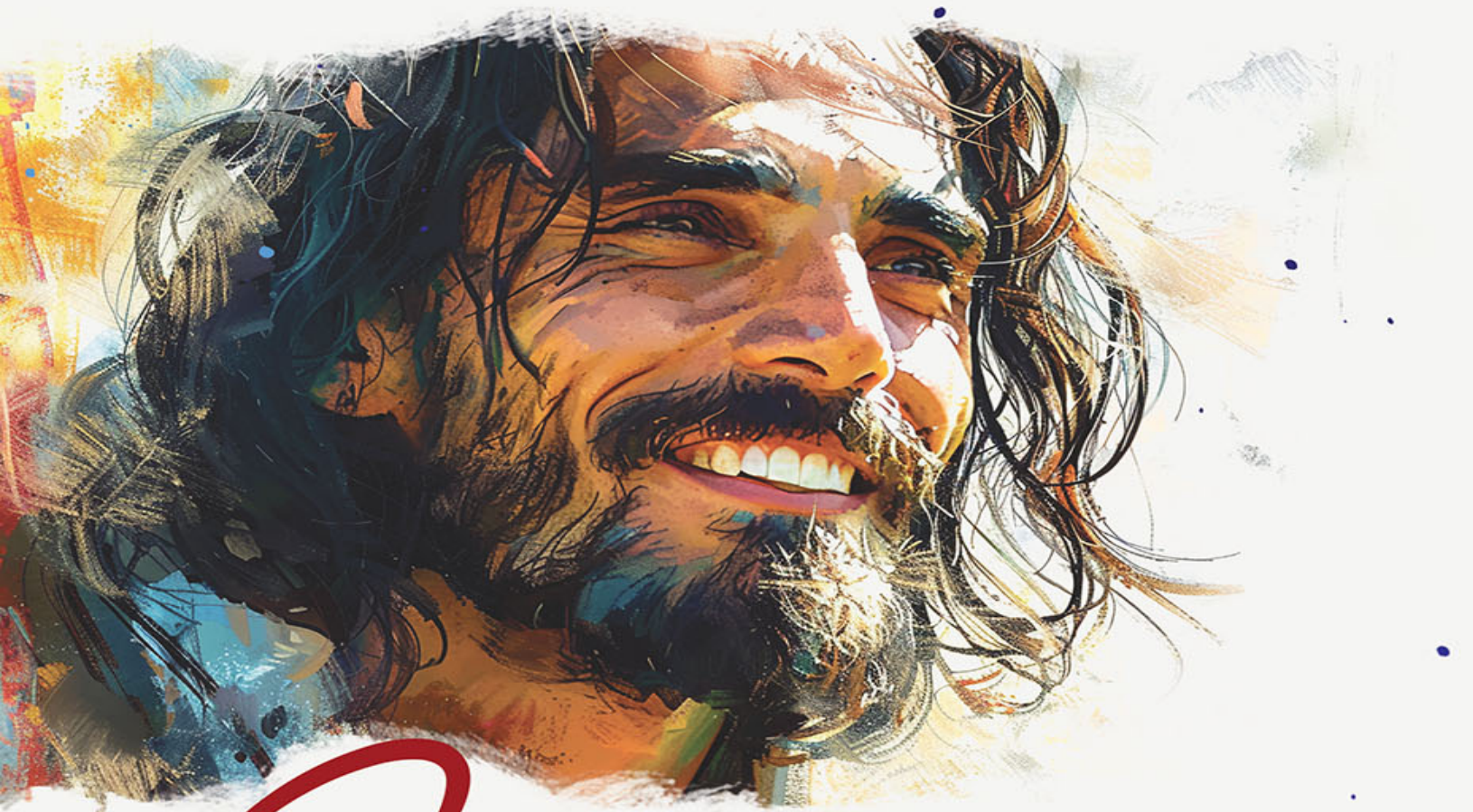


KATHRYN JENKINS



Savior,

REDEEMER

of

MY SOUL

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# WHOSE MIGHTY HAND HATH MADE ME WHOLE

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ONE OF THE MOST POIGNANT STORIES FROM THE LIFE OF THE SAVIOR IS THAT of the man at the pool of Bethesda (see John 5:2–8). According to local legend, an angel periodically visited the pool and stirred up its waters. That same legend claimed that the first person to step into the water after it was stirred up would be healed of whatever disease he had. In other words, that person would be made whole.

Traveling to Jerusalem to attend one of the Jewish feasts, Jesus took a shortcut by walking through the five porches that surrounded the pool, which was located adjacent to the sheep market. We're told that in the shade of these porches "lay a great multitude of impotent folk, of blind, halt, withered, waiting for the moving of the water" (John 5:3). As He walked, Jesus passed that great multitude—but one in particular caught His attention.

We're never told the crippled man's name, but Jesus must have known it. Because Jesus knew that the crippled man had suffered from his infirmity for thirty-eight years (at a time when the average lifespan was thirty-five years!)—many of which had been spent at the edge of that pool, waiting with desperate hope for a miracle.

Jesus approached the man and asked if he wanted to be made whole. Made whole! It was the man's most fervent desire. But he answered Jesus simply: He had no one to help him down to the water when it was stirred up—no one to lower him into the pool. And by the time he crawled to the edge of the pool, another always got there first. The fervently hoped-for miracle had not happened.

After decades of trying, he had never been the first into the water. He had not been healed.

Jesus stood there looking at this pitiful man, whose wretched condition was truly heartbreaking. We can only imagine that the man's plight must have touched the Savior deeply.

The response of Jesus to this feeble man is instructive. Jesus could have summoned someone to help the man down to the water. Or the Savior Himself could have waited with the man and carried him to the pool as soon as the waters were stirred. But He chose a better way.

Knowing the man wanted to be made whole, Jesus simply said to him, "Rise, take up thy bed, and walk" (John 5:8).

And so the man stood, picked up his bed, and walked. He received his miracle—not in the swirling waters of the pool but at the hand of the Healer of all humankind. This account reminds me that as I wait to be made whole, it may happen in a way I am totally not expecting.

The man at the pool of Bethesda had no power to come to Jesus. Instead, Jesus came to him and made him whole.

He will do the same for all of us.

Sometimes I forget how much I mean to the Savior. In my own distressing times, I don't remember the greatest distress ever experienced—don't remember that Jesus anguished in the garden, bleeding great drops of blood from every pore due to the intensity of His pain, just to give *me* the opportunity to repent. That He hung for six hours after being flogged and brutally nailed to a cross for *me*. I meant that much to Him. I still do. And so do you.

I am reminded that, as C. S. Lewis wrote, Jesus "died not for men, but for each man. If each man had been the only man made, He would have done no less."<sup>18</sup> On another occasion, Lewis wrote a similar sentiment: "When Christ

died, He died for you individually just as much as if you'd been the only [person] in the world."<sup>19</sup>

It's as though I'm the only person here—the only person He was determined to save. It's the same for you.

I am reminded too that through some divine arithmetic, not even a sparrow can fall to the ground without His notice—and that the very hairs on my head are numbered to Him (see Matthew 10:29–30).

I am of infinite importance to Him. So are you. A popular Christian hymn tells us, "His eye is on the sparrow, and I know He watches me."<sup>20</sup>

If you have a difficult time believing that, remember what happened to Bartimaeus. On the Savior's final journey to Jerusalem, He passed through Jericho. As He came out of the city, He was accompanied by a large group of people, as was often the case at that time in His ministry.

As He walked, He passed a man who seemed as though he had been thrown by the side of the road like a pitiful piece of litter. It was Bartimaeus, a blind man who sat amid the debris on the roadside and who made his living by begging—the only thing he was capable of doing. Hearing the commotion, Bartimaeus asked those around him what was happening. When he learned that Jesus of Nazareth was walking by, hope flooded his soul.

Suddenly, he became animated and cried with a loud voice, "Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me" (Mark 10:47). I can't even imagine the excitement Bartimaeus must have felt at that moment. Since Bartimaeus called the Savior the "Son of David," it's clear that Bartimaeus knew of Jesus and believed Him to be the Messiah. It's also obvious that Bartimaeus believed in Jesus's willingness and ability to help at a time when most religious leaders attributed blindness (and similar afflictions) to God's judgment for sin or other misdeeds.

Those who were walking with Jesus told Bartimaeus to quiet down and stop calling out to the Savior. They saw him as nothing more than an irritation, an annoying thing that would do nothing more than interrupt the Savior's intended journey. That's how it is with men and women of the world—too often, it's far too easy for them to dismiss the pain and struggle of others.

But Bartimaeus would not be deterred. He only cried out louder, repeating his original request. We assume that his voice reflected what was in

his heart—that he was longing for help from the Lord. Though others started ridiculing him for making so much noise, he was undeterred. As President Spencer W. Kimball noted, Bartimaeus demonstrated “persistent, faithful efforts to reach the Lord” with his petitions.<sup>21</sup> Such might be a pattern for us.

The people with Jesus may have been able to write off Bartimaeus, but the Savior was not. To Him, the beggar was not an irritation but was like a crying child. Jesus stopped. He stood still. He then commanded those with Him to bring the blind man to Him.

Suddenly, Bartimaeus was elevated in the minds of the others. Jesus had noticed him—had invited him to approach! Where they had previously tried to quiet him, now the people around Bartimaeus told him, “Be of good comfort, rise; he calleth thee” (Mark 10:49).

Then the Gospel writer Mark specifies an interesting thing: Bartimaeus rose and went to Jesus, but only after “casting away his garment” (Mark 10:50). Like those of other beggars, the garment of Bartimaeus was likely tattered and soiled and maybe even decayed in places—trodden under foot, much like Bartimaeus himself. By casting it off, Bartimaeus was symbolically casting off his old life as he approached the man of God, brimming with faith and anticipation.

Facing the blind man with the utmost compassion, Jesus asked what Bartimaeus wanted Him to do. Bartimaeus’s request was simple and clear: “Lord, that I might receive my sight” (Mark 10:51). The blind man—a beggar by profession—could have asked for food or money, but his faith was far greater than that; he asked for his sight. He also could have tempered his request with words that would have justified his request. Instead, he simply expressed his sincere desire, believing that Jesus was not only willing but able to grant it. Bartimaeus demonstrated unequivocal faith in the Healer. The same kind of faith we should have. Faith in His ability to make us whole.

Touching the blind man’s eyes, Jesus said, “Go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole” (Mark 10:52). And what of Bartimaeus? He *immediately* received his sight. And, incidentally, instead of darting off in joy over all the things he could now do, he chose instead to follow Jesus (see Mark 10:52).

If Bartimaeus had been afraid to call out, had he been quieted by his friends, or had he questioned the Savior’s willingness to act, he would have stayed blind forever. His own fear and doubts would have prevented the

miracle. Instead, he understood the truth that God rewards those who earnestly seek him (see Hebrews 11:6). Just as what happened to Bartimaeus, when we earnestly seek Him, He can—and will—make us whole.

If Jesus was able to hear that solitary voice through the tumult of the crowds and cared enough to heal a poor, filthy beggar, certainly He can hear me. He can hear you. We may not comprehend such with our mortal understanding, but He can hear our cries for help through the mayhem and commotion of an entire universe filled with those who might also be calling out for relief. To Him, it is as though every one of us is the only one. The very hairs of our head are numbered to Him.

And remembering the story of Bartimaeus, I have to ask myself: What do *I* do when I am made whole? Do I cast aside my worldly pursuits, like Bartimaeus cast aside his garment, and instead follow the One who made me whole?

Another of Jesus's miracles should remind all of us of the importance of the one.

It would be difficult for most of us to imagine what the past twelve years had been like for a woman who goes unnamed but who is identified as the woman with an issue of blood. Now, twelve years into her malady, she likely suffered extreme weakness, fatigue, anemia, a rapid heartbeat, low blood pressure, and low body temperature, among other problems associated with her blood loss.

Doctors of that day were relatively unskilled; surgery was a last resort because there was no anesthesia, and most of those who underwent surgery died of shock as a result. Simply put, the “cure” was often worse than the illness itself.

Many who practiced medicine at that time had no training; some Jewish rabbis posed as physicians even though they had no applicable schooling. One of the treatments for women with chronic bleeding shows how primitive the remedies of that day were. The woman was to dig seven pits, and in each pit, she was to burn vine branches that were not yet four years old. Carrying a cup of wine, she was to approach each pit in succession, sit down by the side of it, and chant, “Be free from thy sickness.”

According to Jewish law, the woman with the issue of blood was ceremonially unclean because of her bleeding (see Leviticus 15:25). Consider what that meant: For twelve long years, she had been unable to live a normal

life. She couldn't associate with others or enter a synagogue to worship God. She could not go to the market or draw water from the well. Even in her own home, she could not care for her children, cook or serve food to members of her family, or engage in intimate relations. Anything she lay or sat on became unclean, as did anyone she touched. (In case you're thinking that women were treated unfairly, men who had an issue of blood were subject to even stricter guidelines.)

This woman had spent all her money in search of a cure, but nothing had helped her. Because her condition had persisted for twelve long years, it's easy to presume that she was desperate—physically, mentally, emotionally, and even spiritually spent. I can also realistically believe that she felt helpless and hopeless—*until* she heard about Jesus. She knew that He was going to be walking through her village, and she was determined to find Him.

According to the laws of ritual purity, she should not have even ventured out into the crowd that day, let alone touched anyone, so it must have taken great courage, determination, and desperation for her to press through the throngs toward Jesus. But she had faith in Him. She knew that if she could just touch the hem of His clothing, she would be healed. He was her last hope. Her faith was so great that she didn't even need to speak to Him—she believed she would be healed if she could merely touch a piece of His robe. Just the hem of His garment.

In some amazing feat of resolve, she did reach the Savior. She touched His robe. He was so aware of her touch that He immediately knew someone had touched Him (see Luke 8:46). When Jesus asked who it was that had touched Him, He wasn't seeking information. He already knew. He asked so she could publicly testify of the miracle that had taken place. He wanted everyone there—and all of us—to know that the miracle was *not* the result of magic or sorcery, which were common in the ancient world, but of faith.

Of her faith. And His.

As with the woman who pressed through the crowds toward Jesus, we can know that He “shall wipe away all tears from [our] eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither . . . pain” (Revelation 21:4). We will, in every sense of the word, be made whole.

When we demonstrate our willingness to follow, His mighty hand will, according to His will, heal our bodies and our spirits. Will cast off our infirmities. Will make us gloriously whole.

His mighty hand has made me whole—physically, emotionally, and spiritually—more times than these pages have room to contain. But one in particular stands out in my mind.

I was addressing a group of seventeen-year-old youth in Salt Lake City as a guest speaker one morning on how to spiritually prepare to serve a mission. The central message I wanted to convey was that once they received a mission call, the adversary would do everything possible to derail them—to keep them from taking their message to the world. I warned that could even include tempting them to do things that might make them unworthy.

I had testified of repentance and said that each of us can be made whole, whatever the problems of the past.<sup>22</sup> Suddenly, my voice sounded to me as though it was at the end of a very long tunnel. I glanced down at my notes, and they were so garbled that I couldn't make sense of them. They didn't even resemble the alphabet with which I was familiar. Then profuse, ice-cold sweat began pouring down my face. Then I couldn't speak. At all.

In reality, that probably lasted less than a minute—but to me, standing in front of that group, it felt like forever. I've concluded that the youth in that audience simply thought I was choked up from feeling the Spirit. When I was finally able to speak again, I thought, *Kathy, this can't be good. Wrap it up and sit down.*

I tried to summarize the remaining fourth of my carefully prepared presentation into a few sentences, concluded with a rapid testimony, and sat down in a chair just behind the podium.

The youth, seemingly unfazed, gathered around a table in the back for orange juice and cookies. The stake president, whom I had never met, rushed through the throng to me and asked with some urgency, "Did you just have a stroke?"

"I—I don't know," I answered truthfully. I didn't know *what* had happened. Nothing like that had ever happened to me before.

"Would you like me to call an ambulance?"

*Oh, wow, I thought. He's serious. He's really worried.*

I assured him that I thought I'd be okay—that I just needed to sit quietly for a minute.

Sure enough, whatever it was passed fairly quickly, and I felt much better. Almost normal. I was supposed to stay at the conference to hear the next few

presentations and then enjoy lunch with the youth, but I thought I'd better call it a day. I sought out the stake president and graciously excused myself, saying I thought I'd better go home.

"Home" was in Orem, Utah, forty miles to the south.

"You can't drive home!" he exclaimed.

"I think I'll be fine," I said, for the moment really believing that. He shook his head and tried several more times to dissuade me as he walked me to the outside door of the hotel where the conference was being held. Thanking him, I headed to my car.

As soon as I sat down in the driver's seat, I thought, *You can't drive home*. I called a good friend, Kimball, who lived in Salt Lake's Avenues. Without telling him any details, I told him where I was and asked if he could give me a priesthood blessing so I could drive home. He readily agreed.

A few minutes later, he pulled up next to my car. Scrambling out of his car, he told me, "I said a prayer before leaving home so I could give you a blessing. I was told you need to go to the hospital on 5300 South. You need to go *now*. I'll give you a blessing when we get there."

I objected. He insisted. Finally accepting that he was intent on getting me to a hospital, I suggested LDS Hospital instead; I'd been a patient there several years earlier for a knee replacement, and they already had information about me. Kimball simply looked at me, astonishment on his face, and said, "Kathy, *I was told the hospital on 5300 South*. Let me drive your car."

When we arrived at the emergency room and checked in, Kimball asked if there was a quiet room where he could give me a blessing. There was. The blessing offered the promise of health. I was then whisked to an examination room.

For seven hours, one test after another was conducted. A flurry of nurses, physician assistants, and doctors attended to me. Kimball patiently kept vigil in the waiting room, despite my frequent requests that he take my car and leave. I promised to call him when I was ready to be picked up. He refused to go.

Finally, a stern-faced doctor told me, "We don't know for sure what's wrong, but it's serious. We're going to admit you so we can run more tests." Kimball bid me farewell, and I was taken to a room.

Subsequent tests over the next few days revealed the extent of the problem. I had suffered a heart attack *and* a stroke. Attempting to drive home,

the doctor told me, would have rapidly gone from foolish to fatal.

The Lord had started exercising His mighty hand on my behalf. That hospital—the one Kimball had been instructed to take me to—was the leading heart treatment hospital for a five-state area. Had I gone anywhere else, even LDS Hospital just fifty-three blocks away, I would have been life-flighted to the hospital in which I found myself. The doctor who was “randomly” assigned to me in the emergency room was a top-flight, well-respected cardiothoracic surgeon sought by patients throughout that five-state area and even some from outside the country.

He explained that all five of my coronary arteries were 90 percent blocked and that I needed coronary bypass surgery. Then he asked a question that stunned me: “When did you have your previous heart attack?”

I told him I’d never had a heart attack. And I was sure I hadn’t. *He* was sure I *had*—tests showed with clarity a fairly large spot on my heart that was dead. Not from what had just happened but from a much older episode.

“That’s going to complicate the bypass,” he said, “but I think we can work around it.”

Because of wildly fluctuating blood sugar and blood pressure, I was in the hospital for eleven days before they could stabilize me enough to do the surgery. The night before I was to be taken to the operating room, Kimball gave me another blessing. The Lord promised a successful surgery and recovery.

The first thing I remember when coming out of anesthesia after the twelve-hour surgery was my surgeon, leaning down close to my face and saying, “That was amazing. I got in there, and the dead tissue in your heart was gone. Just gone. Your heart was pristine. I’ve never seen anything like it.”

The Lord, with His mighty hand, had made me whole.

I stayed in the hospital for nine days after the surgery. There were some complications, and my normal heart rhythm had to be restored. After I got home, an infection in one of the incisions in my leg where they harvested my vein got infected with *E. coli*, a situation so serious that I was told I could lose my leg—or my life. I lost neither and underwent an additional surgery, thanks to the mighty hand of the Lord.

He made me whole.

In the four years since, I’ve had other unrelated health complications, several of which should have killed me. But they didn’t. And through it all, my heart has continued beating in my chest, strong and sure.

Why?

The Lord. The hairs of my head are numbered to Him, and it's as if I were the only one here. He cares that much and is that deeply involved.

His mighty hand has made me whole. Just as it will do for you. For all of us.

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18. C. S. Lewis, *Perelandra* (Scribner, 1943).

19. C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (HarperCollins, 1952).

20. "His Eye Is on the Sparrow," lyrics by Civilla D. Martin, 1905; music by Charles H. Gabriel, 1905.

21. "President Kimball Speaks Out on Administration to the Sick," *New Era*, Oct. 1981, 47.

22. See Jeffrey R. Holland, *Created for Greater Things* (Deseret Book, 2011).

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