“Father Abraham, have pity on me. Send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am suffering in these flames.”

From the Gospel of St. Luke

Teachers hafta have eyes like a security camera. Kids are always trying to push the envelope, to get away with some petty knavery. Recently there were two little darlins in one of my classes ... we’ll call them Becky Sue and Dickie Lou. Class was going on and I was teaching brilliantly, all the while throwing out questions for the eager young learners to answer. Becky Sue and Dickie Lou were seated at adjoining desks and are sort of rivals for top spot in their class. I posed a question and immediately, young Dickie shot up his hand to answer ... which in itself was something of a unique occurrence since the boy almost never raises his hand but just shouts out his answers. Not to be outdone, Miss Becky also raised her hand and when she was pretty sure I wasn’t looking at her, she also elbowed her rival, poor Dickie. At once, I fixed sneaky Becky with a glare and said her name aloud in as stern a tone as I could muster. Immediately she gave me an affronted, persecuted look and claimed she had done nothing wrong save to raise her hand to offer an answer to the question I had posed. For the rest of the period, she stewed and pouted, her perfect innocence called into question by the grossly unfair and mistaken teacher. After class, I
called her up to my desk and asked if she knew why I had spoken to her. Again, there was a claim of innocence accompanied by the persecuted look. “I only raised my hand to answer the question!” “That’s your story?” I said, “Never did you poke Dickie in the ribs with your elbow?”

Aah, caught, trapped like a rat - not so innocent afterall, my pretty!

In today’s cautionary tale from the Gospel, what did the rich man do wrong? Nothing! He had money … that’s no sin. He ate well … it might not have been good for his cholesterol, but it’s no sin. He dressed nicely … no sin in that. He had a nice home … no sin in that either! Did he hafta feed every anonymous beggar who stuck his hand out? How was he expected to take care of every strange person who crossed his path in the town?

But, here’s the deal … when he died and was suffering for the sins of his lifetime, he begged Father Abraham to tell Lazarus to help him, give him a drink of cooling water. How was he able to use the beggar’s name? He knew him then! He wasn’t just an anonymous stranger. The rich man knew the beggar had a name and yet, he still chose to ignore him, see right through him, pretend he didn’t exist and wasn’t in need. That was the sin. He knew what he was asked for. He knew what the man needed. He knew he had the means to help and maybe save a life. He chose to walk right by and not be bothered and pretend the whole situation never happened.

Let’s look at our lives, even as we lived them in the last week. You have been put on trial for your charity and kindness. How do you plead? Innocent, Your Honor. But, God sees. God knows what we try to get
away with; who we try to ignore; the secrets we cover up and think nobody knows.

Christ, the Teacher sees and knows our fickle hearts. Better to stop our excuses and empty claims of pure-as-the-driven-snow innocence and change our ways before we’re caught by the Teacher at the Judgment and made to pay a high price.

Whatsoever you do to the least of my brethren, that you do unto me.