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Looking for America

We see what we want to see.

The science of psychology has determined, without any real doubt, that we perceive what we think we should perceive. Even more importantly, we perceive what we wish to perceive.

What if we look for the good?

The fact that we perceive based on our expectations is significant not only for ersatz columnists, but also for the President of the United States and, at the moment, for Tiger Woods. When you look at Tiger, what do you see?

Most people see a person whose second favorite organ is his brain.

They could see the greatest golfer of all time.

No, Judy, I'm not defending the guy. But what if we look for the good? It exists everywhere, so what if we looked for it?

Although I realize people like Nancy Grace and Rush Limbaugh would cease to exist, that really does not thwart my desire to pursue the line of thought. In fact the possibility of their ceasing to exist is invigorating, especially during the Holidays.

A few decades ago, Simon and Garfunkel said we've all gone to look for America. I believe my wife and I recently found it.

Judy and I drove completely around a small lake. We stopped for breakfast in a small town, on Main Street. We found strangers we had never met and we left feeling as though we'd known them for a long time.

We met a waitress at a small restaurant owned by her mother. They worked together to help run the business, even though the daughter already had received her college degree in retailing and design.

We saw everyday folks like you and me, meeting in a place they seemed accustomed to, a place not unlike their second kitchen, or even their second home, filled with friends.

We had a wonderful breakfast, on Main Street, in America.

All day long we met new people, and yet we left there feeling as though we'd known them forever. We found the good in America.

On the way home, traffic was stopped because of a horrible car accident. Total strangers gathered together like a highly trained unit to pry open the crushed doors to rescue crushed people. They performed CPR on total strangers, to do what was right because their inner conscience told them that's what they should do.

What if we look for the good?

For every Hitler there is a Christ.

For every Potter there is a George Bailey. For every Mussolini, there is a Roberto Benigni.

It's hard to say it without sounding trite, but humanity is more soundly rooted in good than in evil. More of us want good to triumph. Ultimately, it will. It must!

We celebrate the holidays in different ways. We call God by different names, and some of us don't even recognize her existence. Every religion has its shame, its Crusades, its Inquisition or its suicide bombers. We cannot let that fact overcome us, and we cannot forget the good of humanity, or it will overcome us.

You see, George Bailey really did have a wonderful life. We all touch each other in ways we may never recognize, but in ways that also change each of us, and the world, forever. What seems insignificant today ultimately may change not only those around us, but also humanity itself, and history, in ways we can never imagine.

Even when it seemed absolutely impossible, Benigni saw that life is beautiful.

A few decades ago, Simon and Garfunkel said we've all gone to look for America.

I believe that the other day, while driving around the lake, my wife and I found it.

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