

## Column

Thanksgiving is a few weeks off, and hopefully it will be a happy one, especially since Covid seems to have receded into the shadows and families can again gather without fear. There is, of course, no reason whatsoever to wait for the fourth Thursday to reflect on past blessings and to give thanks.

Paul writes: “In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you” (1 Thessalonians 5:18). I don’t think the apostle would object if we augment this exhortation to read: “In every ‘season’ give thanks.” After all, serendipities and blessings are all around us and come throughout the year. Some come in strange packages, as the story I am about to share with you will show.

It was late summer several years ago, and I was doing what I do each month – reviewing charges on my credit card statements. As I did, my eyes fell on charges totaling thousands of dollars which I knew I did not make. Hotels in Chattanooga and Dalton, storage units in several states, laundry charges, not to mention a set of tires, were on the list. Apparently, my information had fallen into pernicious hands, and someone was living the good life at my expense.

If you have ever had such a thing happen, you know how I felt at that moment. First came shock and disbelief; then anger and action.

I found myself on the phone with the fraud department of the credit card company. The person with whom I spoke was sympathetic and assured me all fraudulent charges would be removed. They were, and I was sent a new card.

Several months later, however, the charges reappeared on my statement. About the same time, I received a notification that it had been determined that all these charges belonged to me. The reason given was that several legitimate charges were made during the same period (reoccurring charges, as it turned out).

More calls followed. Would you believe that I had to send the credit card company documentation that I was nowhere in the vicinity of where the charges were made on the dates when they were recorded? Fortunately, I was in another state during much of this time.

Finally, around Thanksgiving I was notified that the issue had been resolved in my favor. The \$5000 worth of charges had been permanently removed. Taking

this news in, Paul's words – 'in everything give thanks' – took on a new reality. Anxiety was replaced with gratitude. Strange as it seems, I even found myself praying for the perpetrator of this dastardly deed.

Causes for gratitude are all around us. Some are familiar and expected, food, faith, family and friends being key examples. Others, meanwhile, come in strange packages. Look for them.

*ALMIGHTY God, the fountain of all wisdom, who knowest our necessities before we ask, and our ignorance in asking; We beseech thee to have compassion upon our infirmities; and those things which for our unworthiness we dare not, and for our blindness we cannot ask, vouchsafe to give us, for the worthiness of thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

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