

We Want To Be Touched by Jesus

They had walked for miles. Crippled people with misshapen limbs; diseased people with open sores, and leprous lesions; the depressed, the downhearted, the demon-possessed, each hoping that by some million-to-one chance they could be close enough to touch Jesus. They came to be healed.

The scripture tells us that everyone who touched Jesus that day was healed because power came out of him. Then the scripture goes on to tell us that Jesus took the time to speak to them as well. Jesus gave them the words of eternal life that day. Yes they touched him and they were healed, but then he touched them and those who listened to him and heard what he had to say and believed were saved.

How many of us hear this story and wish that we could see that kind of supernatural display of the God's power? How many of us long to see or better still **be** the recipient of a miracle? What would you give to have the chance to be in the presence of Jesus when he was healing people? What price would be too high for you to pay to hear the voice of Jesus talking to you as he did to those lucky people in Galilee?

Do you know that some people paid over \$4,000 per ticket to go and sit in the pouring down rain at Miami Stadium to watch the Indianapolis Colts beat the Chicago Bears in the Super bowl? A lot of the players and both coaches claim to be Christians and I hope all of them are. But, I wonder how many more Christians there would be if every Christian only had to work about 20 weeks out of the year and was paid millions of dollars a year to play a game? Do I sound skeptical? Well I guess I am. Jesus didn't say blessed are the rich, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven...no—he said blessed are the **poor**.

Who were the poor then? Were they slaves? Were they aliens and strangers who had no land, had no job, and had no family? Were they the social outcasts who also had no church? The poor were more than just those without money, they were the oppressed in body and in spirit for until Jesus came, they had no hope.

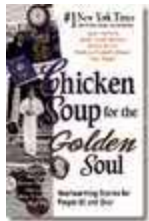
Who do we think the poor are today?

The Rich Family

I'll never forget Easter 1946. I was fourteen, my little sister, Ocy, was twelve and my older sister, Darlene, was sixteen. We lived at home with our mother, and the four of us knew what it was to do without. My dad had died five years before, leaving Mom with no money and seven school-aged kids to raise.

By 1946, my older sisters were married and my brothers had left home. A month before Easter, the pastor of our church announced that a special holiday offering would be taken to help a poor family. He asked everyone to save and give sacrificially.

When we got home, we talked about what we could do. We decided to buy fifty pounds of potatoes and live on them for a month. This would allow us to save twenty dollars of our grocery money for the offering. Then we thought that if we kept our electric lights turned out as much as possible and didn't listen to the radio, we'd save money on that month's electric bill. Darlene got as many house- and yard-cleaning jobs as possible, and both of us baby-sat for everyone we could. For fifteen cents we could buy enough cotton loops to make three potholders to sell for a dollar. We made twenty dollars on potholders. That month was one of the best of our lives.



Every day we counted the money to see how much we had saved. At night we'd sit in the dark and talk about how the poor family was going to enjoy having the money the church would give them. We had about eighty people in church, so we figured that whatever amount of money we had to give, the offering would surely be twenty times that much. After all, every Sunday the pastor had reminded everyone to save for the sacrificial offering.

The night before Easter, we were so excited we could hardly sleep. We didn't care that we wouldn't have new clothes for Easter; we had seventy dollars for the sacrificial offering. We could hardly wait to get to church! On Sunday morning, rain was pouring. We didn't own an umbrella, and the church was over a mile from our home, but it didn't seem to matter how wet we got. Darlene had cardboard in her shoes to fill the holes. The cardboard came apart, and her feet got wet.

But we sat in church proudly. I heard some teenagers talking about our old dresses. I looked at them in their new clothes, and I felt rich.

When the sacrificial offering was taken, we were sitting in the second row from the front. Mom put in the ten-dollar bill, and each of us kids put in a twenty-dollar bill.

We sang all the way home from church. At lunch, Mom had a surprise for us. She had bought a dozen eggs, and we had boiled Easter eggs with our fried potatoes! Late that afternoon, the minister drove up in his car. Mom went to the door, talked with him for a moment, and then came back with an envelope in her hand. We asked what it was, but she didn't say a word. She opened the envelope and out fell a bunch of money. There were three crisp twenty-dollar bills, one ten-dollar bill and seventeen

one-dollar bills.

Mom put the money back in the envelope. We didn't talk, just sat and stared at the floor. We had gone from feeling like millionaires to feeling poor. We kids had such a happy life that we felt sorry for anyone who didn't have our Mom and our late Dad for parents and a house full of brothers and sisters and other kids visiting constantly. We thought it was fun to share silverware and see whether we got the spoon or the fork that night. We had two knives that we passed around to whoever needed them. I knew we didn't have a lot of things that other people had, but I'd never thought we were poor.

That Easter day I found out we were. The minister had brought us the money for the poor family, so *we must be poor*, I thought. I didn't like being poor. I looked at my dress and worn-out shoes and felt so ashamed -- I didn't even want to go back to church. Everyone there probably already knew we were poor!

I thought about school. I was in the ninth grade and at the top of my class of over one hundred students. I wondered if the kids at school knew that we were poor. I decided that I could quit school since I had finished the eighth grade. That was all the law required at that time.

We sat in silence for a long time. Then it got dark, and we went to bed. All that week, we girls went to school and came home, and no one talked much. Finally, on Saturday, Mom asked us what we wanted to do with the money. What did poor people do with money? We didn't know. We'd never know we were poor. We didn't want to go to church on Sunday, but Mom said we had to. Although it was a sunny day, we didn't talk on the way. Mom started to sing, but no one joined in, and she sang only one verse.

At church we had a missionary speaker. He talked about how churches in Africa made buildings out of sun-dried bricks, but they needed money to buy roofs. He said one hundred dollars would put a roof on a church. The minister added, "Can't we all sacrifice to help these poor people?" We looked at each other and smiled for the first time in a week.

Mom reached into her purse and pulled out the envelope. She passed it to Darlene, Darlene gave it to me, and I handed it to Ocy. Ocy put it in the offering.

When the offering was counted, the minister announced that it was a little over one hundred dollars. The missionary was excited. He hadn't expected such a large offering from our small church. He said, "You must have some rich people in this church." Suddenly it struck us! We had given eighty-seven dollars of that "little over one hundred dollars."

We were the rich family in the church! Hadn't the missionary said so? From that day on, I've never been poor again.

By Eddie Ogan,
from Chicken Soup for the Golden Soul

You see it's not the lack of money that makes someone poor; it's the lack of Jesus in their heart. You can have all the money in the world, and still not be rich.

How is your spiritual bank account? If you're running low on spiritual funds, you have come to the right place. God's spiritual bank is open 24 hours a day. No fees and no interest. It's yours for the taking, if you use it to help others come to Jesus and live. There are blessings a plenty for those who are rich in the spirit. And for those who have monetary wealth and don't use it to help others, there will be enough woes from the

book of Jeremiah, and woes from the book of Luke to go around for everyone who deserves it. Get right with the Lord today.