cry out to Him for help. His gentle and lowly heart is the essence of who He is.

Finally, He promises such amazing benefits to those who come to Him.

First, He says He will give us “rest for our souls.” Not necessarily for our bodies—sorry! But our souls will be at rest after we come to Him.

Second, He says “My yoke is easy and My burden is light.” That word “easy” is frequently translated as “kind”, like in Eph. 4:32: “Be kind to one another, tender-hearted.” Paul is telling us to be “easy” with other believers—kind. Jesus isn't saying life will be easy or free of pain. He's promising us a life of kindness from Him.

The yoke is this heavy crossbar that pairs oxen together and forces them the way the farmer wants them to go. But Jesus says His yoke is “easy” / kind. His yoke is a non-yoke; it's full of kindness.

His burden is light. We think of burdens as those things that weigh us down, than press down upon us. But Jesus says His burden is light.

So His yoke is a non-yoke, and His burden is a non-burden. That truth makes not coming to Jesus for help sound silly. Why wouldn't someone come to the most powerful One ever who promises to help you by making things kind and light on you?

You know why? Because that kindness isn't how most of us thought of Christ before coming to Him, maybe not how we think of Him enough. We think of Him in worldly terms:

The wealthier the person, the more they look down on the poor

The more beautiful the person, the more they look down on the unbeautiful

The One who is high and exalted doesn't want to draw near the despicable

That kind of thinking is from the world. But there are some people, maybe even some of us, who think of Jesus in this way. He'll come close to us, but He holds His nose when He gets there.

But that's not how the Bible describes Jesus, not how Jesus describes Himself:
"Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."

He calls for us to come to Him, knowing that we are burdened with difficulties and that we sometimes try to work hard to get those things figured out by ourselves.

He calls for us to accept His rest, without asking us to "prove" ourselves to Him first.

He tells us coming to Him will be easier/lighter than we think, because He will give our souls rest and the things He asks of us are from His kindness.

He is gentle and lowly in heart.

He doesn't simply meet us at our place of need; He lives in our place of need. He never gets tired of sweeping us into His open arms of tenderness. It is the essence of His heart to do those things for us, because He loves us.

His willingness to humble himself and go to the cross for us proves His heart towards us. Gentle. Lowly.

Let's pray.