

COMMENTARY: A lesson from Leroy

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By David Harp

The last spoon of cornbread dressing and gilet gravy sat on my plate, and I realized Thanksgiving was almost gone. So soon, the sights, sounds and smells of another beautiful Christmas season will be upon us. Before we move on to candy canes and cinnamon pinecones and honey-glazed spiraled hams, I still want to cherish my Thanksgiving. I want to live that attitude of gratitude for God's many blessings of life.

Recently, my wife, Andrea, and I traveled to Austin for the Baptist General Convention of Texas annual meeting. This was going to be an unusually hectic year for us, with added meetings both before and after the convention. So, with the help of Internet specials, we decided to fly to Austin.

When we arrived, we hailed a taxi to get to our hotel, and that's when we met Leroy.

Leroy seemed upbeat and jovial, and he had a big smile on his face. Once we settled into his cab, I decided to discover the deeper meaning of Leroy's smile. I just knew he had to be a believer. So, I jumped right in and asked, "Leroy, has the Lord been good to you this year?"

Wow, did I miss it by a thousand light years. I'd never be a good palm reader!

"I guess it all depends on how you look at it," Leroy said. Then he added: "I'm still here. I'm still breathing. I'm still pushing this sorry machine down the road another day."

Well, there it was hanging in the air—thicker than grandma's giblet gravy! I searched for a quick seminary answer, but none was at the ready. I just tried to think like Leroy for a minute. What deep hurt had come to Leroy today, or how had it added up day after day until this day?

Someone has said, "If you scratch anyone deep enough, you will discover great pain." By now, I realized Leroy was in a bigger hurry to get us to our hotel than we were to get there ourselves. But my heart hurt for a man I barely knew, who was just days away from Thanksgiving with no one to thank.

I did all I knew to do. As Andrea and I observed Texas' beautiful hill country, we thanked God for it. As we thought of our church family back home, we thanked God for their love and encouragement. We thanked God for an amazing crop here at harvest time in West Texas. We thanked God for our three daughters, and we named them and thought of each special blessing they have brought to our family this year. We recounted the daily blessings of our faithful Father and "gave thanks with a grateful heart."

When we arrived at our hotel, I remembered reading Gordon McDonald's line: "The older I get, the more I realize my single mission in life is to bring people to Jesus and leave them there."

Leroy taught me a valuable lesson just days away from Thanksgiving—be thankful, but also stay thankful. Every day is a precious and priceless gift from God.

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