Dear all, Continuing to reflect on the radical message of Jesus Christ I remain as forcefully struck now as I was the first time I read the Gospels. In Jewish patriarchal society, only able bodied, mentally stable circumcised Jewish men with enough intelligence to learn considerable quantities of scripture by heart, had any importance at all.

- There were so many reasons that he should have looked straight through the Samaritan woman at the well (John 4:7-26), instead of which he told her about the spring of water rising to eternal life, and confirmed that he was, in fact, the Messiah!
- So many places where he suddenly looked some non-person in the eye and said words to the effect of 'your faith has made you well'. (e.g. Luke 17:19, Mark 10:52, Luke 18:42, Luke 7:50, Matthew 9:1-8, 27-30) or looked and had compassion on people and healed them (e.g. Matthew 9:35-36, Matthew 14:14, Matthew 20:29-34, Mark 6:55-56, Matthew 21:14)
- His love of the simplicity of the faith of children, people of no regard at all in biblical Jewish society (e.g., Matthew 11:25, Mattthew 21:15-16, Mark 9:37, Mark 10:13-16, Luke 10:21, Luke 18:15-17)
- It is to his ministry with and for women that I am drawn again and again, the woman caught in adultery (John 8:1-11),
- the woman who touched the hem of his garment (Matthew 9:20-22, Mark 5:25-34, Luke 8:43-48),
- his teaching and tenderness with Martha and Mary, (Luke 10:38-42)
- and his defense of the woman who anointed him (Matthew 26:6-13, Mark 14:6-9, Luke 7:36-50, John 12:1-8).
- And, at the cross it was the woman who stayed with him, and it was they who hurried to the tomb to dress the body after the sabbath had finished, after the resurrection,
- and it was to the women that his resurrection was first announced,
- and only to Mary Magdalene does he say "Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'" (John 20:17).

In all his later appearances to the disciples and to the larger group of believers, he does not say anything like this first statement to Mary.

So, if you feel unimportant, ostracized, bullied, an outcast, don't be downcast because Jesus loves you just exactly as much as every other person. Jesus loves the real you, the you who you try not to let the world see. No matter how flawed you feel, how guilty you feel, how unlovable you feel, Jesus loves you. And that guilt? No need for that you know… that is the point of getting on your (probably metaphorical) knees and saying sorry. One that is done, there is no guilt. (e.g. 1 John 5:11-15) Love from Rick