



At A Distance – Wednesday May 13, 2020

Perfect

Last night was an interesting one for me. I saw “perfection” twice in the same night! Perfection did not come in a mystical vision or a dream or in some Spirit Messenger or Shape Shifter.

No, one vision of “perfection” came disguised as a grainy old television broadcast from 1956. It was Game 5 of the 1956 World Series between the New York Yankees and the Brooklyn Dodgers. It was Don Larsen’s Perfect Game.

As a hard-core baseball fan, this one was a “must watch” for me, even if it did start at midnight and conclude at 3:00AM. We don’t see perfection much in this world, or at least we don’t think we do. And I did not want to miss out on this opportunity.

A “perfect game” in baseball is extremely rare. A “perfect game” during the World Series is practically unheard of. What makes it “perfect” is that no player reaches first base during the whole game...not on a hit, not on a walk, balk or hit batter. Nothing! 27 batters appear at the plate, and 27 batters are “out” and take their seats back on the bench. This piece of mid-century perfection was magical.

To see the likes of Hall of Fame players like Yogi Berra, Mickey Mantle, Hank Bauer, Billy Martin, Pee Wee Reese, Duke Snider, Roy Campanella and Jackey Robinson all in the same place (Yankee Stadium) at the same time (October 1956) was indeed perfection in and of itself, along with the extra drama and spectacular performance of pitcher Don Larsen. No runs, no hits, no errors, no baserunners. Perfection!

Earlier that night, I saw perfection in another way...different, unique yet perfect none the less. It was the first game of the Korean Baseball League, being played

after some of the COVID-19 restrictions were lifted in Korea and live baseball was allowed to begin again. It was the first “live” baseball being played anywhere in the world, and I didn’t want to miss a pitch. I have to admit, it felt a bit strange. Players and teams that I had never heard of, speaking a language that I did not understand. Cheerleaders prancing and performing their motivational routines to cardboard cut-outs of two dimensional “fans” occupying the first 20 rows of seats. Paper smiley faces welcoming the onset of one of our most beloved sports pastimes. So, what was perfect about this you may ask? Empty stadium, cardboard fans, no Hall of Fame players here, lots of runs, hits and errors...wild pitches, broken bats, passed balls you name it. The exact opposite of the October 1956 Perfect Game. Yet each was perfect in its own way. Why you ask?

Saints each game was perfect because each was joyfully played by imperfect human beings each living into their vocations and dreams. Each and every player giving their best and living into “their call”. In 1956 before 68,000 cheering fans. In 2020, before no fans except for about 200 cardboard ones. The fans didn’t matter, the score didn’t matter. Perfect because the beauty is in the journey, not the destination. Perfection lies in the snap of the ball into the glove, the crack of the bat on a well hit ball, the smell of fresh cut grass and kicking dirt. Perfection lies in simply loving the game, whether it be baseball or the Jesus Way. Playing it as best we can, each time that we take the field. Playing with courage, dignity, honor and yes and most importantly...great joy. Some wise broadcaster once said, “Baseball is Life!” I think perhaps he may be right.