

**“The Lord does not let the righteous go hungry,  
but he thwarts the craving of the wicked” [Prov. 10:3, NIV]**

The once-bustling city of Salem had been caught in the throes of a severe pandemic caused by an infectious virus.

On the west side of Elm Street, there was a landowner named Clara. She was a righteous widow known for her boundless generosity and fairness. Her door was always open to anyone seeking solace or a friend desiring some of her tasty homemade bread.

Across the street, in a massive apartment complex, resided Mr. Grimes, a miserly landlord. Greed consumed him and drove him to exploit the less fortunate for his own gain. He hoarded his wealth, continually raising rents and turning a blind eye to the plight of his impoverished tenants who were struggling after many had lost their jobs in the pandemic. His only desire was to amass more riches, with no regard for the suffering it caused.

One day, while Mr. Grimes was exiting his plush condo, a tenant in tattered clothing appeared before him. He pleaded with him not to evict his young family even though he had been unable to pay his rent. Mr. Grimes refused and kept his distance, quickly shuffling by for fear of contamination. The pleading of the needy tenant fell on deaf ears.

By contrast, Clara refused to raise rent rates during the pandemic. Once when Johnny, one of her tenants, came to her after having missed a rent payment, she realized his plight and had him run grocery store errands to work off his rent. He picked up flour and other foods that she needed for making meals for her own children. The virus's devastation had resulted in an urban famine as the supply chains in the city failed, but Johnny always found a way to get the needed foodstuffs for Clara.

Mr. Grimes barricaded himself inside his opulent fortress in an attempt to quarantine himself from the deadly virus. His heart remained unmoved, consumed by his selfish desire to protect and secure himself and his fortunes, even at the expense of those less fortunate.

Days turned into weeks, and an antidote was soon discovered. The city slowly began to rebuild from the ravages of the pandemic. Clara had gained respect for her fairness and righteousness. She and her family continued to be supported as she had fairly dealt with the plight of those suffering during the infection.

But for Mr. Grimes, the aftermath of the plague brought only further isolation and seclusion. His tenants abandoned him, seeking residences elsewhere after enduring his callous indifference during their time of need. His empty, abandoned apartments had become an economic sinkhole, quickly draining his wealth until he was shackled by bankruptcy, losing everything.

And so, as the vitality of Clara's community returned, the words of the ancient proverb rang true once again: "The Lord does not let the righteous go hungry, but he thwarts the craving of the wicked" [Prov. 10:3, NIV]