**A lazy hand causes poverty,   
but the hand of the diligent makes rich.  
Proverbs 10:4 – A Proverbial Story   
By Ted Hildebrandt and Chatgpt**

In the village of Elmsworth, nestled between the rolling hills and the whispering woods, lived two brothers—Thomas and Eli. Though they were born of the same parents and raised under the same roof, their lives could not have been more different.

Thomas was known throughout the village as a hardworking man. He rose before the sun, tilled his land with care, and tended his livestock with patience. His fields were lush, his granary full, and his heart content.   
  
Eli, on the other hand, had a talent for excuses. He would sit beneath the old willow tree, strumming his lute, claiming that life was too short to toil. He scorned Thomas’s early mornings and calloused hands, refusing to work his own fields, he chose instead a life of loafing and leisure. “Why should I work myself to the bone when the earth provides naturally? The sun rises and sets whether we labor or not.” Eli sold a portion of his land to buy wine and honey. “What’s the point of wealth if not to enjoy it?” he told himself.

One crisp autumn morning, Thomas invited Eli to help with the harvest. “The wheat is ripe, and the rain is coming,” Thomas urged. “Lend a hand, and we can finish before the weather turns.” Eli waved him off with a lazy smile. “You worry too much, brother. Let the sun do the drying and the wind do the winnowing. I’ll help tomorrow.”

Tomorrow came and went, and so did the storm. The winds howled through the valley, and rain poured down, destroying the wheat fields. Thomas salvaged what he could, but Eli’s neglected crop was ruined. He wandered out after the storm, looking over his soggy land in dismay.

By winter, Thomas had stored enough grain to last until spring and even sold the surplus in the village market. Eli, however, found his cupboards bare. Hunger crept into his home like a shadow.   
  
Embarrassed but desperate, he came to Thomas’s door. Thomas opened it with a knowing look. “Come in, brother,” he said kindly, sharing his bread and soup.

“I didn’t think it would matter,” Eli confessed, warming his hands by the fire. “A day here, a day there... I thought I had time.” Ashamed Eli confessed “Brother I’ve wasted my share of the family fields.”

Thomas nodded slowly. “Do you remember what Father used to say?” he asked, gazing into the flames. “‘A lazy hand causes poverty, but the hand of the diligent makes rich.’”

Eli lowered his head. The proverb echoed in his mind like a bell.

Come spring, a change stirred in Eli. He rose early with Thomas, took to the fields with shovel and hoe, and listened more than he spoke. Though his muscles ached and the days felt long, something new took root in him—pride, and a sense of purpose.

By the next harvest, Eli’s field shimmered golden. He reaped what he had sown with his own hands, and for the first time, his barn stood full.

The villagers began to speak of the brothers—not as opposites, but as a pair of men who showed that change was always possible. And whenever a child in Elmsworth grumbled about chores or shirked their duties, their parents would smile and tell the story of Thomas, Eli, and the timeless truth: *“A lazy hand causes poverty, but the hand of the diligent makes rich.”*