



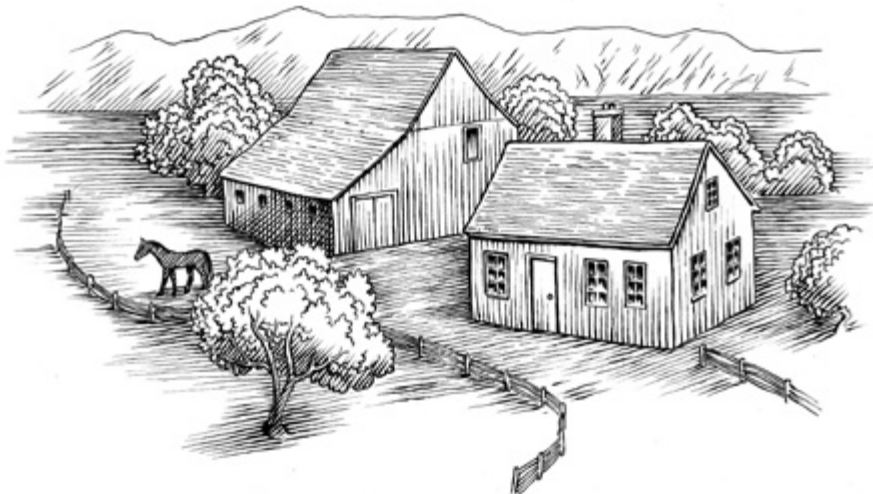
By Elder
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Of the Seventy

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Becoming a “New Creature” in Christ

One horse’s miraculous transformation is a perfect metaphor for how the Savior can see our full potential and make us our best selves.

In the early 1930s, the era of the Great Depression, conditions were difficult in the United States, and northern Utah was no exception. There was little extra cash to be had, especially among farmers. My grandparents had four children to provide for, but they did their best to help others. Their farm in Tremonton was known as a place where hospitality would be extended to anyone who was struggling. Many walked for miles to enjoy a good breakfast prepared by my grandmother’s rough, tired hands. No one was ever turned away.



During this time, my Aunt Sherma was a child. She desperately wanted a horse—not the pony she had been riding but a real, full-sized, honest-to-goodness horse. Her older brother, John, was the proud owner of a beautiful thoroughbred. He never missed an opportunity to tease Sherma. He told her she would never be big enough or strong enough for a real horse. This annoyed Sherma because she was certain she could do anything anyone else could do—especially anything John could do. Unfortunately, her hopes had been dashed over and over again. There just wasn't enough money for another horse.

A Herd of Castoffs

One day, an itinerant stockman stopped by my grandparents' place to visit and enjoy a meal. He had with him a small herd of animals headed for the slaughterhouse in Ogden, about 40 miles (64 km) to the south. Stockmen would often ride into town with animals like these, castoffs from farms in the area—old, worn out, or undesirable in some way.

When Grandpa looked at this scruffy group, a certain sadness came over him. He too was a stockman. He knew and loved animals. (In all my years of watching my grandfather work with livestock, I never saw him lose his patience or abuse them in any way. He especially loved horses.)

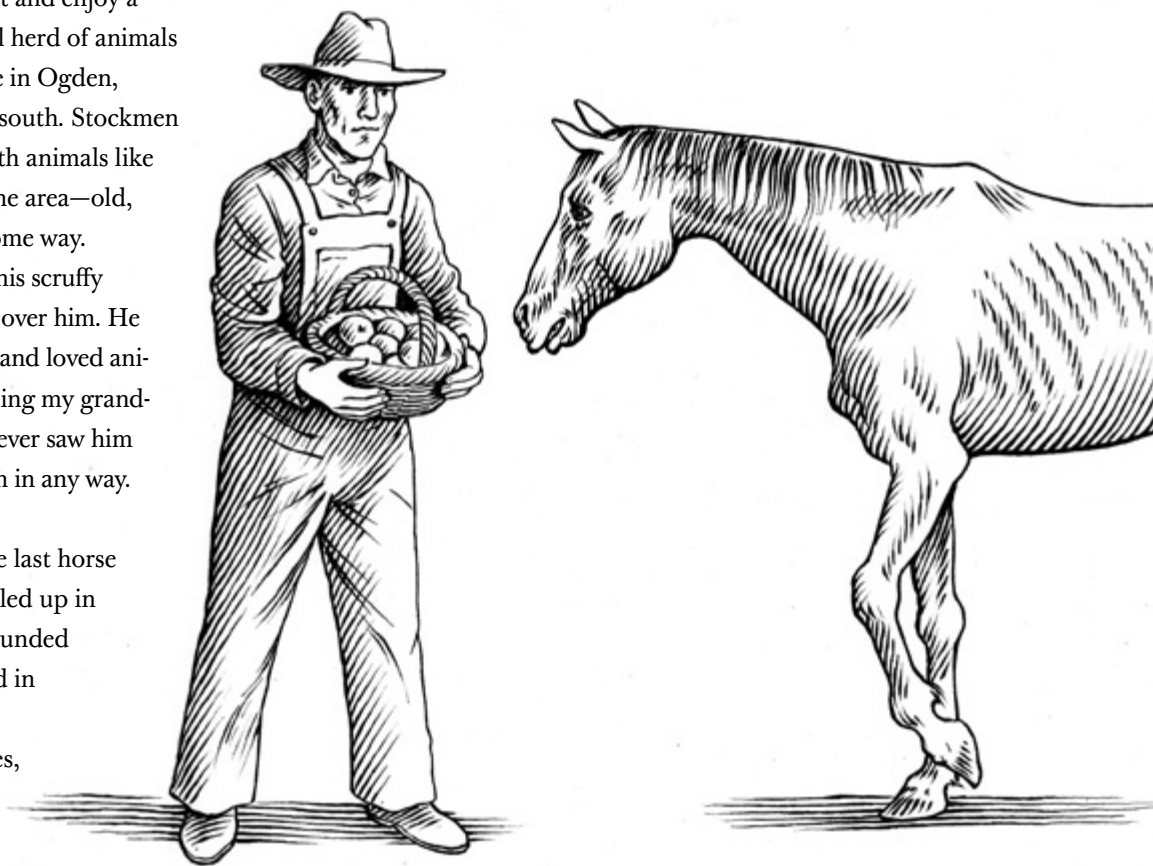
Grandpa's eye fell upon the last horse in the string. Compassion welled up in him as he took pity on the wounded animal. The horse was covered in mud. His joints were swollen. His skin, hanging on his bones, showed marks of neglect and

abuse. Grandpa noticed open, infected wounds and wasn't sure if the horse would survive the remainder of the trip.

Instinctively Grandpa cradled the horse's drooping head in his arms, rubbed the horse's ears, and whispered softly. The desperate animal quivered at his touch. When Grandpa looked in the horse's mouth, he was surprised that the horse's teeth indicated he was not that old. Grandpa stepped back and looked at the animal. He would have preferred a well-bred draft horse or a beautiful thoroughbred, yet there was something about this horse that drew Grandpa to him.

Grandpa asked the stockman if he knew anything about the horse. The man said the horse was a Standardbred trotter, but he was sold off the track because he liked to run in a sport that demanded the discipline of trotting. Purchased by a farmer, the horse proved ill-suited for farmwork. After an accident, he was deemed worthless and sold for slaughter.

Grandpa pondered quietly. After a minute or so, he made an offer to buy the pitiful animal. The offer was immediately accepted.



Many felt that Grandpa had been foolish or softhearted. Grandma may have been the least impressed. Given the dire nature of the economy and the shortage of essential items around the farm, she did not appreciate one more horse in their lives—especially this worthless one. To her, it was simply one more animal to feed.

Restored by Love

Grandpa was never affected much by what others thought. He quietly led the horse to the barn. He treated the horse's wounds, brushed and cleaned him, and gave him oats and hay to eat. He then found Sherma, introduced her to her new horse, and told her she would be responsible to care for him. He suggested that she give him a name.

Sherma was not impressed. She could see that this horse would never measure up to John's fancy thoroughbred. In disgust she exclaimed, "He's just a sack of old doorknobs! I'll call him Old Knobby!"

At dinner that night, Grandpa sat quietly, enduring the sudden "drop in temperature." Grandma was mad. Sherma was mad. John was snickering. And the other kids were not oblivious to the chill in the air. But Grandpa was a patient man, patient with the livestock and patient with his family.

Sherma grudgingly began to care for the horse. With regular feed and exercise, Knobby's muscles came back and his coat began to shine. But even though the horse's health and appearance improved, the name Sherma had given him in frustration and disrespect—Old Knobby—stuck. Through most of the summer, his former talent, athleticism, and beauty were restored as Sherma showed love for him. Like Grandpa, Sherma began to feel something special about this horse.

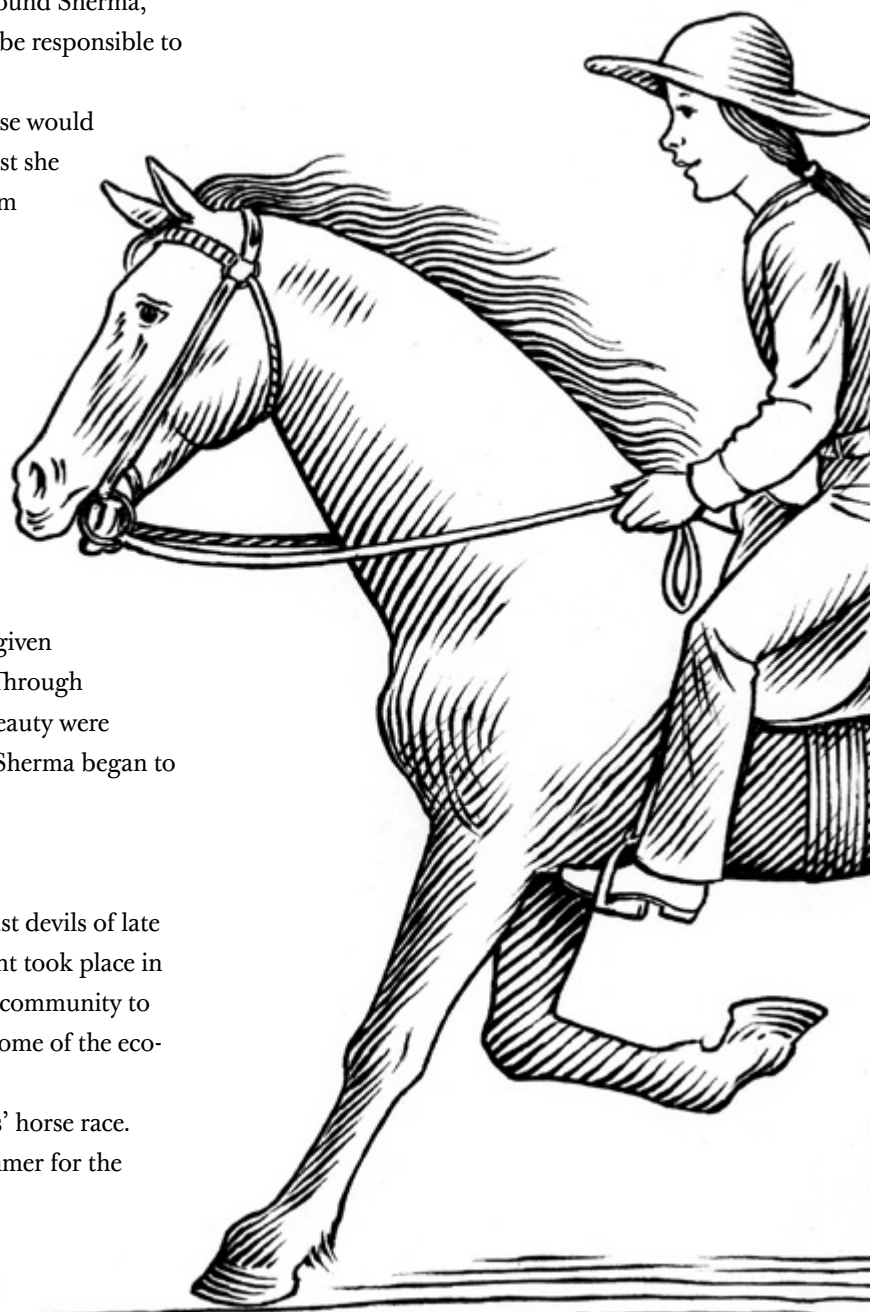
The Big Race

As the crisp air of fall settled into the valley and the dust devils of late summer ceased to dance across the fields, an exciting event took place in Tremonton. It was an old-fashioned fair, a chance for the community to gather together to enjoy the beautiful fall air and forget some of the economic woes of the time.

One of the most popular events at the fair was the kids' horse race. Many young people throughout the valley waited all summer for the

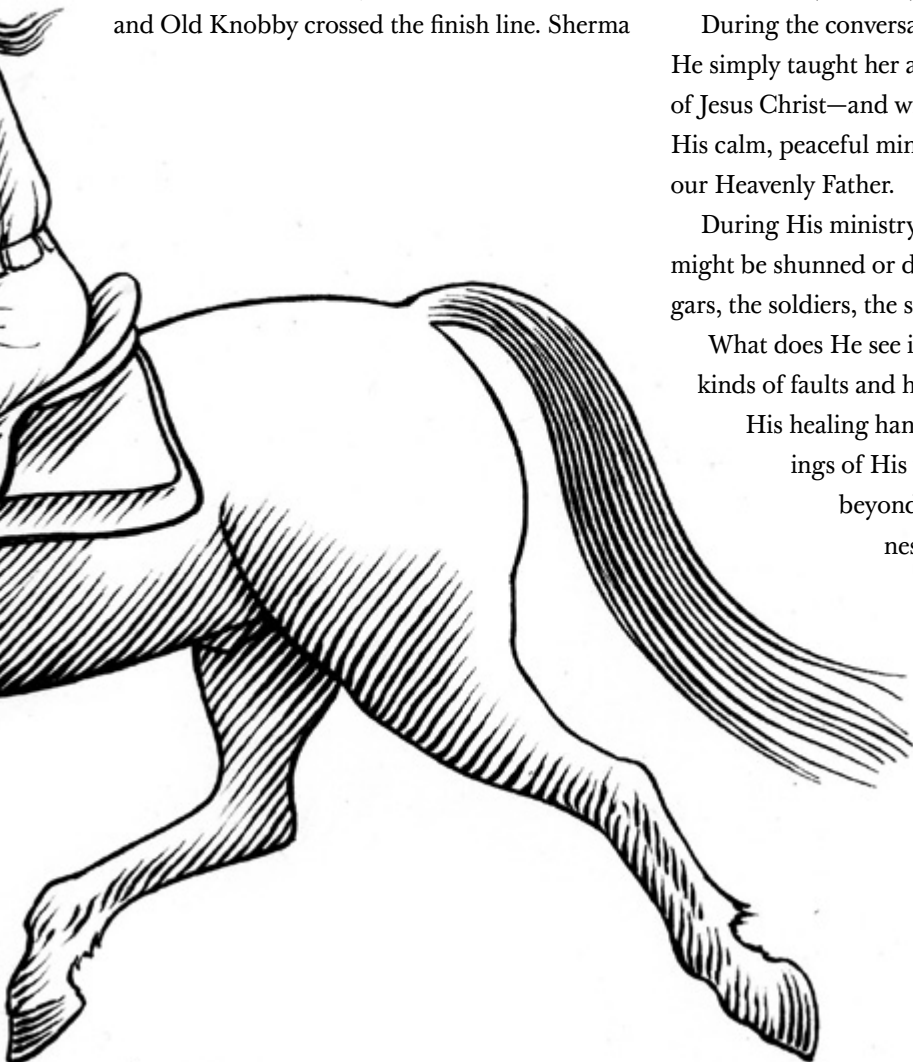
chance to race in hopes of winning the small cash prize. John was no exception. He was certain his magnificent steed would win the day and made his opinion well known to all around him. Sherma, in the meantime, quietly convinced Grandma to let her ride in the race.

The rules were simple. The race included three laps, one at a walk, one at a trot, and one at a run. Most of the crowd paid



little attention to Sherma and Old Knobby, especially when they fell behind in the first lap. Old Knobby's legs were simply not long enough to keep up with the big thoroughbreds. But when the second lap began, Old Knobby the Standardbred started to trot. The small horse soon left the field behind. In the third lap, Sherma let the reins down and Old Knobby took off running.

The crowd went wild! One lady began to jump and shout, pounding the straw hats of the men around her as she cried, "Go, girlie, go!" She lost her balance and nearly toppled over several other people. Everyone cheered as Sherma and Old Knobby crossed the finish line. Sherma



and her "sack of old doorknobs" won the race, bragging rights, and the small cash prize.

Grandpa smiled with understanding.



What the Savior Sees in Us

Just as Grandpa—and later Sherma—saw something of worth in Old Knobby, our Savior, Jesus Christ, knows our worth and sees our full potential.

For example, when the Savior met the Samaritan woman at the well, He saw and understood the difficulties in her life (see John 4:6–29). She was astonished when the Savior asked her for a drink from the well. In disbelief, she asked, "How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans" (John 4:9).

During the conversation that followed, the Savior didn't chastise her; He simply taught her about the "living water" He had to give—the gospel of Jesus Christ—and witnessed to her that He was the Messiah. Through His calm, peaceful ministering, the Savior let her know she was valued by our Heavenly Father.

During His ministry, the Savior never turned His back on those who might be shunned or disregarded by society. The blind, the lame, the beggars, the soldiers, the sinners—all felt His ministering, healing hand.

What does He see in us? As we struggle to come unto Him, bearing all kinds of faults and human frailties, do we not feel the gentle touch of

His healing hands? Do we not hear the soft, comforting whisperings of His voice to our wounded souls? I testify He can look

beyond our faults, our sins, our insecurities, and our weaknesses. He sees us as children of a loving Heavenly Father. He sees our potential for exaltation. He sees us as souls worth saving.

His love for us is evident in His atoning sacrifice and in His invitation: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28).

As we do our part to come unto Him, repent, and endure to the end, He can pull back the shroud that covers our hearts and help us see who we really are—children of God. ■