

The Client

A REFLECTION ON THE STORY OF THE RICH MAN AND LAZARUS FOR THREE READERS

Reader: “*There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and who feasted sumptuously every day. And at his gate lay a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, who longed to satisfy his hunger with what fell from the rich man’s table; even the dogs would come and lick his sores. The poor man died and was carried away by the angels to be with Abraham. The rich man also died and was buried. In Hades, where he was being tormented, he looked up and saw Abraham far away with Lazarus by his side.*”

-*Luke 16:19-23*

Counsel One: “I’m going to appeal this case!”

Counsel Two: (calmly, not bothering to look up from her papers until the end of the dialogue) “You know there is no appeal.”

(One): “But there’s got to be a higher authority!”

(Two): “You *know* there is no higher authority.”

(One): “But it’s just not fair—anyone can see that! I mean, what did the guy do wrong? He earned his money, he spent his money on things. . .”

(Two): “The *finer* things. . .”

(One): “O.k., . . .the *finer* things of life—but that was clearly within his rights! He came by his money honestly and spent his money according to his interests. What’s so bad about that?!”

(Two): “What do you think?”

(One): “It doesn’t matter what I think! It’s what fair that counts! No one would hold him accountable for that. . . that other person.”

(Two): (still sorting her papers) “No one?”

(One): “No normal human being! Any normal human being would say that it was a tragedy, that it was regrettable, but that these things just happen in life. Someone has some bad luck, they make some bad choices, a giant steps on their house—I mean, things like this happen, and nobody’s to blame—especially not my client.”

(Two): “ ‘A giant steps on their house’?—we’re stretching a bit aren’t we?”

(One): “My point is that just because the guy lived outside my client’s door. . .”

(Two): “ ‘Lived’ outside his door?”

(One): “Alright—just because the guy was lying on the ground outside his door. . .”

(Two): “With the *what* licking his sores. . .?”

(One): (softly) “Dogs.”

(Two): “Once again, with feeling?”

(One): “Dogs licking his sores. . . Look, we just want justice here—people like my client getting what they deserve.”

(Two): “Funny, justice is also what we want—people like Lazarus getting what they deserve.”

(One): “Well, just because the guy was having a tough time—a little hungry, a little sick—it wasn’t my client’s fault.”

(Two): “Anybody say it was?”

(One): “Excuse me!? I guess he just decided out of the blue to spend the rest of eternity in that really hot place none of us want to end up because he wanted to work on his tan! Of course somebody’s saying it was his fault!”

(Two): “I never heard anyone say it was your client’s fault that Lazarus got into such rough shape in the first place. It’s just that after he ended up there, your client pretty much ignored him. (reading from one of the papers) ‘Stepped over him on his way to the theater,’ I believe the document stated.”

(One): “But my client never really *saw* . . . what was the guy’s name. . .Lazarus. He had his mind on other things. He was a *very* busy person. Besides, he himself could barely make ends meet. Mortgages, food, entertaining, clothing—you can’t find purple clothes just anywhere, you know—it can be rough just trying to squeeze by today! There are lots of important things for a person like him to take care of!”

(Two): (as she gathers her papers to go) “Guess there was one important thing to take care of that he kind of missed.”

(One): “But was it so important that it cost my client his life!! What kind of a God would care that much about one person’s suffering and then hold the rest of us accountable for it?!”

(Two): (a moment’s pause as she looks at him) “What kind of God wouldn’t?”

The Client

By David Radcliff

New Community Project

718 Wilder Street, Elgin, IL 60123

newcommunityproject.org; 888-800-2985