

Voices: A man one dark night

March 18, 2025

It was dark as I headed to church one recent Wednesday evening. Traffic was heavy. Pedestrians were hard to see, crossing between cars, so I focused.

At the Westheimer and Dairy Ashford intersection for my turn-off, I was about five cars back from the traffic light. I could barely make out on the median a man with a cup and some sort of paper in his hand. He had a bucket to sit on, though at the moment, he was walking down the median, car to car, looking into each driver's window soliciting for help.

The man was dressed in a pair of jeans, a pull-over shirt, a jacket and athletic shoes. There in the dark of night, in a not-so-safe and very busy intersection near 7 p.m., he was doing what he could to survive.

He came to my window, but I looked straight ahead. I pacified myself with the thought we help people like this man every day in our church.

As he moved down the median, I watched him in my mirror. The darkness cloaked his presence. I could make out his outline and shoes, nothing more.

His beginnings

I thought of this man's beginning. He looked about 40 years old. I wondered about the day his mom gave him birth. I am sure it was in a hospital. I imagine the greatest care was given to him and his mom.

I would not doubt a dad was somewhere nearby waiting with nervous expectation. Maybe a dad wasn't there. Maybe his mother decided, in the father's neglectful absence, she'd brave the task of raising a child alone. Maybe the woman's mother was there for her, or a sister or a friend.

Let's say it was on a March 5th when the woman gave birth to this man who is now making his way back toward my truck after exhaustingly searching for help from every car awaiting the light to change.

After she gave birth to a baby boy, she held him. She caressed him. Perhaps she even prayed for him and his future. She wondered what his life would be like, what theirs together might face.

I would imagine she was full of hope, even if she faced the harshest of realities. She had dreams for this baby son she held in her arms, all wrapped in the warm white and green-striped blanket, wearing a little blue onesie the hospital provided along with a little blue cap for his tiny head.

The mom soon would take him to her bare apartment. Again, maybe the proud daddy was in tow. Maybe not. The little boy would speak his first words, take his first steps, enter his first day of school. He would be in school choirs, play on school sports teams and go on school field trips with his classmates.

His present

I could not help but stare at the man with the cup and a piece of paper, in a pair of jeans, a pull-over shirt, a jacket and sports shoes.

I was struck with the question: "Is this what this mother envisioned for her son? Did she imagine him being homeless with no hope, no job, no one to lean on, depending on the kindness of strangers for each day's sustenance?"

Just then, someone rolled down their window and handed him a bottle of water.

Walking back to his spot at the head of the intersection, the light turned green before I could give him the only dollar I had on me.

I drove forward heading to church, looking in my rearview mirror in the dark at the man I did not help.

What caused him to be in this situation? Was it a bad break or a bad choice. Was he raised in a home or put out as a teen? Were drugs involved or some mental illness? I prayed for him, but this seemed empty.

His presence

I was running late for church. I tried to justify not helping, but this did me no good. God gave me a story, a picture, a visible need, and I drove by. How could I face our church family and listen to Pastor Seye lead our Bible study, knowing I left a man without giving aid?

Do you know what? I turned my truck around. I got back into that traffic on Westheimer, first going in the opposite direction of church, then U-turning so I could get back in line for the light.

I wondered if the man would be there or if he had been an angel God used to test me. I prayed he was a man and still there. He was.

As he made his walk to my truck seven cars from the light, I rolled down my window immediately, waiting. I had my dollar bill in my left hand. When he came to my truck, I held it out.

He took it and said: "Thank you. God bless you."

He made his way down the median in the dark of night.

The next morning, the Christian radio station I listen to played a new song called "Looking Up." The song told of a homeless guy on a median in the dark, who was out of luck and had no way out but looking up to the God who cares.

My encounter was no accident. I pray we see with the eyes of God.

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