

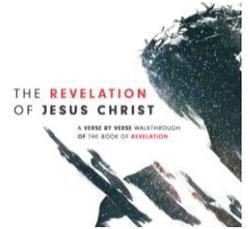
Title: Revelation, Part 26: What a Friend We Have in Jesus

Speaker: Charles Stone

Passage: Rev. 19

Big Idea: Jesus Embodies 5 Qualities We All Need in a Friend

Memory verse of the month: Rev 19:5 Then a voice came from the throne, saying: "Praise our God, all you his servants, you who fear him, both great and small!"



---

Some words remind us of fundamental needs we all have. This is one of those words. Friend. We all need friends. Friends was the title of one of the most popular sit-comes of all times. I did a bit of internet research and found that some of the most memorable and popular songs have been about friends.

- Carol King, You've Got a Friend
- Bill Withers, Lean on Me.
- Ain't no Mountain High Enough by Marvin Gaye.
- Umbrella, Rihanna.
- Friends in Low Places, Garth Brooks.
- You've Got a Friend in Me from Toy Story.
- You're My Best Friend, Weezer and one by Queen.
- Real Friends Kanye West.
- Count on Me, Bruno Mars.

The pervasiveness of the subject of friends in our culture reminds us of what we know intuitively, we all want good friends.

One of the most famous songs about friends ever is this hymn. What a Friend we have in Jesus.

It was originally written in 1855 by a despondent preacher, Joseph Scriven. He wrote it as a poem to comfort his mother and himself. He was born in Ireland but came to Ontario to share the Gospel. His life was full of tragedy. He lost his first fiancée through death. And a few years later he married and his wife died a few days after their marriage. He died a tragic death in Ontario. Nevertheless, this song has left an impact in millions of Christians world-wide. He left such an impact that there is actually an historical marker in his honor about 20 km E of Peterborough.

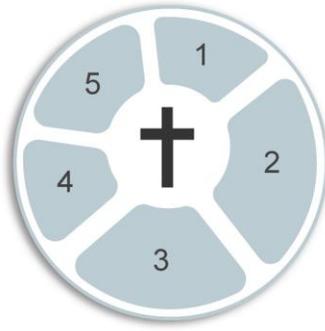
Here are the lyrics. I'll kinda sing them.

*What a Friend we have in Jesus,  
all our sins and griefs to bear!  
What a privilege to carry  
everything to God in prayer!  
O what peace we often forfeit,  
O what needless pain we bear—  
All because we do not carry  
everything to God in prayer.*

This song has been sung by a wide range of older singers from Willie Nelson to Dolly Parton to Ike and Tena Turner. It was even sung in the 1969 movie Driving Miss Daisy.

Scriven calls Jesus our Friend.

I've titled my message today, ***What a Friend we have in Jesus.***



## Big Idea

Jesus Embodies 5  
**Qualities** We All Need  
in a Friend

We continue our series in the book of Revelation, and we learn in Revelation 19 what a good friend he is. Remember that Revelation is a book of prophecy that gives us a glimpse into the future end times, and it reminds us that God is in charge, Jesus wins and will return, and we must be faithful in an increasingly topsy-turvy world.

Let's let this Bible Project Animation catch us up by going back to chapter 17 and bringing us into chapter 19.

### Video 6.08-8.30

- <https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/revelation-12-22/>

In the first six verses John sees two visions of these great multitudes that are praising God for his perfect judgment on evil as the end times approach. The first series of praises were about God's judging Babylon that represented empires and nations opposing God. The new series of praises are due to the final destruction of evil and Satan and when the church, called the bride of Christ, is united with Jesus.

### **<sup>5</sup>... "Praise our God, all you his servants, you who fear him, both small and great!"**

All socio-economic, intellectual, and spiritual stage distinctions are transcended in the united worship of the church. We all stand equally before God and have the privilege of worshipping him.<sup>1</sup>

### **<sup>7</sup> Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory!**

"To give God the glory" is to ascribe all that is noble, all that is just, all that is righteous, all that is good to him and to him alone. This is not to say that there is nothing good or noble arising from man or angel, but that human goodness or nobility is to God like the light of the moon is to the sun. On its own the moon is dark but becomes a light giver through the light provided by the sun. So, all human and angelic goodness and nobility is ultimately a matter of the grace of God, and all heaven recognizes this truth<sup>2</sup>

Another reason to rejoice is for this future wedding. In the Bible the church is described using wedding word pictures. The church is the bride of Christ, and a big feast awaits the culmination of the wedding.

### **For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready.**

Christ has purchased his followers with his blood (1:5; 5:9), and he expects us to live faithfully for him (2:10; 13:10; 14:12).<sup>3</sup>

This wedding has come so the bride gets her wedding gown.

### **<sup>8</sup> Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear." (Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of the saints.)**

Linen was expensive then and worn by priests and royalty. It's a contrast to the showiness of the prostitute's dress we saw a couple of weeks ago, the prostitute picturing those nations and cultures in opposition to God.

This dress of this bride is simple, bright, clean, and highly prized.

This is a powerful picture of grace and works. The linen was given (salvation is a free gift given to those who believe). And righteous acts and 'making herself ready' are the works done in response to God's free gift and done because of our

<sup>1</sup> Osborne, G. R. (2016). *Revelation: Verse by Verse* (p. 309). Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

<sup>2</sup> Patterson, P. (2012). *Revelation*. (E. R. Clendenen, Ed.) (Vol. 39, p. 343). Nashville, TN: B&H.

<sup>3</sup> Osborne, G. R. (2016). *Revelation: Verse by Verse* (p. 310). Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

love for what Jesus did, not to gain his approval or to merit salvation. God's blessings or rewards are given as a result of our faithfulness.

This marriage word picture goes all the way back into the OT as Israel is seen as the chosen bride of God. Then it picks up in the NT.

It's a great parallel because of the common elements in a human marriage and this image of the Church as bride of Christ like love, intimate communion, joy, and fidelity to both parties.

To understand this, it helps to understand Hebrew marriage customs. First was a betrothal, considered more binding than our engagement.

*The terms of the marriage are accepted in the presence of witnesses and God's blessing is pronounced upon the union. From this day groom and bride are legally husband and wife (2 Cor. 11: 2). Next comes the interval between betrothal and the wedding-feast. During this interval the groom pays the dowry to the father of the bride if this has not yet been done (Gn. 34: 12). Sometimes the dowry is in the form of service rendered (Gn. 29: 20). Then comes the procession at the close of the interval. The bride prepares and adorns herself. The groom, arrayed in his best attire and accompanied by his friends, who sing and bear torches, proceeds to the home of the betrothed. He receives the bride and conveys her, with a returning procession, to his own home or to the home of his parents (Mt. 9: 15; cf. also Mt. 25: 1 ff.). When the groom had to come from afar, the feast was at times spread at the home of the bride. Finally there is the wedding-feast, which includes the marriage supper. The usual festivities last seven, or even more, days.<sup>4</sup>*

The bible compares this love relationship between a bride and groom with the relationship God has with his followers or between Christ and the church. Now, the church is betrothed to Christ and Christ has paid the dowry, so to speak, through his death on the cross. The interval of separation is between Jesus' ascension after his resurrection and his coming again. In this vision Jesus has returned. In the interim the bride, the people of God, have made themselves ready, been faithful.

And putting on this linen is what Paul refers to in Colossians.

***Colossians 3:12** Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.<sup>13</sup> Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.<sup>14</sup> And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.*

So, until Jesus comes, we make ourselves ready for his return by being faithful reflected in these qualities.

**<sup>9</sup> Then the angel said to me, "Write: 'Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!'"**

This parallels the marriage fest held during the marriage festivities, just like today when a couple gets married, they have a big meal with friends and family.

**<sup>11</sup> I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice he judges and makes war.**



So now John sees Jesus on a white horse. In Roman days the victorious general would ride a white horse after victory. This is Jesus' second coming, when He comes to judge evil and set up his eternal kingdom. There is no vindictiveness behind his making war. Rather, this description of the conquering Jesus appealed to those Christians looking for a strong helper.

---

<sup>4</sup> Hendriksen, William. More Than Conquerors (pp. 179-180). Baker Book Group - A. Kindle Edition.

What follows is a description of His character.

Faithful and true. Faithful means he can be trusted, absolutely. True means that there is no falsehood in Jesus.

Justice. Justice was perverted in John's time and graft and bribery were common. But when Jesus comes he will exercise his power with perfect justice.

Although the rider is not named, it's clear that it is Jesus.

**12 His eyes are like blazing fire, and on his head are many crowns.**

His eyes as blazing fire means that He is all powerful knows all and will miss nothing as he dispenses justice. The many crowns on his head may seem a bit odd but in John's time kings would wear more than one crown to show that he was king of more than one country. Jesus' many crowns means that He is Lord of all. His rule is all-encompassing and absolute and eternal

**He has a name written on him that no one knows but he himself.**

This may be a way to say that no one has power over him because ancient magicians claimed that they could coerce spirits, have power of them, once they knew their names. It may indicate the transcendent quality of Christ, that in the very nature of Jesus some things lie beyond human understanding.

**13 He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood, and his name is the Word of God.**

This blood on his robe reminds us of his sacrificial death on the cross. He is called the Word of God because in Him God fully expresses and reveals Himself. To both Jew and Greek 'the Word of God' pointed to what was supremely important and supremely significant<sup>5</sup>

**14 The armies of heaven were following him, riding on white horses and dressed in fine linen, white and clean.**

As this final battle is about to ensue (and there is no question who wins), Jesus brings his army that could be angels, or the martyrs, or Christians or all of them.



**15 Out of his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations.**

He will conquer by the power of his word. The sword was an image for Roman might.

**16 On his robe and on his thigh, he has this name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.**

His name was written on the skirt of Christ's robe, lying over his leg, as he rode upon the white horse. It singles him out as the greatest of all rulers, the universal King.<sup>6</sup>

And what follows is the total destruction and death of evil described like vultures who fly around dead things waiting for their feast.

**19 Then I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies gathered together to make war against the rider on the horse and his army.**

This is the final battle of the end times. Remember the beast represents the persecuting powers of world powers in opposition to God. So, as we approach the end times, anti-Christian forces gather against Christ yet they will be totally routed and these evil forces are described as being thrown into a fiery lake of burning sulphur. And in the next chapter Satan is fully deposed. Love defeats evil once and for all and the next chapter details it.

---

<sup>5</sup> Morris, L. (1987). *Revelation: an introduction and commentary* (Vol. 20, p. 220). Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

<sup>6</sup> Barclay, W. (2004). *Revelation of John* (Vol. 2, p. 206). Louisville, KY; London: Westminster John Knox Press.

Let's go back to our big idea. [Big idea: Jesus Embodies 5 Qualities We All Need in a Friend](#)

You may think, where are you going to get Jesus as a friend from this? I'm going to show you.

### Our Friend Jesus is a friend who...



#### 1...is **gentle** as a Lamb

In this chapter he is called a lamb, one of the most common images in the bible for Jesus. Lambs were used in sacrifices in the temple and Jesus was the perfect ultimate lamb. A common phrase we use to describe someone or something that is gentle is, gentle as a lamb.

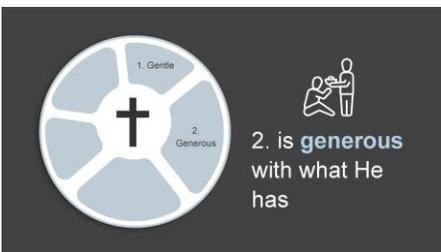
We want a friend to be gentle and kind with us, right?

Isiah gives us a powerful word picture of this idea when he writes,

*He will not crush the weakest reed or put out a flickering candle. (Is 42.3, NLT)*

Jesus is as gentle as a lamb.

### Our Friend Jesus is a friend who...



#### 2...is **generous** with what He has.

In this vision John describes believers at a banquet, a wedding supper, picturing the generosity of Jesus to share his bountiful blessings with us and picturing his presence with us.

Don't we all want a friend is generous with us? Not just with their stuff, but with their time and their presence?

Jesus is a generous friend. He blesses us here on earth and will do so in heaven. And he is always available to be generous with his presence to meet us where we are.

*Psalm 23:4 Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.*

Jesus is a generous with what He has.

### Our Friend Jesus is a friend who...



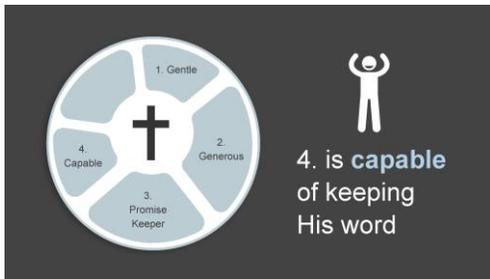
#### 3...is a **promise keeper** to us.

Several of this chapter's descriptions speak to Jesus as faithful to his promises and to his word. He is called faithful and true. He is called the word of God. John describes a sword coming from his mouth that reminds us of his words and promises.

*2 Corinthians 1:20 NLT For all of God's promises have been fulfilled in Christ with a resounding "Yes!"*

Don't we all want a friend who is trustworthy, who keeps their word? Jesus is a promise keeper to us.

### Our Friend Jesus is a friend who...



4... is **capable** of keeping His word.

This one relates to the prior one, but it gives an added emphasis that Jesus has within himself all the power and resources to keep his word.

**On his robe and on his thigh he has this name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS. (16)**

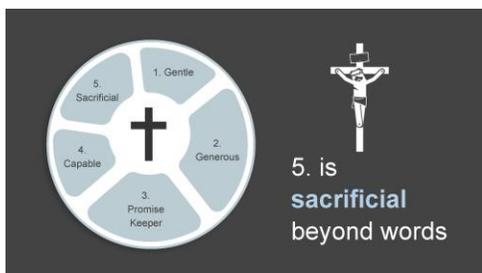
He is called these ultimate superlatives King of Kings and Lord of Lords as he's pictured riding this powerful white horse reminding us that he truly does have all power and all authority.

We don't serve a weak Jesus, an incapable Jesus, a tapped out Jesus, but an all-powerful Jesus.

Don't we want friends that when they make promises, we know that they have what it takes to keep their promises to us?

No empty promises with Jesus. Jesus is our capable friend.

### Our Friend Jesus is a friend who...



5...is **sacrificial** beyond words

His robe was described as dipped in blood reminding us of his sacrifice on the cross for our sins.

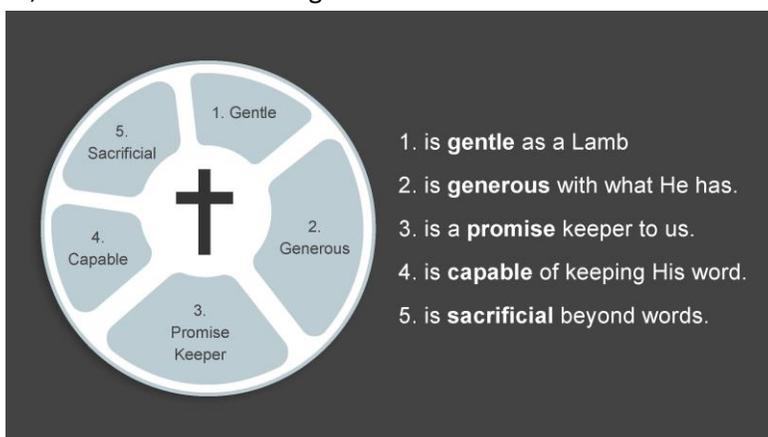
*Romans 5:8 But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*

He sacrificed his life in our place by taking upon himself all our sins.

Don't we want friends who are friends whether or not it is convenient? Don't we want friends who will sacrifice for us?

Jesus made the ultimate sacrifice for you and me on the cross. He is sacrificial beyond words.

So, let's look at all these again.



Maybe you need a friend. Maybe you need to remind yourself that even when there seems to be a dearth of friends, Jesus is your friend. Watch this performance of What a Friend we have in Jesus.

Video.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v9oRay5YBHg>