

THE COBBLER

("The Shoemaker" An adaptation of a story of Leo Tolstoy)

Intent of the Story

- ✓ *Finding and serving God in others.*
- ✓ *Be kind to all – rich and poor, good and bad alike.*

The Story

In a small village perched up on the mountains there was a cobbler. One Christmas Eve, something very strange happened to him. Was it a dream? Did it really happen? No one will ever know it.

While the cobbler was at prayer, he got a message from an unknown person: "Johnny, God is pleased with you. I announce to you that the Lord Jesus will come today to visit you in your little shop."

The cobbler was overjoyed. Immediately, he began sweeping and cleaning his little shop without, of course neglecting his work. When he cooked for the day, he prepared something extra for his visitor. To Johnny, that day was a day of gladness. He even put on his best clothes.

All of a sudden, a woman entered Johnny's shop. She was a woman of bad reputation. Very kindly, Johnny received her, but he muttered to himself: "What if Jesus happened to enter my house now! How shall I be able to receive him as he deserves? In spite of all, Johnny did not try to send her away soon. He spoke kindly to her till she was gone.

At last, Johnny was alone again waiting for his Lord. His imagination got the better of him. Johnny kept asking himself: "What will Jesus look like? Will he have the serene look of the Christ of the icon on my altar? Will he radiate the majesty of Christ the King of my parish?

Engrossed in his thoughts, he did not realize that some had come to his shop. "Good morning, Johnny!" "Vow! You startled me," Johnny replied, "I thought it was someone else! Come! Come in! Most welcome! What happened to your little boy? He looks so weak! Sit down, sit down, my son! Would you like an apple, my boy? It will do you more good than to me. Eat; eat, my dear!" The child turned to his mother and exclaimed: "Mummy! Look! An apple!" That day, the poor woman and her little son left the cobbler's shop with a new pair of shoes just as a Christmas gift!

While they were joyously returning home, the cobbler alone and pensive, was waiting for his Lord. He muttered: "Can it be possible that the Lord comes to my house today?"

One after another, people kept streaming into his little shop. Finally, a drunkard dropped in and shouted with laughter: "Johnny, give me a glass of liquor! I've been drinking so much wine that I have lost the taste of it. Liquor is what I want." "Come, sit down. Liquor I haven't," Johnny said, "What I have, I'll share with you. I have clean and fresh water and a lovely meal I have prepared today for a special guest. Sit down. We shall eat together."

Johnny and the drunkard sat down and ate their meal together. They enjoyed each other's company, though each in his own way. The drunkard left Johnny's shop, comforted and with greater courage to face life's problems.

The hours rolled by. It was sunset now, and then night, and finally midnight! The cobbler did not get any more visitors that day. Johnny was sad, his spirits down. He felt cheated, disappointed. Jesus had not come.

It was already time to say his night prayers and go to sleep. Johnny knelt down and prayed: "Lord, why have you not come today? I had been waiting for you so eagerly so long!"

Johnny's heart nearly burst with joy when he heard a whispering voice telling him: "Johnny, of course I came today to your house, not once, not twice, in fact many times and throughout the day!"

That night, Johnny went to sleep with a joyous and peaceful heart.

Points for Reflection and Discussion

1. When is the best time to hear the voice of God? Why?
2. Had Johnny a reason to be disappointed at the end of that day? Why?
3. What's the best way to prepare ourselves and our homes to receive Jesus? Explain.
4. Does Jesus truly come to our homes; even today? How does he look? Describe Him
5. Have we to treat honest and respectable people with greater honor and love than when we meet drunks, cheats and their likes of them? Why?
6. Can you remember some Gospel texts that convey to us the message of the story? Mention them and explain them.
7. In the past when Jesus came to you, how did you treat him? Are you happy with the way you entertained him? Why?
8. Anything you should change in your way of dealing with others? What is that? Can you share it with us?