



TRUTH APPLICATIONS

Articles

Where Love Is

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Martin was very ordinary, a man who had known some of life's good and much of its bad. He was a cobbler who lived and worked in a basement with a window that let him see only the shoes of passers-by. Only the youngest of his children had lived past infancy, his wife had died when the youngest was just three, and that boy had himself died just as he was old enough to begin work as an apprentice. Martin was alone.

In despair, he stopped going to church, reproached God, and often prayed to die. An old holy man happened by one day, listened to Martin's despair, chastened him for questioning God, and urged him to imitate the model of Christ. So, Martin bought a New Testament and found himself thrilled at what he read there.

One night during his reading, Martin had the sense that the Lord had spoken to him, promising to visit the next day. As that day dawned and wore on, he helped three different strangers with urgent needs, all the while waiting for the Lord's visit. But darkness came and Jesus had not come. Disappointed, Martin opened his New Testament and experienced something like a dream in which those he had helped appeared, declaring that in helping them, he had helped the Lord. So, the Lord had appeared after all.

Leo Tolstoy wrote Martin's story, called "Where Love Is, God Is," in 1885. Though the story never mentions the birth of Jesus, a Principal for whom I worked as a school teacher used to tell it every year just as we broke for Christmas. His timing was good.

As you read this today, millions have stopped — some for the first time since last year — to remember the birth of the one the angel called "a Savior, who is Christ the Lord" (Luke 2:11). For that, I give thanks, even as I hope they all will see so much more. The baby Jesus, so precious to them now, grew up to show compassion as no one had

shown it, to give as no one had given, and to model a life no one had ever lived, not least those whose religious airs led them to look down on the sinners he welcomed.

Whether “sinner” or Pharisee, we hope they will see. Tolstoy reminds us that when we help the hungry, the cold, the stumbling and the bitter like Jesus did, we give them a chance to do so.

We are the living body of Jesus. Are we where love is?

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