

Dear Lord,

Well, here I am again, Matt -- Matt the Loser. Yes, that's right, Matt the Loser. You know, the guy who's never amounted to anything. The guy on your B-list.

Remember me in school? -- always the last one picked for the team cause I couldn't do sports. I was absent the day you handed out the gift of coordination, I guess, or you just didn't choose to give it to me. So, the balls slipped through my fingers, the bat always managed to strike out, I ran like the tortoise and swam like the titanic. Even the gym teachers began to taunt we. How would you like to have the nickname, "Goose Egg?"

But that's not all, I was also Matt the zit. You didn't give me athletic ability so you would think that you might have compensated with a little dose of good looks. But NO..., that didn't happen either. Worst case of acne of anyone in my class. Plus, I'm not strong, I have a big nose, and now, almost 40 years old, I'm heavier than I'd like to be, getting gray upstairs, and wrinkles in the face.

Then there's the brain category. I so much wanted to excel in school. But, hard as I worked, I was always just mediocre there as well. I did okay -- B's and C's. It was good enough to help me squeak through college, but I was never any Bill Gates. And now, I'm stuck in a mediocre job I don't like. It pays the bills, but isn't exactly what mother dreamed for me.

My wife and I seem to fight too much, my kids give me grief, my house is too small, I have nothing saved for retirement and I don't know how I'm going to deal with these college bills.

Perhaps my wife could cash in on the life insurance policy? If you know what I mean, Lord.

**(Matt?)**

Yes, Lord?

**(Why are you being so negative?)**

Was I being negative?

**(Don't be smart, Matt. Comeon, what's going on?)**

Okay --- I just came back from my class reunion, where I got to see all the grand and important things my old friends are doing. Jack is married to a beauty queen. Bob has got the dream job. Eliot has a gorgeous home. Sam travels all over the world. And what have I got? Nothing. I'm a loser, Lord.

I feel like that guy in Pastor's sermon last Sunday. Thirty eight years laying around a pool waiting for the water to be stirred so that some miracle will happen. Well, what have I been doing. Forty years and I've accomplished nothing at all. I might as well have never

been born. In fact, if I was whisked off the earth like people in a Tsunami, I don't know who would notice.

**(Is that what you got out of that story? A man that wasted his time laying around a pool?)**

Well, what was the point YOU were trying to make? Frankly, I don't get the point of that story. But I sure can relate to that guy. Crippled. Stuck in a rut. And everybody too busy to notice -- or even give him a shove in the right direction.

**(Not exactly the point I was trying to convey.)**

Well tell me, then. What am I missing?

**(That story shows that I came to the earth not for kings and princes and Pharisees and Scribes. I came to give strength and help to people who were hurting -- everyone!)**

Well, where've you been, Lord? You haven't exactly been stirring the Pool of Bethesda in my life.

**(No?)**

No.

**(How's your health?)**

Now don't start with that. I don't want to hear about all the blessings you've bestowed upon me. Sure, there's a lot of

good stuff. I'll grant you that. But there's a lot of stuff missing, too.

**(Like....)**

Like all that stuff I was talking about before. Why couldn't I have been smart like Eliot or successful like Bob or a world traveler like Sam? My life seems so....ordinary...hard.

**(And you don't think they have hard days too?)**

No.

**(Well, I'm not going to go into the details of their lives for you, but trust me when I say that each one is dealing with his own issues. Life is not all keen and rosy for them any more than it is for you.)**

Really?

**(Yes, really. But the important thing is not the difficult things that each person goes through. The point of the story of the healing at Bethesda is that no one needs to be alone, uncared for, stuck by a pool, lost and broken. I came to earth to touch lives, like I did for that man by Bethesda's pool. And I didn't just come to do it for the rich, the powerful, the popular, or the intellectual. I came for sinners, one and all.)**

But sometimes it hurts so much, Lord. Sometimes it all feels so empty.

**(Yes, I know those feelings too, Matt. Talk about emptiness, imagine the Creator of the Universe hanging on a tree while the crowd below mocks, scorns, and taunts. I was emptied of everything. And talk about pain .... Well, you hardly know what pain is, Matt. The crown of thorns, the nails through my hands and feet, and, most of all, being forsaken by my Father and by my friends. That was agony.)**

I'm not going to pretend that I've gone through what you did, but abandoned is how I feel too.

**(But Matt....all that I went through? I did it for you. So that you would never be alone. So that you could have forgiveness, life, and salvation. So that you could look at the future and say with joy and confidence, "I know where I'm going.")**

**That man by the Pool of Bethesda -- you know what he did after he was healed?)**

No. What?

**(He didn't look backward at the 38 years of pain. He looked at the present and leaped for joy at his healing. And he looked at the future and all the good things that lay in store for him as a child of God.**

**Matt, you've got to put your life in perspective. You've got a great wife, wonderful kids who love you. Your house is small, but it's getting paid for, your car gets you where you want to go. You aren't Mr. Universe, but you're not laying by a pool either. But best of all, through the waters of baptism that I stirred for you 40 years ago, you are wrapped in my blanket of love, protection, hope and strength. I am your Savior and I am committed to you. And if you could only know the future I have in store for you.... well ... let's just say we wouldn't be having this conversation.)**

I'm sorry Lord. I really am. I guess I just let myself get caught up in everyone else and stopped seeing all that you've done for me. I got caught up in the sideways glances of "keeping up with the Jones'" and forgot about the upward glance of prayer, faith, and hope.

**(So you know what I'm going to say to you now, Matt?)**

What Lord? I couldn't blame you for yelling at me. Go ahead.

**No. I'm not going to chide you. I going to say the same thing I did at the Pool of Bethesda. Pick up your mat, Matt, and walk. Walk forward with joy. Get out there and make a difference. Stop getting paralyzed by earthly comparisons. Remember the waters of life. Give thanks, rejoice, and be glad.**

**For great are your blessings now, and great is your reward in heaven.**

Alright, Lord. I'll try. And...thanks.