

## WARRIOR OF LIGHT ONLINE #110

### Christmas Story: A place in Paradise

Many years ago, in the northeast of Brazil, there lived a couple who were very poor and whose only possession was a hen. They managed to scrape a precarious living from the eggs laid by that one hen.

On Christmas Eve, however, the hen died. The husband, who only had a few pennies to his name, which was certainly not enough to buy food for that evening's meal, went to seek help from the village priest.

Instead of giving him money, the priest merely remarked:

'God never closes a door without opening a window. Your money will buy you almost nothing, so go to the market and buy the first thing you're offered. I will bless that purchase and, since Christmas is the time for miracles, something will happen that will change your life for ever.'

The man wasn't entirely convinced that this was the best solution, but he went to the market anyway. One of the traders saw him wandering aimlessly about and asked what he was looking for.

'I don't know. I don't have much money, but the priest told me that I should buy the first thing I was offered.'

The trader was very rich, but even so he never let slip an opportunity to make a profit, however small. He took the man's few coins and in exchange gave him a note scribbled on a piece of paper.

'The priest was quite right. Now I've always had a kind heart, and so, on this festive day, I'm selling you my place in Paradise. Here are the deeds!'

The other man took the piece of paper and moved off, while the trader glowed with pride at having closed yet another excellent deal. That night, while he was preparing for supper in his house full of servants, he told the story to his wife, adding that it was thanks to such quick thinking that he had become as rich as he was.

'That's shameful!' said his wife. 'Fancy behaving like that on the day Jesus was born! Go straight to that man's house and get the piece of paper back, or you'll never set foot in this house again!'

Alarmed by his wife's anger, the trader decided to do as she said. After much asking around, he managed to find out where the man lived. When he went in, he found the couple sitting at a table that was completely bare apart from the piece of paper.

'I've come because what I did was wrong,' the trader said. 'Here's your money. Now give me back what I sold you.'

'You did nothing wrong,' replied the man. 'I followed the priest's advice and I know that what I bought from you is blessed.'

'But it's just a piece of paper. Besides, no one can sell someone else their place in Paradise. If you like, I'll give you double what you paid for it.'

However, because he believed in miracles, the poor man refused to sell. The trader gradually increased his offer, until he reached the sum of ten gold coins.

'That's no good to me,' said the man. 'In order to give my wife the life she deserves, I need one hundred gold coins. That is the miracle I'm waiting for this Christmas Eve.'

In despair and knowing that if he lingered any longer, no one in his own house would have supper or go to midnight mass, the trader ended up paying one hundred gold coins to get the piece of paper back. As far as the couple were concerned, the miracle had happened. As for the trader, he had done as his wife had asked. His wife, though, was filled with doubt. Had she been too hard on her husband?

As soon as midnight mass was over, she went to the priest and told him the story. 'Father, my husband met a man who said that you had told him to go to the market and buy the first thing he was offered. My husband, seeing a chance to earn some easy money, wrote him a note on a piece of paper, selling him his place in Paradise. I told my husband that he wouldn't eat in our house tonight if he didn't get that piece of paper back, and he ended up having to pay one hundred gold coins for it. Did I go too far? Could a place in Paradise really cost that much?'

'Firstly, your husband was able to show great generosity on this, the most important day in the Christian calendar. Secondly, he became the instrument of God through whom a miracle was performed. But to answer your question: when he sold his place in Heaven for a few pennies, it wasn't even worth that much; however, when he bought it back for one hundred gold coins simply to make his wife happy, that, I can assure you, made it worth much much more.'

(Based on an Hasidic tale by David Mandel)

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